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Rapid Deployment Amateur Radio - RaDAR

Introduction

Rapid Deployment Amateur Radio, often referred to by its acronym RaDAR, is a concept for operating an amateur radio station anywhere, anytime and even in adverse environmental conditions.

This concept supports the amateur radio service's emergency communications mandate.

Where the concept originated

Radio amateurs from South Africa came up with a concept to build a comfortable portable radio station capable of operating for extended periods while walking or stationary after walking to a specified site.

The idea was discussed in an open forum and ideas gleaned from many of the local radio amateurs, some prototyping was done and the "Shack in a Sack" (SiaS) concept was born.

In August 2009, RaDAR - Rapid Deployment Amateur Radio, was launched a more professional version of the SiaS concept.

Natural evolution

Rapid deployment of an amateur radio stations was the goal of RaDAR. Initially it was a requirement to walk at least one kilometre carrying all station equipment, antennas and logistics to the operating position. This was no different to any other similar outdoor amateur radio activity.

The need to be different

There was no time limit set for an initial deployment so the essence of deploying quickly was not quite there, it was simply too easy.

Some experiments were done and RaDAR once again evolved into a more refined idea by having to move station for a required distance depending on the mode of transport after every five contacts. No other amateur radio activity in the world works this way. RaDAR is different.

The concept adapted

Rapid deployment and indeed rapid redeployment is what makes RaDAR different otherwise it would be just the same as all the others nothing different to what has been done for a 100 years.

RaDAR has evolved into something where movements are the highlight. It is therefore more than just making QSOs, it's a challenge to decide quickly where and how to set up an effective station, proving it works by making 5 contacts; packing up making sure nothing is left behind, moving and doing it all over again.

Sure it's a different challenge including repeated physical activity. It's also a method of learning, practising and finding what works and what does not.

Modes of communication

RaDAR promotes the use of voice, digital, CW, HF, point to point VHF and UHF communications and even satellite communications. The use of terrestrial repeaters is however not allowed, for contest purposes at least.

The future of RaDAR

Many looking to practice amateur radio in different ways will see it's value and the extreme fun it can be. The highlight is the "moving" aspect of RaDAR which is what makes RaDAR different to all other amateur radio activities.

A slogan was appropriately recently developed, "RaDAR daring to be different".

A few comments from RaDAR operators worldwide:

"I love the challenge of the RaDAR contest because it's different ... It keeps me on my toes!"

"Every time I set up outdoors, I am practicing for RaDAR."

"Some runners may not run a marathon each weekend but they train with the marathon in mind. I actually find the moving fun in itself."

"Whilst I am not a true RaDAR operator in the sense of moving after every 5 contacts, I like field operating and if conditions are favourable for me to keep moving, then I will do so."

"RADAR is like a parachute, if it is not there when you need it, the chances that you will ever need it again is very slim! Radar concept plays a vital role in times of disaster and during Search and Rescue operations!"

Conclusion

The author is aware of some interesting articles soon in publications like CQ Magazine and QRP ARCI written by independent RaDAR enthusiasts. See "Out and About With QRP" in the Spring 2014 issue of The QRP Quarterly, www.qrparci.org. There are two Facebook groups "RaDAR - South Africa" and "RaDAR – International".