

## Field Day Safety

By KI5UAJ

Winter Field Day is coming up soon. With so many Amateurs involved with this event, I would like to do a brief review regarding Field Day safety. At no extra cost, I have included a few Pro Tips.

Many of us are going to deploy together to the park site in Granger for Winter Field Day 2024. We will set up antennas or towers and operate in an environment that is entirely different than air conditioned and heated radio shacks. Above and beyond the normal outdoor hazards of wind, rain and cold, we will also be assembling and rigging antennas and towers.

Some of us working together at one location and some members and visitors to tonight's broadcast may be having Winter Field Day from home. This information can be helpful to anyone setting up their gear for a weekend of field day fun.

Here are a few tips for being safe during this event:

**Weather** – The weather forecast for Field Day weekend is still a bit out of range to be determined. If it mimics last year's field day weather, it will be cold and damp, with some looming thunderstorms and lightning in the area. Hence, Winter Field Day. Dress in layers and accordingly. Even sitting in a drafty garage or in a pop up tent in the backyard can cause you to get a chill if your not bundled up enough.

Don't forget to bring some rain gear, maybe even a rainsuit or poncho. An umbrella or other rain gear may help keep you dry.

**Cold** – The lower temperatures and dampness can pose a significant threat if you are outside for extended periods of time. Everyone should

bring plenty of water to stay hydrated. Stay in the protection of the campsites or trailers as much as possible and monitor the other folks on your team for weather related symptoms. We should never compromise our personal health and safety during an event like this. We are here to have fun and build comradery, not cause each other to be in unbearable conditions.

Site Placement – If it is at all possible, the operating stations should be indoors or in covered areas to keep the operators dry and warmer during times of contesting . Before installing and operating stations under trees, be sure to check that the trees are healthy and dead branches will not fall and injure an operator or damage equipment.

All antennas, towers and masts should be well away from power lines. They should be positioned so that if they happen to fall, in any direction, then they will never touch a power line or fall over anywhere near the wife's GMC pickup truck.

Operating stations should also be positioned outside the fall zone of any tower or mast.

Erecting Towers and Masts – Many of us will be erecting antennas and portable structures to hold antennas. Safety should always be the 1st consideration. Unless you are actively participating in erecting a tower or mast you should stay well out of the area. Same for being at home, a well meaning grandchild getting caught up in some of your radials you have placed around the yard can be a disaster.

Listen carefully to the leader of the work crew for instructions. Erecting and taking down a tower or tall mast is one of the most dangerous activities during Field Day.

If attending an organized group Winter Field Day, attend the safety briefings that take place. A lot of useful information is shared, and it will

be helpful in the event of an unforeseen storm or medical attention is needed.

Exertion – Field Day set up can be tiring and many heavy items will need to be lifted. Always ask for help to carry large items. Never carry heavy items alone.

PRO TIP! If your wife is trying to carry that heavy ice chest full of your favorite adult beverages out to the garage where you are setting up your command post for the weekend, give her a hand and offer her one of those cold ones... she might come back out later with a hot pocket or a pizza for you. YOU are welcome for that tip!

Always take frequent rest breaks and don't forget to drink plenty of water.

Generators – Never refuel a portable generator when it is running. Gasoline fumes can ignite if spilled on a hot generator. Losing a few minutes of operating time is better than a being burned in a gasoline fire. If gas is spilled while refueling then move the generator well away from the spill and make sure any gasoline spilled on the generator has been removed before starting it.

Always be sure to store fuel containers far away from the generator.

Site Safety – Field Day always has a proliferation of wires, cords and ropes. Each of these poses a hazard. All tent and antenna guy lines should be conspicuously marked to reduce this hazard.

Any cables running across a walkway should be covered to help eliminate trip hazards. Neon green tape can be placed along concrete floors to hold down coax and extension cords around the campsite or in the temporary command post you have set up in the dining room at home. This helps make this more visible.

PRO TIP! Letting the wife/base commander know that this is only temporary and is to ensure her safety that she not trip and fall. This is not a good time to mention how much money you spent over the summer time buying ham equipment to prepare for this glorious event and that you would be real mad if it got busted up. Duct tape is cheap insurance that your coax isn't gonna get snagged by the dogs paws or by the Sasquatch- in- law that's rooting around your garage fridge for food or trying to fish a cold one out of the bottom of your cooler.

RF – Part of our training as Amateur Radio operators involved RF Safety. It is our job to make sure we keep our operators and the public a safe distance from our antennas. Never transmit until your antenna is installed in a safe location to reduce RF exposure.

In all of our Field Day activities our #1 consideration should be safety. If we are gathered as a group withing a group or running from our garage or makeshift campsite in the woods. It is important to practice our radio field skills and learning how to do so safely is an important part of this process.

I hope that all of us have a safe and fun Field Day. Play nice on the radio and enjoy yourselves.

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-Rudy