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PRESS CONTACT:

Brad Baker, KD6ZJN

Santa Cruz County Amateur Radio Emergency Service (ARES)

(408) 395-0314

Santa Cruz County Amateur Radio Emergency Service to Hold Simulated  
Emergency Test (SET)

Santa Cruz, Oct. 18 – This coming Saturday, October 22<sup>nd</sup>, the Santa Cruz County Amateur Radio Emergency Service will lead the annual simulated emergency test (SET), in yet another of its ongoing training efforts to ensure that county amateur radio (ham) operators are prepared to respond effectively in the event of an actual emergency.

With no prior knowledge of event timing or details, county amateur radio participants in this exercise will be activated and called upon to stand by in readiness to respond to an undisclosed simulated emergency somewhere in the county. Utilizing their own personal radio equipment resources, they will be assigned to provide radio communications support to various Santa Cruz County agency and emergency service organizations, much as they would in the event of an actual disaster causing a disruption in routine communications systems. Simulating being dispatched to various locations around the county, operators will test their skills to improvise and adapt to the situation at hand, while efficiently passing both emergency and health and welfare messages over the airwaves.

"While amateur radio has for many years been key to providing emergency communications support during various county emergencies, its vital role in a disaster gained national visibility in the wake of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita", explained Cap Pennell KE6AFE, ARES District Emergency Coordinator. "Drills like the SET both train and fine-tune the skilled emergency response required from amateur radio operators during such large-scale and unprecedented disasters. Prepared in this way, we are best able to support government and emergency aid organizations when other communications infrastructures are overloaded, damaged or have completely failed." Locally, during earthquakes, fires, and harsh winter storms, amateur radio operators are typically dispatched to support hospitals, fire and police departments, emergency shelters, community groups and the Red Cross.

The Santa Cruz County ARES organization is organized by geographical region into 4 sections covering Santa Cruz, South Santa Cruz/Pajaro Valley, San

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Lorenzo Valley and Loma Prieta, respectively. ARES members volunteer their time and radio equipment on a routine basis to participate in various community events in the county. Providing communications support, a few of these events include a number of bicycle and runner races, long distance relays, horse show/endurance rides, the Santa Cruz County Fair, the Aptos Fire Works, and the Watsonville Air Show. ARES utilizes these events as part of their continuing training for emergency preparedness while at the same time serving the public.

The SET exercise is an activity of the Amateur Radio Relay League (ARRL), the national organization for amateur radio. Their web site address is <http://www.arrl.org>. Additional information about the Santa Cruz County ARES organization can be found at their web site, <http://ares.santa-cruz.ca.us>.

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