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Fire and Rescue honors 'hams' MORE INFO

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by Hugh Muir
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The Stafford Fire & Rescue Department has honored 31 county volunteer ham radio operators for their assistance over the past year, particularly during the tornado strike in southern Stafford in May.

Assistant Fire Chief and Emergency Manager Gerald Jaskulski presented certificates of appreciation Aug. 16 during an award gathering at Perkins Restaurant, on Warrenton Road near Interstate 95. He praised the amateur operators for relaying information, particularly when other communications were hampered.

Eleven of the hams received recognition for assisting in spreading the word on the Skywarn Radio Net about possible tornados in the Stafford area during the night of May 8. Twelve were honored for their response after the south Stafford tornado touched down on May 9.

The tornado struck the England Run neighborhood. There were no fatalities or serious injuries, but there was extensive home property damage.

Particular recognition was given to David Collins who worked more than 12 hours on the May 8 Skywarn alert and then on May 9 as a link for the American Red Cross between Spotsylvania and southern Stafford. Seven hams were recognized for being on standby during the tornado aftermath.

Two other hams, Sig Gates and Camden Bullock, were honored for a separate incident on Aug. 21, 2007, when they served as a communication links between county emergency units and the victims of a car accident on State Route 612, where no cell phone coverage was available.

Stafford's Volunteer Emergency Communications Team currently has 49 members, the largest such team in a district of seven counties. Those interested in participating in amateur radio should contact Curt Bartholomew, the group's emergency coordinator, at N3
Email: GQ@cox.net.

The organization points out that the term "amateur" is not a reflection on the skills of the participants, which are often quite professional. Rather, "amateur" indicates that ham activities are not permitted for commercial or moneymaking purposes.

Once all hams had to be proficient in Morse code for a license, although most broadcasts are now by voice. On Feb. 23, 2007, the Federal Communications Commission phased out this requirement.

An estimated 6 million people worldwide are regularly involved with amateur radio. The origin of the name "ham" is



Sigfried Gates receives his certificate from Stafford Assistant Fire & Rescue Chief Gerald Jaskulski.

not known, but it has been used almost since amateur radio began in the early 1900s.

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Honored at the recent gathering:

For their work during the May 8 Skywarn Net: Mike (K5JMP), Carlos (KE4ZN), Steve (W4SHG), Tom (N4NW), Rick (W1DFH), Nolan (KD41QD), Mark (K4RFP), Matt (KG4PDQ), Emmett (K3EP), Chad (W1CAR), and David (N4WDC).

After the tornado struck: David (N4WDC), Tom (AK1E), Dar (KD4CVC), Gordon (WB4LNT), Jack (KB4XF), Carolyn (AC4SK), Alexander (KI4ZFR), Bart (N3GQ), Dee (K3KAT), Emmett (K4ZRL), David (NO3B), and George (WA4CRL).

Standby for the tornado: Camden (N2CLB), Robert (KD4WUO), Mike (K4GMH), Tom (AD5QA), Harry (KI4JVE), Andy (KJ4CCU), and John (W4IM).

Auto accident response: Sig (KG4UCM) and Camden (N2CLB).

--Hugh Muir

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