

RAYNET – What is RAYNET?

RAYNET is a registered charity organisation and is a British National voluntary communications service provided by Amateur Radio operators and the word RAYNET stands for Radio Amateurs Emergency Network. Although you do not need to be an Amateur Radio Operator or have a licence to be a member of a local RAYNET Group. There are jobs that need doing in any society that are not at the face of the society but none the less are just – if not more – as important for the society to function properly.

A brief description of how RAYNET got started.

In 1953 after a severe flooding that caused damage to communication cables and networks that hit the East Coast of the UK it seemed necessary that there should be an organisation that provides a communications back-up for the community. By using a resource that already existed, that of Amateur Radio operators, it was just a matter of time before an organisation was created called RAEN now of course know as RAYNET was created.

The Role of RAYNET in the community.

The primary role of RAYNET is to provide communications in times of an emergency and possible disaster. The Ofcom Licence dictates who may call on Radio Amateurs' services. However, this does not mean that we cannot help other organisations as long as one of the defined User Services approves the event and the list is as follows;-

- △ Any UK Police force
- △ Fire & Rescue Service
- △ HM Coastguard
- △ Local Authority Emergency Planning Officers
- △ Any health authority
- △ Any government department
- △ British Red Cross
- △ St John Ambulance
- △ St Andrew's Ambulance Association
- △ WRVS
- △ Salvation Army
- △ Any 'Public Utility'. This can include BT, Gas and Water suppliers etc.

What can RAYNET do?

We are able to provide a wide range of communications systems such as point-to-point links, base stations talking to mobile and/or portable units, radio coverage of a wide area, or a particular course or route. We can also provide mobile asset tracking using APRS. We also provide communications for local community events, such as marathon runs, cycle rides/races etc. Some areas do not have a good mobile phone coverage, so this is where RAYNET can help by putting an operator into the area or setting up a repeater network that can link back to a control point wherever it's required.

RAYNET are available 24/7 and the most Groups can be up and running in a matter of minutes as base stations to pass those messages through that could save lives.

Your local RAYNET Group.

The local RAYNET Group is called Hasting and Rother RAYNET. The Group consist of, currently, 16 members not all are licensed Amateurs. They meet most months at the St. Helens Methodist Church meeting rooms in Ore.

The Group have many events to attend this year not least The Hastings Half Marathon, The Hastings Pram race and The Hastings Carnival. Other events that the Group have been involved in over the years are Jack in the Green, local Bike Rides, Hastings Bonfire, Bexhill Carnival, Battle Fun Run, Battle Bonfire and The Battle Re-enactment and many more besides.

All these events are used as practice for the day that the Group may be called on to provide communications for any disaster or emergency. The events are all run professionally with that thought in mind.

The Group is not a business - it is run by volunteers. We do not get paid but we try to cover our costs where we can so all donations are greatly received. There is no cost to the volunteers other than their time and you are not required to attend all events, just what you can manage to do. Jackets and tabards are supplied. If you have an Amateur Radio licence you probably already have a 2m/70cm hand held, which in most cases is enough, or even a mobile and base rig. If you don't have a licence then there are other jobs in the Group that you could do. If you want a licence we can arrange for a tutor to assist you in that area as well.

Operation Snowman: The latest call out for Hastings and Rother RAYNET Group

On the 12th of March the Group were called to assist with transport of Doctors, Nurses and patients to and from the Conquest Hospital due to the snow. Whilst the Group could only supply one 4x4 – Martin M0MJU - to assist, there were others monitoring the frequency ready to stand in and pass those messages that were vital to the operation. In all there were 5 passengers taken to or from the Conquest from as far as Rye and Catsfield. The Group worked closely with Eastbourne and Wealden RAYNET Group over the day and a successful outcome was achieved.

The Hasting and Rother RAYNET Group are moving forward. It is a slow process but we are making inroads. We meet regularly with other RAYNET Groups, Local Event Organisers, Local Council and Emergency Planning Officers to fly our flag. The Group would like more events to cover but of course we need **MORE MEMBERS**, 4x4 owners, operators and back room staff.

If you would like to know more about RAYNET and your local Group, and think that you could help out, then please contact Steve M0SSR by email or phone. Email m0ssr@aol.com
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