

# RADIO DAYS

## SEA-PAC, PACIFIC NORTHWEST'S LARGEST HAM RADIO CONVENTION, DIALS INTO SEASIDE JUNE 1–3

By **DAN HAAG**  
FOR COAST WEEKEND

**S**EA-PAC, the Pacific Northwest's largest convention of independent ham radio operators, arrives at the Seaside Convention Center for the weekend of Friday, June 1, through Sunday, June 3.

Now entering its 36th year, the event features exhibits, seminars, a flea market and family entertainment. It's also an annual opportunity for ham radio operators from around the region to gather and talk shop. And it's a chance for novices to learn from the pros and get a glimpse into the fascinating, communicative world of ham radio.

Far from an introverted bunch, independent operators enjoy meeting new people and experimenting with the latest trends in their field.

"Really, we're just a bunch of folks who like playing with radios," SEA-PAC Chairman Delvin Bunton said.

Like many people who become interested in ham radio, Bunton caught the bug in his youth. A desire to travel the world without leaving home held great appeal, especially in the years before the cell phone age.

"I had always dreamed about being able to talk to somebody in other parts of the world," he said.

After becoming a licensed operator as an adult, Bunton's main drive for being an operator stemmed from his interest in emergency communication.

"In many emergencies, communication systems for fire and police departments can get knocked out," he said, pointing specifically to the Great Coastal Gale of 2007, a winter wind storm that put much of the North Coast in the dark. "Amateur radio operators use their own equipment to support the county."



DANNY MILLER PHOTO

Richard Lang prepares to use his soldering iron while working on a transceiver kit during the DIY Workshop at the SEA-PAC Ham Radio Convention in 2016.

Bunton added that Oregon has been particularly aggressive in coordinating independent operators with government and emergency services.

"Along the coastal counties of Oregon, the number of Ham operators per thousand is much higher than inland," he said.

Before someone can become an op-

erator, they must first become licensed.

The Federal Communication Commission regulates the amateur band in order to prevent operators from interfering with their neighbors, something that could quickly escalate beyond mere nuisance.

"You may screw up other people's radio or Wi-Fi services," Bunton said.

"For example, if you lived near the Coast Guard and messed with their frequencies, they'd probably get pretty put out, especially when lives are on the line."

### Ham-ing it up

There are three levels of ham radio operator licenses: technician, gener-