



NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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HAMS HELP KIDS TALK TO SANTA AT NORTH POLE

Boise, Idaho (December 11, 2006) – Just about everyone knows that Santa lives in a magical village at the North Pole, and that the North Pole is very far away. There are no telephones at Santa's Village, so for generations, kids have been writing to tell Santa what they want for Christmas. But what if you're in a hospital and you want to talk directly to Santa at his North Pole workshop?

On the morning of December 11, Treasure Valley Ham Radio Operators will set up a radio station at St. Luke's Mountain States Tumor Institute (MSTI) so that young patients can talk to Santa at the North Pole using the magic of radio. In the afternoon, the Hams will move the station to St. Luke's Children's Hospital so patients in the Pediatric Unit may also talk with Santa.

There is real Christmas magic in this annual event! Radio signals carrying Santa's voice crackle with static. And if you listen very carefully, you just might hear workshop elves making toys in the background. Children talking with Santa by radio are amazed because he seems to know so much about them personally. It's not unusual for Santa to call the family pet by name, or to know the names of brothers and sisters, best friends, and favorite teachers. And Santa really does seem to know if they have been naughty or nice.

While they are on the radio, kids ask Santa a lot of questions about the elves and the North Pole. But "the number one question, year after year, is about Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer," said John Cline, Media Relations Representative for Santa's Workshop and RACES, the Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service. "We have to be very careful," Cline said. "Occasionally, a rather cantankerous elf named Orville gets on the radio while Santa is away from the microphone. Orville is supposed to be outside taking care of the reindeer, but he would rather be inside where it's warm, drinking hot chocolate. Elf Orville draws the kids into his conspiracy to stay inside where it's warm."

RACES is a volunteer organization of the Idaho Bureau of Homeland Security. Throughout the year, volunteer Amateur Radio Operators prepare to respond to major emergencies and disasters that disrupt public safety communications. But at Christmas time, they use their equipment to help kids talk with Santa at the North Pole. Cline says that setting up radio equipment at MSTI and St. Luke's Hospital requires the same skills needed to establish emergency communications during a disaster. Radio operators and support personnel have a number of real challenges to overcome. After all, "the North Pole is very far away," Cline said.

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