

# Lighthouse Lovers and Radio Buffs Talk to Each Other (Alcona County Review, August 14, 2002)

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*Special to the Review*

There is a dedicated group of people around the world who share two unusual interests -- they're amateur radio operators and they like lighthouses.

The Amateur Radio Lighthouse Society will be very busy this weekend, sending and receiving calls to and from lighthouses and lightships all around the globe.

The special event is International Lighthouse/Lightship Weekend, which was established to promote public awareness of the role that lighthouses, lightships and amateur radio operators have played in assisting and maintaining safety at sea. The weekend activities will include interactive public displays of amateur (often referred to as "ham") radio equipment and methods and live contacts with other operators at lighthouses around the world.

Saturday, August 17 is the annual celebration of Historical Day at Sturgeon Point sponsored by the Alcona Historical Society. In conjunction with a variety of other activities, the society will play host to the Alcona Amateur Radio Group whose members will be participating in this international event. Local amateur radio operators and members of a club from West Bloomfield, Mich. will establish a temporary radio station adjacent to the Sturgeon Point Lighthouse. All weekend they will be trying to contact as many other lighthouses as possible.

During the 2001 event, 354 amateur radio stations were established at lighthouses and lightships in over 46 countries. The event is not a contest or competition. It is designed for amateur radio operators to have fun while creating more public awareness of the connections among, and international aspects of, amateur radio, lighthouses and lightships.

The Alcona Amateur Radio Group is a non-profit, public service organization which was established in 1997 to meet emergency communications needs of the county. It reports to and works cooperatively with the Alcona County Emergency Management Office. The group

has grown from 12 members to more than 50 active amateurs, most of whom are new licensees.

They are involved in all aspects of emergency and community communication services. Their operating expenses are paid by donations from community members and by various county governmental agencies.

Some of their recent projects have included back-up communication for inoperative county systems due to power outages, National Weather Service Skywarn Spotter Network, notification of nursing homes, parks and schools during emergencies, electronics classes and testing for Alcona Community Schools students, search and rescue assistance, and assistance to the U.S. Coast Guard and Alcona County Sheriff's Marine Division. It has also set up special event stations at various community festivals, provided support at the county-wide clean-up days and provided communications at the Alcona County Fair.

In addition to sending and receiving calls from the temporary station at Sturgeon Point on Saturday, the group will have the Alcona County Emergency Communications Trailer and Command Unit on site for the public to view. This 19-foot, tandem axle trailer has been a major accomplishment for the group. It is fully insulated, with heating and air conditioning, complete with generators and a separate command/conference room.

The trailer project and basic equipment was completed in August 2000. Phase II -- which includes the interior furnishings and advanced communications equipment -- became operational in June 2001. The trailer has been used at a number of community events and in simulated emergency training exercises.

There will also be a display of antique and other interesting early radio equipment set up for public viewing. The activities at Historical Day at Sturgeon Point will begin at 10 a.m. and will conclude at 4 p.m. The amateur radio operators will continue their calls again on Sunday.