



Squelch Tales



Newsletter from the Merrymeeting Amateur Radio Association for September 2011



Tour De Merrymeeting Bay a Success

TOPSHAM: The morning of Saturday August 13th had the crack team of MARA communicators gather at the town recreation field on Foreside Road to do their part in providing bike route supervision and communications as they had done for the past many years.

As in past years the route from Topsham around Merrymeeting Bay through Bowdoin, Bowdoinham, Richmond, Dresden, Woolwich, Bath, and Brunswick went off without a hitch. It was good practice to keep the MARA and ARES team's communications skills up to snuff and as anticipated the team proved to be real pros.

The Event officials want to thank Harry (N1TTT), Don (KA1WAL), John (K1JJS), Bruce (W1ZE), Marjorie (KX1I) and Jim (N1IPA) for their wonderful support.



Special Event Station K5B – Plano Balloon Festival

September 16, 2011 – September 18, 2011 – Plano, Texas Celebrating the 31st annual Plano Balloon Festival,

members of the Plano Amateur Radio Klub (PARK) and area amateur radio operators will be QRV as K5B during the festival. Frequencies plus or minus QRM: 7.255, 14.255, 21.355 and via Echolink at K5PRK. QSL with SASE to K5PRK .

More information formation will be available on our website at:

www.k5prk.net/k5b.



Vanity Call Sign Fee to Go Up in September

On August 10, the FCC announced via a Final Rule in the Federal Register that the cost of an Amateur Radio vanity call sign will increase 90 cents, from \$13.30 to \$14.20. The new fees take effect 30 days after publication, making September 9, 2011, the first day the new fee is in effect. Earlier this year, the FCC released a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking and Order (NPRM), seeking to raise the fee for Amateur Radio vanity call signs.

"The Commission tries to keep the regulatory fee for Vanity call signs as minimal as possible," explained the FCC in its Final Rule. "Between FY 2007 and FY 2010, the regulatory fee for Vanity call signs increased from

\$1.17 per year to \$1.33 per year, an increase of \$0.16 per year or \$1.60 over a ten-year license period. We do not believe this increase is inequitable, and the Commission will continue its efforts to keep this fee as minimal as possible. The fees that are collected from Vanity call signs are used to offset the cost of monitoring and researching new call sign requests to prevent the issuance of duplicate call signs."

The vanity call sign fee has fluctuated over the 14 years of the current program -- from a low of \$11.70 in 2007 to a high of \$70 as first proposed in the FCC's 1994 Report and Order. In FY 2011, the FCC expects to grant 14,600 vanity call signs, bringing in \$207,320 from the vanity call sign program, and looks to recover a total of \$336,599,048 in fees from all the Services that it regulates.

The vanity call sign regulatory fee is payable not only when applying for a new vanity call sign, but also upon renewing a vanity call sign for a new term. The first vanity call sign licenses issued under the current Amateur Radio vanity call sign program that began in 1996 came up for renewal five years ago. The FCC is authorized by the Communications Act of 1934, As Amended; to collect vanity call sign fees to recover the costs associated with that program.



Kindle users rejoice

Information from ARRL Newington, CT.

For those of you that have fallen in love with the e-book called Kandle by Amazon you will be happy to know that the ARRL's Technician, General and Extra Q&A is now available from Amazon.com for the Kindle. This e-book is your authoritative guide to every question in the Technician (element-2), General (Element- 3) and Extra (Element-4) question pools

-- everything you need to pass your Technician and General class license exams. When you use ARRL's Q&A, you can be sure that you are using



the best way to review for the exam questions. The e-book includes every question -- and answer -- in the Technician and General class question pool, utilizing a multiple-choice format similar to the one on the actual exam.

Kindle is shaped much like a book, with a paper-like screen that displays text and pictures. You do not need a Kindle to download and purchase the General Q&A: those who have the Kindle application installed on their [Apple iPhone iPod touch](#), Android smartphone -- or even on their computer -- can download the book for use on these devices. Each version of the *Q&A* lets you review questions

and answers from that element's entire question pool so you can pass your exam. The [Tech Q&A](#), [General Q&A](#) and [Extra Q&A](#) are available from Amazon.com for \$9.99 each. The soft cover version of the new General Q&A is also [available](#) for \$17.95. Upgrade and enjoy more frequency privileges today.



EC-001 Field Instructors Needed

Field Instructors are volunteers who commit their time and expertise to offer classroom instruction of the ARRL Amateur Radio Emergency Communications Course. Volunteer instructors may now conduct classroom instruction covering the material in the new *Introduction to Emergency Communication* course.

Field Instructors must be registered with the ARRL Continuing Education Program and must meet certain requirements:

- Completion of EC-001 (old or new version)
- Completion of FEMA IS-100, 200, 700 and 800
- Must be 18 years of age with Technician or higher license
- ARRL member
- Recommendation of Section Manager

If you are interested in serving as an ARRL Field Instructor for EC-001 you may submit an application [here](#).

ARRL and California Researchers Team Up to End 12 Meter Interference

ARRL HQ 08/15/2011

After the **resolution of the recent 60 meter CODAR situation on the East Coast**, the ARRL noted an earlier report by John Terrell, N6LN, of Palos Verdes, California. Terrell described CODAR activity <http://www.codar.com/> on the 12 meter band, from 24.93 to 25.058 MHz. Since it appeared likely it was originating on the West Coast -- possibly near Orange Section Official Observer Coordinator Dan Welch, W6DFW -- ARRL Field and Regulatory Correspondent Chuck Skolaut, K0BOG, contacted Welch for assistance.

With assistance from Richard Saunders, K6RBS -- an Official Observer from Mission Viejo, California -- Welch determined the CODAR transmissions were originating from an installation operated by the University of Southern California. "Dan contacted Burt Jones, a Professor of Research in the Marine Environmental Biology Department, and Lab Manager Matthew Ragan," Skolaut explained. "The folks at USC were glad to cooperate and they promptly moved the transmitter frequency out of the amateur band."

Jones, a former radio amateur, told the ARRL that he was glad that he

was notified of the problem and was happy that it could be resolved quickly. "In many ways, we are on the same team, in the sense of using the radio technology to address multiple kinds of issues," he said. "The ARRL and the Amateur Radio community provide a substantial benefit to society that I think the general public doesn't fully appreciate. Our HF radar network serves multiple issues, from understanding basic science to facilitating search and rescue operations, as well as managing responses to environmental disasters, such as last year's Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico."



It's Back to School Time...for Ham Radio, too!

By Dan Romanchik, KB6NU

As I write this, it's about 85 degrees, and I'm sitting on the patio of a cottage overlooking Elk Lake in northern Michigan. This idyllic spot is about as far away from school as you can get. And yet, in less than a month,

kids will be back in school, and if kids are going to be back in school, why not ham radio operators?

The fall is a good time to begin teaching a new group of Technicians. I favor the "Tech in a Day" or "Ham Cram" type of class. This type of class focuses on teaching students the answers to questions on the test rather than the material itself.

There's a lot of controversy about this, and many decry this method of teaching, but I think the best way to learn about ham radio is by actually doing it, and you can't do if you don't have a license. Besides, how much more instruction will students actually get in a more traditional eight-week or ten-week course, maybe 16 hours? Will those 16 hours make that much of a difference?

For the sake of argument, let's say that you've decided to offer a one-day Tech class. Now what? Well, the first thing you have to do is to find a place to teach it. Possible sites include your local public library, a township hall, a community college, perhaps even your church.

Now that you have the place, you need to find some students. Your local emergency-management group would be a good place to start. Also, make sure a notice gets published in your amateur radio club's newsletter. Chances are most of the subscribers already have licenses, but they may have friends or relatives who would be interested. Also, make sure the

class gets listed in the upcoming events section of local newspapers or magazines.

Once people start signing up, you should suggest that they either purchase a study guide or download my free study guide

(www.kb6nu.com/tech-manual).

Because I use my study guide when teaching the class, I always advise them to get a copy, but if you'll be using other materials, then your advice may differ.

I counsel the students to read through my study guide a few times and take some online practice tests before coming to class. That will make them familiar with the material, especially areas they may be weak in or have questions about. By bringing those questions to class, we can address those areas in a little more depth, which will, hopefully, give them the help they need to pass the test.

The class itself is six hours long, running from 9am to 3pm, at which time we give them the test. This is not a lot of time for the amount of material I have to cover, so I move along at a pretty brisk pace. I concentrate on giving them the answers, but with enough context to that it all makes sense.

OK, let's say your class was wildly successful, and you now have a group of newly-minted Techs. What do you do now?

Well, you might consider offering some short sessions on what ham radio operators do--Ham Radio 101, so to speak. The topics could include how to choose your first radio, the basics of FM repeater and net operation, and building your first antenna (say a 2m ground plane). They'll be more enthusiastic about these classes now that they actually have a license.

It might also be a good idea to schedule a General Class license course for sometime shortly after the Tech class. This will encourage them to upgrade while they are enthusiastic about the hobby.

I hope that this has encouraged you to offer some ham radio courses of your own. If you have any questions, feel free to e-mail me at cwgeek@kb6nu.com or phone me at 734-930-6564. Good luck, and let me know how your classes turn out.

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When not preparing for his next ham radio class, Dan publishes the "No-Nonsense" study guides for the Technician and General Class license exams. Free versions and print version are available from his website at www.kb6nu.com/tech-manual. E-book versions are available for the Kindle and devices that run the Kindle app on Amazon.Com and for the Nook on BarnesandNoble.Com.

