

Amateur Repeaters Fall Victim to Washington Wildfire

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Two Central Washington repeaters, owned and operated by the **Lake Chelan Amateur Radio Club**, have been destroyed by one of the wildfires raging in that state. The co-located machines, one on 2 meters and one on 6 meters, were sited on Slide Ridge near Manson, Washington, in Chelan County. On August 27, the First Creek Fire completely leveled the building housing the repeaters. Scorched antennas and support structures are still standing but are likely beyond repair. The club's Roger Odorizzi, W7CH, said the repeaters had been offline for several days.

"We knew the fire had wiped out the power going to our site, but we hoped for the best, that our mountaintop building was possibly spared," he said. "Now we have confirmation this was not the outcome." Odorizzi said the area remains closed, and the club likely will not have access to it "for a long time."

The club's Ken Rau, K7YR, said the loss, in addition to the building, included the two repeaters, duplexers and antennas. The repeaters provided coverage in North Central Washington. Rau told ARRL that it's unlikely that the building housing the repeaters would be replaced. It once housed radio and TV broadcast translators, most no longer in use. Topography is also a factor. "This is a mountain site — 4900 feet above mean sea level — with power lines that were installed on a very steep slope."

Rau said a lot of fire remains in the area and predicted that access to the repeater site probably would be limited for several weeks and that the site could remain off limits until first snowfall.

The First Creek Fire covers more than 6000 acres and has been threatening hundreds of homes, destroying a dozen houses along with seven "other structures," according to the National Interagency Fire Center. It is only 25 percent contained.



The Slide Ridge repeater site on August 27, 2015 (Courtesy of Ken Rau, K7YR)