



Squelch Tales



Newsletter from the Merrymeeting Amateur Radio Association for August 2011



Information from KD0FNR

Hi, I just saw the MERRYMEETING ARA on the arrl.org web site and I noticed that you offer help for newcomers. I've written a set of free online FCC ham radio license exam practice tests at:

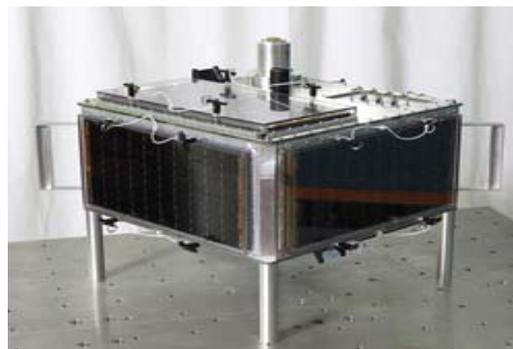
<http://copaseticflows.appspot.com/hamtest> that I'm hoping hams will find useful. There are randomly generated practice exams for all three license classes in the U.S. as well as for the Canadian and New Zealand ham radio exams.

Online help topics are provided for many of the exam questions. The list of help topics is constantly growing as I get time to add to it. Users can track their test scores, as well as a count of how many of the question pool questions they've practiced over time. In addition to random practice exams, users can automatically practice exams with questions they haven't seen yet in each sub-element group, or questions they haven't gotten correct in each sub-element group. There are also embeddable versions of the practice exams that you can add to your clubs own web pages. These are available at: <http://goo.gl/OC1b7>

Please let me know if you find it handy, or if you think of any ways to make it better. Also, if you think it's useful, please feel free to add a link to the practice exams at your site. Thanks!

73 de KD0FNR Hamilton Carter

<http://copaseticflows.appspot.com/examhelp/acf.html>



Astronauts On Board ISS Get ARISSat-1 Ready for Launch

The ARISSat-1 satellite (also known as KEDR) has spent several months aboard the International Space Station waiting for deployment by crew. According to the AMSAT News Service, that day is arriving soon.

AMSAT's Gould Smith, WA4SXM, stated, "As of July 22 we are looking at an August 3, 2011 date for EVA 29 and the ARISSat-1/KEDR deployment, subject to change due to ISS schedules. The preliminary Russian EVA-29 timeline shows the ARISSat/KEDR deployment is the first task of the EVA, so it will occur fairly soon after the EVA begins."

The ARISSat-1/KEDR battery is scheduled to be charged 24 hours beginning 24 July at 09:45 UTC. A test of the satellite inside the ISS is scheduled to run from 1900 UTC on Saturday, July 30 and turned off at 14:30 UTC on July 31.



During the test and upon deployment, ARISSat-1 will be active on the following frequencies and modes:

145.950 MHz FM Downlink: FM transmissions will cycle between a voice ID as RS01S, select telemetry values, 24 international greeting messages in 15 languages, and SSTV images.

435 MHz - 145 MHz Linear Transponder: The linear transponder will operate in Mode U/V (70 cm up, 2m down). It is a 16 kHz wide inverting passband and the convention will be to transmit LSB on the 435 MHz uplink and receive USB on the 145 MHz downlink.

145.919 MHz/145.939 MHz CW Beacons: The CW transmissions will be call sign ID RS01S, select telemetry, and call signs of people actively involved with the ARISS program.

145.920 MHz SSB BPSK-1000 Telemetry: The BPSK transmissions will feature a new 1kBPSK protocol developed by Phil Karn, KA9Q. When the CW2 beacon on 145.919 MHz is active this indicates that the BPSK-1000 format is being transmitted. If the CW1 beacon on 145.939 MHz is active this the backup of BPSK-400 format is being transmitted. --AMSAT News Service



K1GDI provides Hex Beam instruction at July meeting

At the July monthly meeting George Szadis, K1GDI who purchased a DX Engineering 5-band Hex Beam at the Dayton Hamvention

provided a demonstration on how the antenna (kit) goes together. With two other MARA members in attendance who will be assembling their Hex Beam shortly, his demo was listened to intensely by them. George's good humor and presentation style was a real plus. In addition George provided photos of the group of Maine hams that made the pilgrimage to the nations largest hamfest and flea market. Well done George....



ARRL Official Observers Team with FCC to Solve Rogue Keyer Problem on 17 Meters

From ARRL HQ 07/26/2011

On July 15, Walt Bilous, K3DQB -- an Official Observer ([OO](#)) in ARRL's Eastern Pennsylvania Section -- notified ARRL Headquarters of a keyer continuously sending a series of dits on 18.0855 MHz. According to ARRL Field Regulatory Correspondent Chuck Skolaut, K0BOG, Bilous kept hearing the dits throughout the night.



Skolaut asked Bilous to alert other OOs to monitor the frequency, but the signal was proving hard to locate via direction finding due to changing propagation and fading conditions on the band. "We alerted OOs across the country to monitor and collect

additional information for us including bearings and signal strength reports,” Skolaut said. “We had a great response from quite a number of Official Observers.” But the signal was still proving elusive, so Skolaut contacted the FCC for assistance.

“By Monday evening, July 18, the FCC indicated that the dits were originating in California, ruling out speculation that it might even be coming from outside the United States,” Skolaut explained. “On Tuesday, we received word that the FCC had pinpointed the exact location of the dits. They visited the radio amateur’s home, found the cause and the transmitter was immediately shut off.” According to the FCC, an amateur in Northern California had unintentionally left his keyboard too close to his keyer paddle, and the paddle somehow got pushed against the keyboard, making it send continuous dits.

“We appreciate the efforts of all the involved Official Observers and the prompt follow up by the FCC in pinpointing the source of the transmissions and getting them stopped to prevent further interference on the band,” Skolaut said. “Since signals on 17 meters may travel long distances, we received a number of reports from stations overseas who supplied signal strength reports along with bearings. This incident prompts a very important reminder to all amateurs to always be vigilant when operating and if leaving your operating position, to turn off or secure your transmitters to avoid situations like this from happening.”



146.61 Auburn Repeater back up and running

Tom, KE1I, has the Auburn, Me Repeater 146.61 (no pl) back up as July 29, 2011.



Sights & Sounds

A new [WRTC-2014 video](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yNyMA MjRNuA) by professional videographer James 9V1YC. If you are asked, "What is WRTC and why should I support it?" you could offer this video (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yNyMA MjRNuA>) as a good start! The high quality of video production and running time of just under 5 minutes makes it ideal for use at radio club meetings, for introducing amateur radio to young people, or promoting ham radio at public events.

Your MARA is in the process of assisting the WRTC-2014 organizing committee by facilitating contacts with the officials at the Brunswick Executive Airport (old BNAS). That site is being looked at as a possible site for the WRTC-2014 Radio Sport event. Stay tuned.



RTTY RKKY RNDP

We have an excellent opportunity coming up to capitalize on the computer savvy of new and potential hams! The upcoming [ARRL Rookie Roundup](#) (August 21st, 1800-2400 UTC) will be conducted using RTTY for the first time. While watching the St Charles Amateur Radio Club's excellent Field Day GOTA station coach, Jeff ACØSC, lead new hams through the paces of making PSK31 QSOs I realized that digital operation is probably the most comfortable and thus the most attractive for someone just getting involved with ham radio.

Why not phone? After all, everybody can talk, right? Well, sure, but making a phone QSO is a brand-new and awfully unfamiliar process for non-hams. Aside from mike fright, general nervousness and self-consciousness, there is all that QRN and QRM to contend with, the weird (to rookies)

contact protocol and exchange, the hard-to-understand (again, to rookies) filtered and low-fidelity voice, and so forth. All of these make it hard for a rookie to jump right in with confidence.

On the other hand, digital operating lowers the psychological barriers to entry quite a bit (so to speak). No more scratchy voices - on RTTY, all you have to do is just line up the signal peaks or get the ellipses balanced on the display and the software does the rest. No one will ever hear your nervous voice and the keyboard doesn't care if your fingers are a little uncertain. The interface is completely familiar to most people - keyboard and mouse and computer software. The contact protocol is easy to learn without all the other simultaneous distractions - select the colored call sign, press the macro key, wait for the response, accept the information and press another macro key. Presto - you just made a contest QSO! As the photo shows, even my mom made a digital contact under Jeff's patient tutelage. In the past 40 years, I could no more get her to make a voice contact than jump off the high dive - fuggidaboutit! Yet there she was putting a WBØHSI contact in the log!

So here's your assignment - get together with the Field Day GOTA coach and reach out to one or two of the most interested rookies. Invite them over to your station for a Sunday afternoon of operating - for an hour or the whole contest. If you don't have a GOTA log to work from, contact the local general-purpose radio club and find those new hams. Get them on the air! The Rookie Roundup is a low-pressure way to show how simple contacts can be made using skills they may already have in an environment with which they are already familiar.

What's that - your station isn't set up for RTTY? This is great opportunity for YOU, then, isn't it? There is plenty of time to put together or buy a simple audio interface. Many late-model radios even have direct data

interfaces to simplify the connection even further. Just do an on-line search for your radio model and RTTY or digital modes - you may be surprised at how simple it can be. I am a poster boy for this - I've dabbled in RTTY and PSK31, but having made the invitation, I am now going to have my station set up for low-power RTTY and PSK31 operation by the 21st. (I may even get my mom back over here...)

What's that - your contest software isn't set up for RTTY? Another great opportunity! The latest word is that the N1MM software package will have a version that supports RTTY for the Rookie Roundup in time for the contest. Other contest packages support RTTY and you can operate the contest using a "General QSO" configuration in most cases. Another option is to create a free account on [In The Log](#) and enter your contact information separately from whatever digital mode software you use. As an added bonus, stations using In The Log can see the scoring totals of all other Rookie Roundup participants using In The Log, too!

The biggest name in RTTY contesting, [Don AA5AU](#) is thoroughly supportive of the RTTY Rookie Roundup as is CQ WW DX Contest manager, Ed WØYK. They know how much fun digital mode contesting is and how easy it is to get going...once you get started.

So what's holding you back? Recruit a rookie or two, get your station configured, clear off the operating desk and have some summertime fun. Who knows, you might find yourself jumping into an RTTY contest or two yourself? There are more "Dig" checks in the [Contest Corral's](#) mode column every month!

73, Ward NØAX

