

# Sky Valley Hams form radio club

By Nettie E. Robertson  
LIFESTYLE EDITOR

Because the flood in the Sky-komish Valley last year demonstrated how disorganized communications were, a group of people interested in amateur radio have organized themselves into the Sky Valley Amateur Radio Club.

Amateur radio, also known as "ham" radio, is primarily a non-commercial communication service of hobbyists worldwide. Amateurs use special radio frequencies and are licensed to use their own stations to communicate in a variety of ways on their two-way radios including Morse code, voice, and computer-based systems. Ernie Allsop of Index is secretary/treasurer of the local group, and has had his license since March of last year. "There's never been a club in east county," he said,

although several school children in Index and Sultan have taken classes.

The government's concern about responsible use of the airwaves is why amateur radio operators need licenses. All it takes is a little interest and motivation to earn the "Novice" ticket. With a little more study, hams can earn a higher class license and have more privileges on the airwaves.

With a network manned by hams in east county, communications can be organized and readily available in times of need.

They were active with the North County Emergency Services and the Snohomish County Emergency Services during the recent derailment and burning of a propane railroad car near Arlington. "Several hundred hours were put in by area amateurs," said Allsop.

The new club held a field day in June 1991 in the Startup rest area

and made 250 contacts in 24 hours. It is an annual contest for all amateur radio operators in the United States to see how many radio contacts they can make in 24 hours. Additional points can be obtained for using emergency power. It's sponsored by the American Radio Relay League.

The club has a six- or seven-month course for kids. Next school year, there will be a member to teach a class at the Monroe Christian School in addition to the one at the Index School. "A no-code technician these days can operate without Morse Code," said Allsop.

"If any adults want to learn, we'd support them," he said. It widens the horizon of those involved. Allsop has reached as far as Bulgaria.

All area amateur radio operators are encouraged to join the new club in addition to those interested in ham radio. Dues for kids are \$2.50 a year, and for adults, \$14 per year.

They meet the third Saturday of the month, 8 a.m., at the Dutch Cup Restaurant in Sultan for a no-host breakfast. There are about 30 in the group - 20 are voting members, the remaining 10 are youngsters and interested adults.

Four members of the club are authorized by the Federal Communications Commission to give amateur radio tests, and they are given after each meeting. There's no charge for a novice license and above that the charge is \$5.40 a session.

Allsop's call sign is AAT7U. Others in the club are Dave Axe, W7AGJ; Annette Schain, KB7LJN; and Darryl Hirst, W270.

For information, call Allsop at 793-0319, or Darryl Hirst at Sultan Elementary School, 793-0121. Write Allsop at P.O. Box 183, Index, WA 98256.

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