

Ham operators get to show off this weekend

Special to the Avalanche

Thousands of ham radio operators -- including those in the Big Bend -- will be showing off their emergency capabilities this weekend.

In recent months, the news has been full of reports of ham radio operators providing critical communications in emergencies worldwide. During the recent tornadoes and in Hurricane Katrina, amateur radio -- often called "ham radio" -- was often the only way remaining by which people could communicate.

On Saturday and Sunday, the public will have a chance to meet and talk with these ham radio operators and see for themselves what the Amateur Radio Service is about.

Showing the newest digital and satellite capabilities, voice communications and even historic Morse

code, hams from across the nation will hold public demonstrations of their emergency communications abilities.

This annual event, called a field day, is the climax of the weeklong "Amateur Radio Week" sponsored by the National Association for Amateur Radio.

Using only emergency power supplies, ham operators will construct emergency stations in parks, shopping malls, schools and back yards around the country.

Their slogan, "When all else fails..." is more than just words to hams as they prove they can send messages in many forms without the use of phone systems, Internet or other infrastructure that can be compromised in a crisis. More than 34,000 amateur radio operators participated in last year's event.

Members of the Big Bend Amateur Radio Club will partici-

pate in the event, as they have for over 35 years. Members of the club, who come from Brewster, Jeff Davis and Terrell counties as well as guest operators from as far away as Houston, will begin setting up stations and antennas at 1 p.m. Friday. Beginning at 1 p.m. on Saturday, the hams will try to contact as many other stations in the

U.S. and Canada as they can.

The test is scheduled to be held at the pavilion behind the sales office of the Double Diamond Ranch south of Alpine on Highway 118.

"This is a good chance for the public to view amateur radio in operation," said club president Billy Roberts, W5NPR.



He is always nice,
and sometimes
thrifty. His name is
Joe and he is fifty.
Love Rubio Family