



SIERA BEACON



Carson Valley, NV

August 2021

"HAM radio is not a hobby. It's a way of life." - Carlos Beltran, XE1MW



Local Hams React to Tamarack Fire

When the Tamarack Fire flared up on July 16, local hams burned the NV7CV frequency with reports and descriptions of the quickly evolving situation around Markleeville, CA. Paul Gulbro, WA6EWV, switched from coordinator of final preparations for The Death Ride to IC for evacuating Death Ride volunteers, riders, and support crews. He didn't waste any time calling out on NV7CV, on the newly-installed Hawkins Peak repeater, and by phone to warn hams to either vacate or not deploy to their Death Ride positions. In an email to the Beacon, he said that "modified operational plans" would be needed for such events in the future. With the fire approaching both the Leviathan and Hawkins Peaks, Paul said he was keeping an eye on them from the git-go.

It was a squeaker for Leviathan as fire crews fought to keep the southern edge of the fire from advancing upon it, holding the northeast side of the mountain in containment while

the northwest side remained uncontained for several days. (Such information came from maps and briefings on the Tamarack Fire Information Facebook page.)

The fire spread with such ferocity that fire crews were overwhelmed. Alpine County government lost power at their facility and had to move operations to Douglas County. It took a couple of days to pull units from many other fires to fight Tamarack.



The fire actually started as a smoldering mass back in the wilderness on July 4th. When the Afternoon Zephyr picked up on the 16th, flames exploded and the fire grew to 6600 acres by the morning of the 17th. Markleeville, Grover Hot Springs, and all campgrounds were evacuated and Hwys 88, 89, and 4 were closed. The SIERA Facebook page posted updates from various sources, both official and ham related, including photos from Garth Grugal KC4M and Sue Cauhape KI7CTT. Many of these posts included maps of the growing fire as well as official updates and briefings from the newly-formed Facebook page, *Tamarack Fire Information*. Meanwhile, local hams transmitted eyewitness accounts, questions, and information.

(photo by Garth Grugal KC4M)

Jamie Dahl N6JFD, stationed at Hermit Valley for the Death Ride, moved to Mosquito Lakes to hang around and report any updates he witnessed. That evening, Karen KI6BPP traveled up to her post at Top of Monitor to bring down her trailer parked at the site. When she got there, she radioed that campers from along Hwy 4 had moved up there, taking advantage of the porta-potties, water, and pop-ups left behind by the Death Ride crews. The sky was clear at that time with smoke moving further to the northeast. It formed a long plume over the Pine Nuts and continued past Carson City. Bill Holmes K7DUY reported "cold ash" falling on his property in Ruhsenstroth. By morning, Brad Smith WT6B said that ash was all over everything. Garth and Sue kept up a running commentary of various reports, which included information about signing up for reverse 911 evacuation alerts from Douglas County emergency. Here's the link:

https://www.douglascountynv.gov/.../emergency_management

Ruhenstroth residents Chuck Gervie K7PGI and Bill Holmes commiserated with Ed Eggert K3VO in Chichester about all the air traffic buzzing over their houses. Bob Williams K7VOC went to lunch at the Tail Dragger and listened to the airport frequency. Planes were using both runways and helicopters were landing on the taxi lanes. "It was truly chaotic," Bob said. And the mayhem continued 24 hours a day as firefighters, both airborne and on the ground, struggled to contain the beast. It took over a week to actually start a ring around the parameter and still, by August 1, it was only 80 percent contained. By then, crews were busy with suppression repairs.

Chuck was especially upset about preparing to evacuate as he and Mary Lou had to pack up only six months prior during another emergency. Luckily, Ruhenstroth never had to follow the order, but Joel Parker KK6ZUP finally had to unplug and leave his home in Holbrook Highlands, which was a critical hot spot for firefighters throughout the incident. Finally, after six days hunkering down at the Comstock RV Park in Carson City, Joel returned to find his home still standing. He had two refrigerators and a freezer full of spoiled food to take to the Douglas County Disposal yard and a charred mess to clean

up. With power restored to his home, he was able to call in to the Watering Hole that Wednesday and report the good news. Congratulations, Joel, for your good fortune. That was a close one.

Diana Moore sent this comment in an email to the Beacon:

"Indeed, you and others we know monitoring the 33R frequency provided a great resource service to everyone...and this isn't the first time either!!!! ... There were key resources accurately and appropriately shared and driver's redirected etc. Behind the scenes stories no one knows about. And as Alpine County said in the early shelter briefing- their communication infrastructure was compromised. Yes...obvious from early on e.g. cell phone circuits were overwhelmed...with no info to be found on line. You also provided some important advice or attitude redirection for people when needed. Any way, again, what a great job and service you offered...once again!"

Thank you, Diana. And thank you Garth KC4M, Jim Sanders AG6IF, Bill Holmes K7DUY, Tom Tabacco KE7NCJ, Ed Terlau, KG7ZOP, Bill O'Brien K1AQB, Traci Mattice W7PSI, Don McRoberts W3DRM, Daryl Haines KG7HXD, and many, many others. Local hams made a great team in getting the information out to the public. It was a confusing time for all concered.

A Voice in the Wilderness

On July 21, a garbled signal crackled on the radio. After Brad WT6B told the station he was unable to hold the repeater, a clear signal finally came through. Mike N6GEM was calling from his Markleeville home! Sheriff's deputies were escorting residents to pick up needed items and pets. Mike said he just thought he'd call out and see if he could reach anyone. He reported that the maintenance buildings at Grover Hot Springs were burned, but the spring and the pool were okay. All the homes in Shay Creek survived as did all the homes in his neighborhood above the village, and the East Fork RV Park. He couldn't see directly into town because it was behind the tree line. He was sad to report that the landscape all around Markleeville and along Hwy 89 will not be the same for a long time, but he praised the firefighters for saving all the houses. He couldn't see any houses that were destroyed. Then he had to close down because he needed to meet the Sheriff at the library to return to Gardnerville. Thank you, Mike, for your report. We're glad you still have your home and your town.

For our August 7th Board and General meetings, we'll return to normal at the United Methodist Church in Gardnerville (1375 Centerville Rd.) with Ed Terlau presenting "Generators and Inverters, OH MY!" The Board meeting is at noon the General is at 1 p.m. Bring a mask.

Generator/Inverter Presentation, Ed Terlau KG7ZOP

- Discuss different generators for home and camping
- What does one really need? Loading
- Waveforms and Power Quality
- Cost estimates of machines and KWH
- Generator Questions?

- Inverter types and your UPS
- Summary, Questions, and Final Recommendations

Ed will bring various examples of inverters, wire, switches, generators, carburetor mods, meters, a transfer switch, and other stuff.



An Apology is Due

I apologize to Gerry Miller KJ7GEZ, the new coordinator of the Pony Express amateur radio team, for attributing a quote to him in the July 2021 Beacon that he claimed he never said nor would even think it. I took something I thought I heard him say at the May SIERA General Meeting, put quotes around it, and inserted it into the story. Not only was he maligned deeply, but it was sloppy and unprofessional journalism on my part. He was also upset that I didn't interview him for details beyond what I reported. He pointed out that I did a poor job of angling the story toward the hams, "who all gave generously of their time, money, sleep, scratched paint, hot/dusty conditions, and being away from family" to make the Pony Re-Ride a success.

In an effort to rectify this, here is a proper thank you for all the hams who worked the Pony Express Re-Ride this year.

A Big Thank You to Pony Express Hams

Thanks to all the hams who supported the Pony Express Re-Ride this year:

- Pony Coordinator Gerry Miller KJ7GEZ, who stepped in at a fairly late date to bring the whole ham response into being;
- Ken Head KE6FTM who comes all the way from Placerville and follows the Pony to Ibapah year after year;
- SIERA hams Jim Sanders AG6iF, John Abrott KD7NHC, Mel Hogan WA6EYD, Jim Marshall K6LR, Mike Sherrick NC7G, Natalie Sherrick N7JKM, Sheila Clement KA7AjQ, Leroy Clement KA7UIS, Daryl Haines KE7HXD, Ed Terlau KG7ZOP, Tom Tabacco KE7NCJ, Don McRoberts W3DRM, all of whom returned to their traditional posts in supporting the Re-Ride;
- Robert Nelson WA7PAD, and his crew from Las Vegas: George McCulley WA6TVD, Tom Resk KJ7TKR, Gary Lefler KG6ZLQ, who set up a relay station near Austin, NV;
- Greg Rossi KJ7GGVZ, Sharon Rossi, no call sign, Keith Gordon K7KSG, Craig McVeigh N0SCM, Lona McVeigh KM4DOE, Frank Kostelac N7ZEV, Linda Kostelac KC7IIT, Danny Conner W4MI, Les Robison N7GWT, Randy Larson N7NHP and other ENARS members who gave of their time and resources.

You do this event every year and make sure that the riders get through their sections safely. Without the hams, riders in areas where cell phone coverage is spotty at best would be in deep peril should they meet with an accident. Thank you to all of you.

By the way, because doing personal interviews is inconvenient for all concerned, I depend on email reports from hams telling their stories about their participation in events, the projects they're working on, and lists of items they have for sale. If you have

a story you'd like to have in the Beacon, please email me at: scauhape2020@protonmail.com. That way, I will avoid misinterpreting what you told me or not get the complete story down the way you want it. I know this sounds like a cop-out, but I've found that it helps me get the facts straight. This incident with Gerry isn't the first time I've screwed up.



Videos of the Ride:

Jim Sanders took this video of the mochila exchange near his home in Dayton, NV. Jim Marshall, Don McRoberts, and Tom Tobacco were following the Pony at that point along Hwy 50 between the State Park and the Ft. Churchill cutoff.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BQbdaN9po0U>

Also Garth Grugal KC4M posted this to Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/ga.gx.12/videos/4786314088052267>

Earthquake Em Comm

July 8 at around 4 p.m., a 5.9 pt earthquake hit 32km SWW of Smith Valley, according to the USGS Active Earthquake website:

<https://earthquake.usgs.gov/earthquakes/map/?extent=37.15156,-121.76147&extent=40.17048,-116.69678>

For the next few hours, local hams, especially Garth Grugal KC4M and Jim Sanders AG6if followed the progression of the quake as a string of tremors veered west to Dardanelle, but then Jim reported that the aftershocks were clustering around Coalville and Walker, just south of Topaz Lake. Eric Bero KI7WHH reported that Hwy. 395 closed at the California/Nevada border because of a rockslide in Walker Canyon. News reports the next day placed the epicenter at about six miles southwest of Walker, CA. Merchandise was thrown off shelves at local stores, but there was no heavy damage and Walker entrepreneurs were back to business as usual in a couple of hours.



You Really Gotta Wonder!

As earthquake chatter continued on the NV7CV repeater, Garth confessed that he was the cause of the earthquake swarm. He survived the Northridge earthquake in southern CA years ago. The night before that quake, he killed a gopher. The earthquake awoke him during the early morning hours. The night before this quake, he again caught and killed a gopher. And we all experienced the cummupance that the gopher's family took out on Garth this time around. But

from Carson Valley to Walker, CA? That's a big gopher colony, Garth.

Not too long after the shaking stopped, the next crisis d'jour cancelled the Death Ride, spewed thick smoke across our valley, and forced massive evacuations. As Sue Cauhape KI7CTT mused about a couple of Sunday drives she and husband, Jeff K7BCV, took

recently, it struck her that perhaps Garth's experience with gophers could be ominously similar to hers.

Late in June, Sue and Jeff drove north on Hwy 395 to Susanville, exploring some of the outlying neighborhoods and enjoying the beautiful sunny day. Pastures still held that springtime verdance and wildflowers bedecked the roadside. The following week, the Beckworth Fire devoured much of northern Sierra Valley and threatened those same grazing lands Sue and Jeff viewed.

The Thursday before the Death Ride, Sue and Jeff drove over Monitor Pass to find where their support post would be. The air was fresh and clean. Forests and meadows were green and lush. And Markleeville hummed with tourists and even a few bicyclists pumping over the pass before the main event. That Friday, as Paul Gulbro WE6EWV guided last minute preparations for the Ride from his TARA station at Turtle Rock Park, a smoke plume from the back woods warned everyone of the coming disaster. Riders, tourists, and Paul had to dash quickly from the area as the fire advanced in the stiff winds that carried it across the mountain ranges south of Carson Valley.

While Sue and Jeff aren't superstitious people by any means, Sue can't help but wonder, like Garth, "was it something we did?"

Rumor re: 147.24

There was a rumor going around that the TARA 147.240 repeater was down. Paul Gulbro, owner of the repeater, reported that it was never off the air. What went down was the EchoLink. He needs to reload the image memory card for the system. Apparently there was a "major power line glitch" at his QTH.

Meanwhile, his new repeater on Hawkins Peak (147.85MHz) is being rewired for future use and will have a new PL. He'll let us know when it's up and available. Thanks you, Paul, for your efforts to enlarge our range.

Guenther Noder KUSB



Guenther Noder's daughter, Linda, passed along some news about her father in an email to the Beacon. "He took a turn for the worse a few weeks ago. He fell a few times, has severe sudden onset of weakness, and ended up in a wheelchair. Eventually he went to Renown for four days for testing and is now in rehab undergoing intensive PT and OT to try to get some of his strength back. He'll be out of commission for checking into the net for a while."

Linda also expressed a need for someone to be a care provider after he returns to The Chateau. If anyone is interested in helping or knows someone who would want to do this, please contact Linda at: erstati@aol. She will pay for those services.

Where are all the Hams?

Ever wonder how many hams there are in the Carson Valley area? Well, here's a map that you can download: <https://haminfo.tetranz.com/map>

Short Wave Video Series

Keifer Bly KJ7LYB, who tunes into the Watering Hole on EchoLink, has produced a series of short videos where you can hear strange signals on Short Wave radio:

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL9LiN2Y2IKDGk-6-7L8UwwwEIZkA0hFJK>

QSO Today Virtual Ham Expo

More than 80 internationally known ham radio "luminaries" will speak during this virtual Hamvention **Aug. 14-15**. Also, you can order kits that will be delivered in time to participate in virtual kit building workshops. What's really cool is that for the following month, you can listen to presentations you missed during the live event. Check out this link for details and registration: <https://www.qsotodayhamexpo.com/>

Fourth Saturday Breakfasts are Back

May's fourth Saturday officially re-opened our monthly breakfasts at the Tail Dragger Café at the Minden Airport with an earnest group of about a dozen diners. It was good to SEE people again, in-person and maskless, although with the new restrictions coming out late in July, bring a mask. There's still some social distancing at the café, but we were able to drag tables together for our group. Join SIERA for the Fourth Saturday Breakfast at 8 a.m. any month of the year. Let's rebuild the raucous group that used to descend upon the Tail Dragger in pre-COVID days.

DCART News

Monday, July 19, DCART held a ZOOM meeting to introduce David O'Hara KB7DWO, the new Douglas and Alpine County ARES Coordinator. He outlined plans for offering classes in ICS, DMR, and other emergency communications modes to assist 911 Dispatch. Hoping to lure more people and retain present members of DCART, he plans to arrange more exercises and SETs.

Diana Moore KJ6DVY, who works with the local tribal groups, suggested reaching out to these and other agencies in the area, such as CERT, to build cooperation and strengthen DCART's ability to respond to disasters. To facilitate this integration, David stressed the importance of educating County officials of how amateur radio operators can contribute to field operations beyond assisting Dispatch. When the Death Ride was being organized, he asked DCART members to commit to shifts in the W7SR station to assist DR, but they refused the help. Also, DCART was not deployed for communications during the Tamarack Fire operation.

He also hoped that DCART will be able to find a venue for meeting in person for the August meeting. He had offered his home for the July meeting, but because of the smoke, it was impossible to hold it outside there. Thus, the ZOOM meeting returned DCART to

regular monthly meetings rather than participating in the regular net on third Mondays. And because of the new mask mandates, ZOOM meetings will continue.

The Watering Hole, Wednesdays at 7:30 p.m. on 147.330/240mh. Questions and Answers pertaining to Amateur Radio.

Forty Ways to Sound Like a Lid by Rusty Bumpers

Jim Sanders AG6IF gave us all quite a chuckle by reading some "LID" descriptions from this article written in 1993 by Rusty Bumpers. Do any of these fit?

https://www.qsl.net/kb8qeu/How_to_sound_like_a_LID.html

Note: This "Rusty Bumpers" column is from the May 1993 issue of "Solid Copy," the Richmond (VA) Amateur Telecommunications Society's monthly newsletter. Most of the examples used by "Rusty" have happened on the local repeaters exactly as written, although some of the items are exaggerated slightly for humor. (Step 35 was written before the 1993 "no business" rule change.)

Also part of the Watering Hole discussion was 'where to find repairs for ICOM radios.' Eham.com has been an often-referred resource for anything ham radio.

Nets Available in Carson Valley and Beyond:

The SNARS Noon Net daily on 147.150.

Daily Carson & Eagle Valley net, 6 p.m. on 28.435 MHz USB

BARC Nightly Net, 8 pm on 146.655MHz pl 131.8, ragchew and pre-check-in at 7:30 p.m.

DCART Net, Mondays at 6:30 p.m. on the following schedule: The first two Mondays on 147.330 linked with 147.240. The fourth (and fifth) Monday(s) on 147.270 to be linked with 147.240

TARA Net, Mondays at 7:30 p.m. on 147.240.

SIERA VHF/HF Nets, Tuesdays: 7:30 p.m. on 147.330/240MHz; 8 p.m. on 3982KHz.

Plumas County Net, Tuesdays at 7:30 p.m., on 145.470MHz.

W7DEM Net, Wednesdays at 9 a.m., various frequencies: Eagle Ridge 442.225 T156.7, Carson DEM 442.900 T156.7, Lake Tahoe 442.300 T156.7, and Smith Valley 440.050 T 94.8. (Refer to Nov. 2020 Beacon for details.)

Carson ARES Net: 9-10 a.m., check in anytime in that hour on 147.270mh PL156.7. Includes VHF

CARS Fusion Net, Wednesdays at 7 p.m. The local FUSION repeater is at 442.300.

Brad Smith's (WT6B) Watering Hole, Wednesdays at 7:30 p.m. on 147.330, "questions and answers pertaining to amateur radio."

SKYWARN at 7 p.m. Wednesdays.

NV ARES Net Thursdays at 7 p.m. Echolink conf server NV-GATE 152566 IRLP Western Reflector Ch8:9258

SNARS Hospital Net, Fridays at 10:00 a.m. on 147.030 or 147.150
(SNARS Linked Repeaters: <https://snars.org>)

RARA Rural Amateur Radio Assn., Fridays at 8 p.m. on 147.180 pl 123

ARES HF Net, Saturdays at 7 a.m. on 3965kHz (+or - QRM).

RARA, Rural Amateur Radio Association, Saturdays 7:30 a.m. on 3965kHz

New Hams Net, Sundays at 1 p.m. 146.760 pl 123

National Traffic Service Net, Sundays at 6:15 p.m. on 3945kHz

Don't forget to check out the SIERA website on www.cvhams.com for lots of information and reference material. This includes a comprehensive list of nets throughout the area.



Resources for Taking the Licensing Exams During the COVID Era

SNARS schedules exam sessions at the REOC in Reno. Just click on this link for more information and registration: <https://snars.org/exams/>

Good online resources for learning amateur radio:

eHam.com has study questions and quizzes

hamstudy.org is highly recommended by SIERA members because it helps you understand the whys and wherefores of amateur radio instead of encouraging you to just memorize answers.

There is also a wide selection of licensing books on Amazon. One of the more expensive as well as the best resource is the *ARRL General License Manual*.

Ham Test Online <https://www.hamradiolicenseexam.com/study.jsp>

If you want a copy of the Treasurer's Report, email Debbie Williams N7XYL at n7xyl@arrl.net or any of the Board members.

Remember to send your photos and news for the Beacon and the SIERA Facebook page to scauhape2020@protonmail.com