

LAKE STEVENS -- When people across the country turned their attention to TV screens broadcasting news from Haiti after the quake, Frank Remington turned on his amateur radio. A network providing emergency communications for the Salvation Army called out for volunteers to help handle emergency messages from the country. Remington, 68, a skilled radio operator with more than 40 years of experience, was up for the challenge. Meanwhile, voices were coming through, making contact with Remington. A priest off the coast of Haiti. A search and rescue team from South Africa whose plane just landed in Port-Au-Prince. A doctor who was looking for an armed guard to help a nurse deliver insulin for a diabetic patient. Staying tuned in from his Lake Stevens home, the retired Boeing worker wondered what would happen if the unspeakable happened right here in Snohomish County. "It makes you wonder, how prepared are we," he said. "When all else fails, amateur radio operators are going to be the ones to supply communications." Remington is part of a specially trained group that works directly with the county's Department of Emergency Management to help with search and rescue operations and other missions in case of disaster. Few people know that hospitals and city halls are equipped with a radio, he said. It can be a lifeline in an emergency. Remington has a generator and his car is equipped with a radio transmitter. A special license plate bears his call sign, a unique code issued to ham radio operators. If a crisis hits home, he will be ready. Amateur radio operators, or hams, have to be licensed with the Federal Communications Commission. Remington first got his license in 1961. As a young boy, he lived next door to a ham and became interested in the hobby.

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