



## Radios in Action

We were returning from the Radio Rendezvous on April 2nd—a number of members still had their radios tuned to the Green Mountain (146.88MHz) repeater. Heather and Dave Ballaine had just returned to their house and heard a

distress call on the repeater frequency. Heather responded to see if she could be of assistance. The elderly caller said that he had parked his vehicle at a trailhead in a remote area—out of cell phone reach. When he returned to his vehicle after a hike on which he had taken his amateur radio—the windows were broken and the contents of the vehicle were gone. To complicate matters, after a strenuous hike back, he also was having breathing and/or heart attack symptoms. He was relieved to reach the Ballaines on the radio and while Dave comforted the gentleman, Heather worked with 911 operators to locate the person and dispatch assistance.

During the last year the Committee has had a number of discussions about emergency communications and this recent incident reminded us all about the benefits of having alternative options for communication. We are fortunate to live in an area with (normally) excellent cell phone coverage and we have become dependent upon cell phones and rely on their capabilities. On a boat we can use VHF radio—calling boats on Channel 16 and then switching to a clear “working” channel. But as we all know, sometimes it can be difficult to find a clear channel while sorting out the other miscellaneous chatter.

The technology used for most maritime mobile communications is called simplex, i.e., you are transmitting on the same frequency as the receiving station. Amateur Radio repeater stations work a little differently. By transmitting to a repeater (on top of a mountain) a repeater can take a weak signal from a hand held device, amplify the signal, and rebroadcast on a different frequency, allowing the signal to be heard miles away (similar to a cell tower). In fact this evening during the Sunday night check-in I talked with two members returning from Cortez Island at the truck crossing (just north of Bellingham) through a repeater located near Bremerton. Other evenings we’ve had “check-ins” from Tumwater, Seattle, Kirkland, Bainbridge, and Mount Vernon.

This summer, we encourage all members with amateur radio equipment to listen in on repeaters that are located

between here, Port Hardy, and beyond. There are many on line references to locate repeaters, but one of the best print resources is the ARRL repeater guide (available at [www.arrl.org](http://www.arrl.org)). There is also a new interlinked repeater system called IRLP (Internet Radio Linking Project), with information available at [www.irlp.net](http://www.irlp.net). IRLP was developed in BC and is rapidly growing to include over 1200 repeaters worldwide. One evening I heard a conversation with an amateur radio operator in Port Townsend talking through a repeater in Victoria, BC, linked to a repeater in Scotland.

To listen to repeater communications, all you need is a radio that is capable of receiving between 144 and 148 MHz (close to the Marine bands). You don’t need a license if you just want to listen and it’s a great way to get familiar with amateur radio protocol and net operations. There are a number of active boating and emergency nets that meet at all times of the day on the various repeater networks. The most utilized net for boating is the BC Boaters Net that meets in the early evening. One of the Committee’s on going projects is to map repeater coverage and research the feasibility of linking into the IRLP system for extended coverage. In the meantime, the Committee decided at the last meeting to use 146.56 MHz Simplex for point-to-point communication and to listen in or check-in on the BC Boaters net this summer.

## Fall Radio Rendezvous

Over 35 members attended the first Spring Radio Rendezvous on April 1st. The event included an open boat tour, lots of socializing and discussions, and an evening tech talk. We are tentatively planning to have a Fall Radio Rendezvous on September 16th. Starting in September, Committee meetings will be on the second Wednesday of the Month starting promptly at 6pm in the Commodores Room, so the next formal Committee meeting will be on September 13th. We are also planning to repeat the Tech Class and FCC Exam we held this past year—on January 6th, 2007. All meetings are open to all SYC members and guests.

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73s – Day Chapin, Chair.

