public service

BY BOB JOSUWEIT,* WA3PZO

Are You Ready for Alberto?

Experts Predict Another Bad Hurricane Season

It's the beginning of June. Many hams are making plans for Field Day or that vacation getaway, but if you are along the Atlantic or Gulf Coast of the United States, there is a chance that an unwelcome guest, named Alberto, may appear in your neighborhood sometime soon. Alberto is the first of the named storms for the 2006 Atlantic hurricane season, which begins June 1. Are your Field Day preparations solid enough to handle a real emergency? This month we'll take a look at what some of the experts are saying about this year's hurricane season and the preparations that are being made.

What the Experts Say

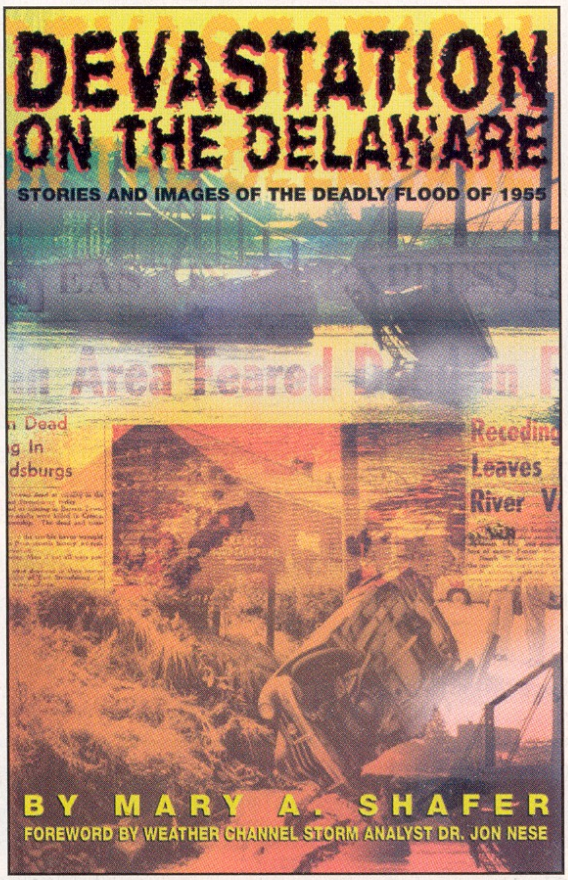
In April we turned our attention to noted scientist and hurricane forecaster Dr. William Grey of Colorado State University. Dr. Grey recently has turned *his* attention to global-warming issues, so the familiar Grey report will be issued by the team led by Phil Klotzbach. Grey says he will continue "to be closely involved in the issuing of these forecasts for the next few years."

According to their report, "information obtained through March 2006 continues to indicate that the 2006 Atlantic hurricane season will be much more active than the average 1950–2000 season. We estimate that 2006 will have about 9 hurricanes (average is 5.9), 17 named storms (average is 9.6), 85 named storm days (average is 49.1), 45 hurricane days (average is 24.5), 5 intense (Category 3-4-5) hurricanes (average is 2.3), and 13 intense hurricane days (average is 5.0)."

The report went on to say that there is an 81% probability that a major hurricane (Category 3 or above) will strike the U.S. and that the U.S. East Coast, including Florida, has a 61% chance of being hit by a major hurricane. The Gulf Coast of the U.S. is at a 47% risk and the Caribbean is at an "above-average major hurricane landfall risk."

Will History Repeat?

In 1955 hurricanes struck the central and Mid-Atlantic coasts of the United States. When comparing the mild winter that occurred then with this year's weather, the similarities raise concern as to whether a hurricane is due to hit somewhere between the Carolinas and New York. Mary Shafer, author of *Devastation on the Delaware,,* writes about a dozen days in February with temperatures above 50 degrees. March even had a 73-degree day mid-month. The second half of May would see high temperatures above 70 degrees. In August 1955 the Delaware River valley was hit with record-breaking rainfall from Hurricanes Connie and Diane. The heavy rains caused flooding on the Delaware and its tributaries. Reports indicated that in some areas water heights rose 30 feet in just 15 minutes.



Author Mary Shafer, a certified Skywarn weather spotter and a self-described "weather weenie," follows the true stories of survivors and eyewitnesses to bring the events to chilling life in Devastation on the Delaware. *For further information on her book and about the flood, visit <http://www.55flood.com>.*

The book covers the important role amateur radio and MARS played in providing emergency communications. Nine amateurs working at the Tobyhanna Signal Depot (PA) kept the MARS and club station, K3WCQ, on the air around the clock handling emergency messages. In the book, Shafer details the beginning of storm warnings and how the National Weather Service was upgraded following these deadly storms.

Field Day—This is a Drill

This year the Tampa Amateur Radio Club's ability to be called out in a time of emergency and deploy to a location away from the operation-center

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Names of 2006 Atlantic Hurricanes/Tropical Storms

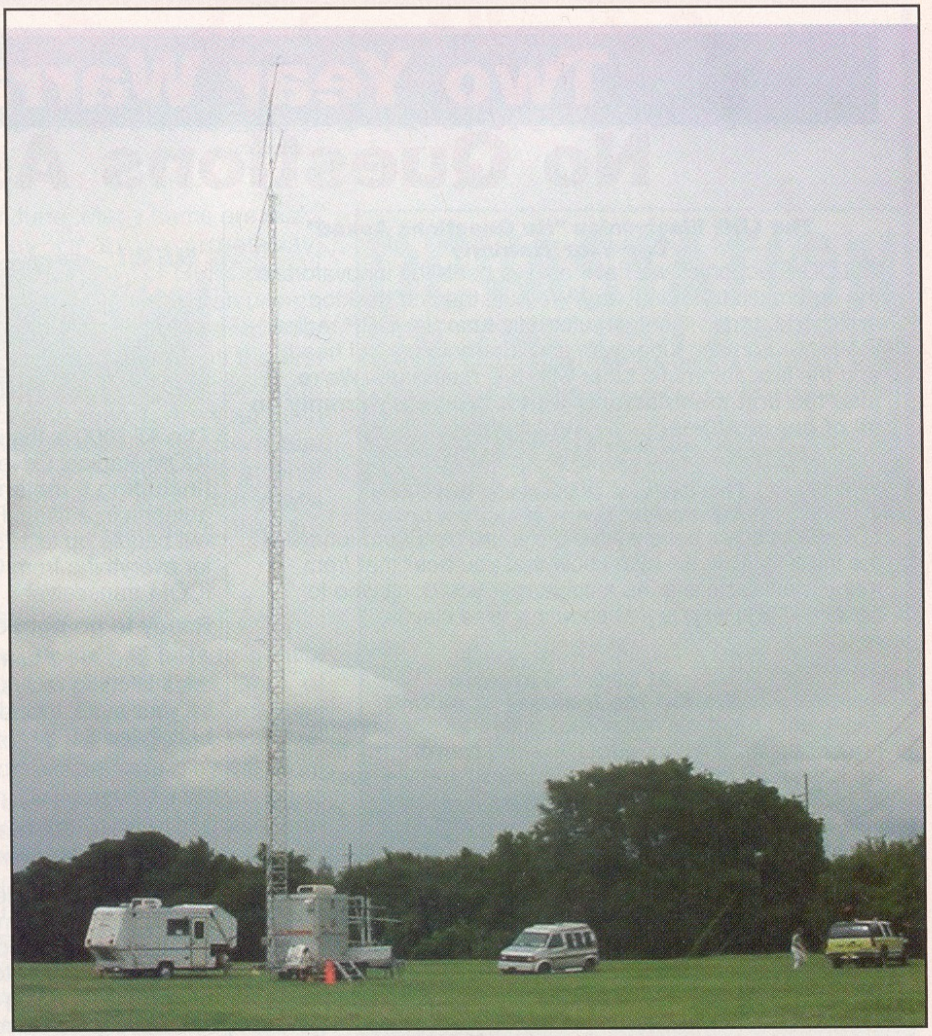
Alberto	Leslie
Beryl	Michael
Chris	Nadine
Debby	Oscar
Ernesto	Patty
Florence	Rafael
Gordon	Sandy
Helene	Tony
Isaac	Valerie
Joyce	William
Kirk	

(Courtesy National Hurricane Center)

Note: The World Meteorological Organization has "retired" the names of five storms that caused massive damage in 2005: Dennis, Katrina, Rita, Stan, and Wilma. After the 2004 hurricane season, Charley, Frances, Ivan, and Jeanne were also "retired" by the WMO.

grounds in an extremely short time frame will be tested. The exercise will show club members' capabilities, pre-planning skills, and ability to improvise.

The Tampa club had experience deploying members in response to Hurricane Katrina as well as other hurricanes that struck the Gulf Coast and Florida. During the Katrina deployment, members already in position along the Gulf had to radio back for another unit to bring antennas for a unit already on the scene.



The Tampa Amateur Radio Club goes all out for Field Day. Here they are set up at a remote location. (Photo courtesy of Jim Gerhart, WA3DIT)

This year club members will use Field Day to train and prepare for a call-out to deploy. The drill will be similar to what would happen if they were requested to offer communications assistance to a neighboring county in the event of emergency. This could include a hurricane response, flooding, and so on.

The exercise is presented in the hopes that other groups might use it as a training exercise for their club or emergency-preparedness group. Our thanks to the Tampa Amateur Radio Club for sharing their training exercise with us.

Tampa Amateur Radio Club 2006 Field Day Training Exercise

Preliminary activities (prior to June 23rd): Field Day crews will inventory required equipment at the clubhouse to ensure the necessary parts are on hand. No RF-related equipment can be utilized that is constructed prior to the notification of a potential need to deploy on June 23rd, 1900Z.

Step 1: The Hillsborough County Director of Emergency Management will notify the RACES Officer of a need for emergency communications. The RACES Officer will issue a callout on the 147.105 N4TP repeater at 1900Z Friday, June 23rd of a need to deploy. All interested TARC members should monitor the 147.105 repeater for further instructions and prepare to deploy when requested on the repeater.

Upon notification of a potential need to deploy, all TARC members planning to be deployed should muster at the clubhouse as needed to prepare to be deployed.

Step 2: The RACES Officer will announce on the 147.105 N4TP repeater, shortly after 1900Z, Friday, June 23rd , the decision to deploy the TARC club membership. At that time, the location of the deployment (Field Day) site will be announced and all members deploying should muster at the clubhouse to pick up the equipment they need. Between 1900Z Friday and Saturday, June 24th at 1800Z, all members should

Major Shakeup at MARS

With budgets being cut and leadership being trimmed, will MARS still be able to fulfill its obligations?

Two top MARS officials stepped down this spring. Robert Sutton, who served as Chief Army MARS for 16 years, stepped down due to illness, and Air Force Chief Ray Collins announced his retirement. Collins said, "It is with mixed emotions that I end a career that has spanned more than five decades." He cited "recent developments" and apparent criticism of MARS management from within the membership as reasons for his stepping down.

"It is my hope that Air Force MARS will continue to prosper, grow, and become an important entity recognized in the emergency communications arena." In the interim, Collins said, regional MARS directors will take over issuing and signing MARS licenses for new and renewing members, as well as many other duties. Collins noted that a moratorium on all equipment issues went into effect April 1 because that element of the MARS program cannot be delegated. Equipment requests already received will be processed, however. Action on SHARES applications also will be deferred. According to Collins's announcement, his position will remain vacant for a while.

Replacing Sutton as Chief Army MARS is Kathy Harrison. While not a ham radio operator, her immediate past position was Training Team Leader for the Network Enterprise Command/9th ASC G3 Training & Exercise Division. She previously served in MARS as Eastern Area Coordinator from 1995 to 2000.

In a prepared statement, Harrison said she is "hitting the ground running." She continued, "We will have many new challenges in the next year to meet our mission with directed budget cuts, but I feel our NETCOM/9TH ASC MARS staff and volunteer membership will meet those challenges."

MARS's Role Changing

Army MARS facilities have been steadily reduced over the last decade. Most recently, the MARS European Gateway Station which had provided a link with troops in Afghanistan and Iraq was closed. Previously, the three area commands (Eastern, Central, and Western) were reduced to two by merging the central area with its neighbors. Similar reorganizations have occurred in Navy MARS.

The cutbacks paralleled the replacement of MARSgram "morale and welfare traffic" by e-mail and satellite-phone connections but ignored the membership's drastically expanded mission of emergency communications backup. MARS members provided important communications during the 9/11 terrorist attacks and Hurricane Katrina. Many MARS members are wondering whether they will be able to meet their expanded role in emergency communications. *CQ* will keep an eye on this developing story.

gather, transport, and build the needed communications stations and prepare for operations by Saturday, June 24th at 1800Z .

As soon as the first club members arrive at the site, they should establish comms (HF and FM) back to the clubhouse. This link should remain active until 1800Z to assist other club members in locating the site, and to request needed equipment be brought in as required.

Note: Once members have left the muster area (clubhouse or home), they may NOT bring any additional RF related gear (radios, cables, connectors, antennas, or equipment required to support the stations). Any additional equipment brought in must be requested via communication back to the clubhouse, and brought with members who have not yet arrived at the deployment site.

To better simulate the longer drive times required in a real deployment, those leaving with additionally requested gear will only leave the muster area on the hour.

Step 3: Operations will commence at 1800Z on the 24th with whatever equipment is onsite and operational at that time. All stations MUST be operational by then. If the more substantial gear is not ready by then (COWS [Cell on Wheels], trailers, etc.), the station MUST be activated and operational via whatever means is available. This includes mobile stations, wire, back-packer gear, etc.

It is asked during the setup that each station team be prepared to operate mobile or via wire until their station is erected. During actual emergencies, the unexpected occurs and we must be prepared to deal with it.

Be prepared for the unexpected. There could be a late arriving COW, or possibly a missing coax, nut, washer, rotor control box, power cord, generator that won't start, beam part, antenna mast, etc. Expect something

to happen, and be prepared. Motto: A failure to plan is a plan to fail.

Note: In order to properly simulate a dispatch to a devastated area, once someone has left the clubhouse for the deploy site, NO items necessary for antennas, cables, or radios may be obtained by going back to the clubhouse or home for it. Remember you are operating in an area that is devastated and has very little, if any, infrastructure in operation.

Suggestion: Since we are going to utilize this as an Emergency Communications training exercise, it is suggested that each station be prepared and build an emergency half-wave dipole for use at their station. During this activity, be sure to have relatively new hams work on this pursuit under the guidance of a more experienced ham. In an actual emergency, you will likely operate from wire, not beams. The whole purpose of this exercise is to train and be better prepared....

Thanks to Larry Gispert, KR4X, Bill Bode, N4WEB, and Gary Sessums, KC5QCN, for supplying an exercise that for many of us will only be a drill, but for those who get deployed, a valuable experience.

Another Month....

Well, the 2006 hurricane season is here. Many of us will get an opportunity to practice emergency communications on Field Day. Others will have already been deployed at least once this year to supply emergency communications.

Each month we enjoy bringing your story to the attention of others. At the same time we appreciate getting feedback indicating that the column provides information that is helpful for a particular group. This month we want to thank Charlie Christmann, K5CEC, Jay Miller, WA5WHN, and the Tampa Amateur Radio Club for their input.

If you're out on Field Day, be at a safe location and also keep safety in mind when handling radios and power sources. We're there to train for communications, not to have to request the services of paramedics. Have a great time, and remember that "Field Day is Not Enough."

I hope to meet some of you at the Rochester, NY hamfest this month, too. Until next time... 73, Bob, WA3PZO

New Mexico Hams Get Emcomm Grant

At 9600 feet above sea level, Bill Kauffman, W5YEJ (NM ARRL SEC), works on the ground while Gary Bonebrake, W5BI, is on the tower of the Pajarito Mountain Repeater, which is owned by New Mexico Sandoval County Amateur Radio Emergency Service. (Photo courtesy of Jay Miller, WA5WHN)

When New Mexico Governor Bill Richardson signed the 2006 Budget Bill into law, it contained a $500,000 allocation to design, construct, and install a state-wide emergency communication network. Although the money will be allocated to the New Mexico Department of Public Safety, the purpose is to purchase amateur radio equipment for hams to use in a disaster. All of the equipment will be state owned. Preliminary plans for the state-purchased equipment call for the installation of strategically located, interlinked VHF and UHF repeaters. Both voice and digital packet data will flow across this network from one side of the state to the other.

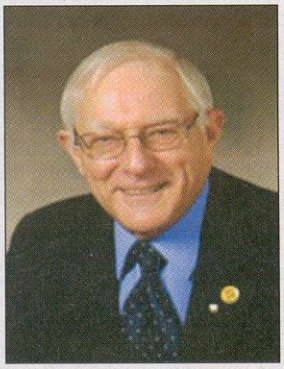
State Representative Tom Anderson, R-Bernalillo, who is a licensed amateur radio operator (KB5YSG,) sponsored the bill in the 2006 New Mexico legislative session. "After hurricane Katrina, we've seen first-hand just how valuable amateur radio can be in a disaster," Anderson said. "The Gulf Coast hurricanes destroyed communications infrastructure and overwhelmed government resources. It was amateur radio operators who helped to save the day by providing vital communications ... This money is an investment by New Mexico for the protection of lives, property, and public lands in the event of a catastrophe here."

The New Mexico Emergency Management Association, State Department of Homeland Security Director Tim Manning, and many of the amateur radio associations around the state worked very hard to make sure that the emergency network funding made it past the governor's desk. New Mexico is lucky in that hurricanes and tsunamis are not a threat to the state. However, the potential for disastrous wildfires, tornadoes, and flooding is ever-present. Because of the lack of moisture this winter, the forests and grasslands are extremely dry; hence, the 2006 fire season is predicted to be the worst in many years. Through the middle of March 2006, more than 100,000 acres had already been burned in a very early start to the fire season.

When major fires strike the state, hams are there alongside the emergency responders. This year, when range fires broke out near Hobbs and communications were needed, it was hams who provided that service. During the Cerro Grande Fire in 2000, more than 130 ham radio operators volunteered their time and personal equipment. Over the 14-day period they logged 2500 hours at 15 different locations, including Red Cross shelters and Emergency Operations Centers.

Profile: Rep. Tom Anderson, KB5YSG

New Mexico State Representative Tom Anderson, who has had an interest in amateur radio since age 9, holds a General Class amateur radio license. He retired to New Mexico from the U. S. Navy in 1977 after 20 years of service. Tom is a graduate of the USN Communications Officer's School, and the Navy also certified him as a "Naval Ordnance Engineer (Nuclear)." While in the Navy, Tom served a tour of duty as the Communications Officer of the *USS Bexar* (APA-237). He has been involved with the Sandoval County Amateur Radio Emergency Service for more than five years. Currently, Tom represents Bernalillo County's District 29 in the State House of Representatives.



New Mexico State Representative Tom Anderson, KB5YSG. (Courtesy of Rep. Anderson's office)