SQUELCH TALES

NEWSLETTER FROM THE MERRYMEETING AMATEUR RADIO ASSOCIATION FOR APRIL 2018

MAINE PREPARES

Announcement by Marjorie Turner, KX1I

The **Tenth Annual Maine Partners in Emergency Preparedness Conference** will take place at the Augusta Civic Center on April 24th & 25th.

This conference is FREE for CERT and ARES and most likely anyone who is interested in Emergency Preparedness.

Here is the tentative agenda:

http://www.maine.gov/mema/prepare/conference

To register, go to:

https://www.eventbrite.com/e/maine-partners-in-emergency-preparedness-conference-2018-registration-38875078406

Here is another link, just in case: http://www.maine.gov/mema/prepare/conference/

I recommend attending at least one day at Augusta Civic Center.

- **Choose the day with more interesting topics. See the exhibits & outside demos which are cool.**
- **Did I mention free donuts & coffee for continental breakfast, and excellent buffet lunch with desert?**
- **New MARA members, it is easy to become a member of ARES, … i.e. whisper and interest and they will become part of the Amateur Radio Emergency Service.**
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73, *Marjorie*, KX1I

News From Newington

ARRL Requests Expanded HF Privileges for Technician Licensees

02/28/2018

ARRL has asked the FCC to expand HF privileges for Technician licensees to include limited phone privileges on 75, 40, and 15 meters, plus RTTY and digital mode privileges on 80, 40, 15, and 10 meters. The FCC has not yet invited public comment on the proposals, which stem from recommendations put forth by the ARRL Board of Directors' Entry-Level License Committee, which explored various initiatives and gauged member opinions in 2016 and 2017.

"This action will enhance the available license operating privileges in what has become the principal entry-level license class in the Amateur Service," ARRL said in its *Petition*. "It will attract more newcomers to Amateur Radio, it will result in increased retention of licensees

who hold Technician Class licenses, and it will provide an improved incentive for entry-level licensees to increase technical self-training and pursue higher license class achievement and development of communications skills."

Specifically, ARRL proposes to provide Technician licensees, present and future, with phone privileges at 3.900 to 4.000 MHz, 7.225 to 7.300 MHz, and 21.350 to 21.450 MHz, plus RTTY and digital privileges in current Technician allocations on 80, 40, 15, and 10 meters. The ARRL petition points out the explosion in popularity of various digital modes over the past 2 decades. Under the ARRL plan, the maximum HF power level for Technician operators would remain at 200 W PEP. The few remaining Novice licensees would gain no new privileges under the League's proposal.

ARRL's petition points to the need for compelling incentives not only to become a radio amateur in the first place, but then to upgrade and further develop skills. Demographic and technological changes call for a "periodic rebalancing" between those two objectives, the League maintains.

"There has not been such a rebalancing in many years," ARRL said in its petition. "It is time to do that now." The FCC has not assessed entry-level operating privileges since 2005.

The Entry-Level License Committee offered very specific, data- and survey-supported findings about growth in Amateur Radio and its place in the advanced technological demographic that includes individuals younger than 30. It received significant input from ARRL members via more than 8,000 survey responses.

"The Committee's analysis noted that today, Amateur Radio exists among many more modes of communication than it did half a century ago, or even 20 years ago," ARRL said in its petition.

Now numbering some 378,000, Technician licensees comprise more than half of the US Amateur Radio population. ARRL said that after 17 years of experience with the current Technician license as the gateway to Amateur Radio, it's urgent to make it more attractive to newcomers, in part to improve upon science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education "that inescapably accompanies a healthy, growing Amateur Radio Service," ARRL asserted.

ARRL said its proposal is critical to developing improved operating skills, increasing emergency communication participation, improving technical self-training, and boosting overall growth in the Amateur Service, which has remained nearly inert at about 1% per year.

The Entry-Level License Committee determined that the current Technician class question pool already covers far more material than necessary for an entry-level exam to validate expanded privileges. ARRL told the FCC that it would continue to refine examination preparation and training materials aimed at STEM topics, increase outreach and recruitment, work with Amateur Radio clubs, and encourage educational institutions to utilize Amateur Radio in STEM and other experiential learning programs.

"ARRL requests that the Commission become a partner in this effort to promote Amateur Radio as a public benefit by making the very nominal changes proposed herein in the Technician class license operating privileges," the petition concluded.

Editors Opinion: ***I don't want to sound like an old conservative fuddy-duddy, but in my opinion this proposal is poorly thought out. Technician class already has phone privileges on the 10 meter band. It is not difficult to obtain a General Class ticket these days because the difficulty factor between the Technician and General class exam is not much, just a few more rules and frequencies to remember. A few days of study should get the average Tech Class holder an upgrade and in turn even more privileges in the HF ham spectrum. This proposal is like todays pee-wee baseball where everyone gets a trophy even if you do not know how to play the game. W1ZE***

ABC/1-2 RF Coax Relay for HF

By Bruce Randall, W1ZE

Like some of you out there, I have several HF transceivers that I use on the air on a regular basis. My main Transceiver is an ICOM IC-746PRO 1.8 to 148 MHz. I also have an IC-706MK2g, FT-450d and an FT-897d feeding various antennas.

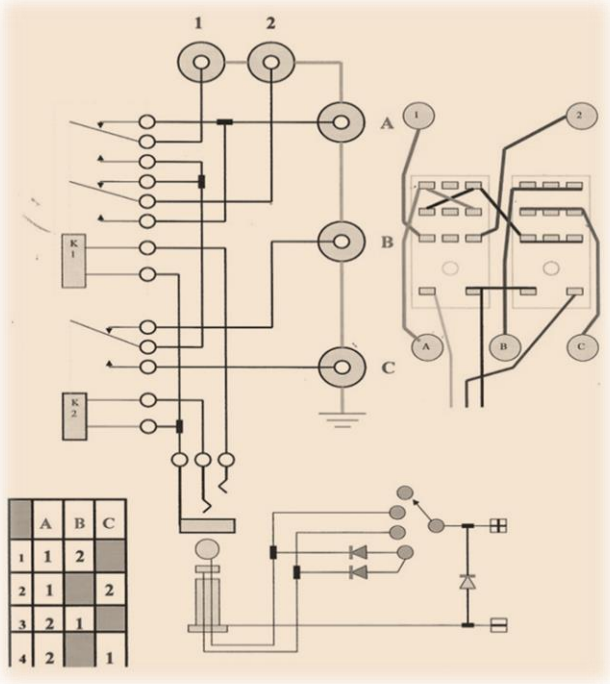
I have been known to have one rig on one band and another on another band and mode.

To switch back and forth between the various radios and antenna matching and feed system would take a lot of manual coax switches and the cost of good multi output coax switch could be a bit costly. Since I have a modest electronics parts supply I have collected over the years I was able to gather enough components together to build a remotely switched ABC/1-2 coax transfer relay box.

I built a coax relay box that allows me antenna vs rig versatility. This is accomplished with the use of just two DPDT relays.

The hart of the relay box are two Potter-Broomfield 12 VDC 10-amp relays. These are available from various sources and suppliers. But I have seen many of them at ham flea markets. I was able to find a supply of them at NEARfest for a couple bucks each. However, all the parts needed to build the relay box are available on line, but I recommend you try the flea markets first to save a few bucks. My relay will switch 3 inputs to two outputs and vice-versa

The following is a schematic of the box I assembled:



The remote control in the above diagram is a SP4T rotary switch available online for a fewer bucks. Again, this is another item to look for at the fleas.

For the internal RF wiring I used No.14 AWG solid copper, scrapped out of some leftover house Romex cable. I used a mini (1/8") stereo plug and jack to connect the control head wiring to the relay box. I had some 2-conductor with shield wire in my junk box that works well and keeps the RF off the control wires. I did ground the relay box to the station ground bus and that is recommended for your installation also. The three diodes are 1N4001 silicone type but any of the 1N400x that will handle a half-amp or more will work.

If you keep the internal RF wiring between the relays and SO-239 receptacles as short as possible you should not experience a big impedance bump in your transmission lines. On the HF bands, I found that the SWR did not change or was very small from 1.8 to 30 MHz. Even on 50 MHz the SWR change was so small as not to make much of a difference in performance. (1.15:1 vs. 1:1).

73, Bruce

NEAR-Fest 2018

May 4 & 5, 2018

The NEAR-Fest is an international event run by and for all radio hobbyists and enthusiasts, including "hams", short-wave listeners, scanner buffs, vintage/antique radio fans, etc. NEAR-Fest is held twice annually, spring and fall, rain or shine, at the Deerfield Fairgrounds, Deerfield NH beginning on Friday at 0900 and ends Saturday at 1500 hours.

Admission is $10. Persons under 18 and over 80 are admitted free of charge upon presentation of government-issued ID. Inside parking is available for $10 and includes a "reasonable amount of flea market selling space" for PRIVATE INDIVIDUALS selling their own personal property. Commercial vendors must register and pay applicable fees. If you are wondering if you are a "commercial vendor" you probably are. One complimentary inside commercial space is available for clubs, estates and other "non-profit organizations" on an "as available" basis.

Overnight camping, trailer and RV hookups are available. Three food vendors provide meals and snacks at reasonable prices. The Deerfield Community Church ladies serve up a breakfast that has to be consumed to be believed. Angelino's offers hamburgers, steak, sausage submarines and other great "fair food" specialities and Patty's Polish Kitchen menu features wonderful "Mitteleuropa" cuisine. No one goes hungry at NEAR-Fest. We are extremely proud of the high quality of food that these vendors offer our guests while they are at the 'Fester.

NEAR-Fest typically attracts attendees from the six New England states, NY, NJ, PA, MD and other states as well as from Quebec, Ontario, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia in Canada. Some attendees travel great distances; one gentleman from Los Angeles has attended fifteen events and in 2010 one radio amateur traveled from Greece to join us for the fun.

The program of activities and events at NEAR-Fest is extensive; a huge outdoor electronic flea market, three buildings full of commercial vendors, forums, technical seminars and symposia, demonstrations, exhibits, displays, licensing examinations, special events radio stations, a "jam session", good food, fellowship, fun and general mishigoss. NEAR-Fest is the largest event of its kind in the Northeast and has once been described as the "Woodstock of Amateur Radio".

All of NEAR-Fest's staff members are volunteers. Since NEAR-Fest is a 501(c)(3) Public Charity, any funds remaining after expenses are used for benevolent projects. NEAR-Fest directs some of its resources to attracting newcomers to our hobby with a special emphasis toward young people. To that end NEAR-Fest has gifted an amateur radio station capable of communicating through satellites orbiting the Earth as a gift to the McAuliffe-Shepard Discovery Center in Concord NH and brokered a partnership with the Contoocook Valley Radio Club (CVRC) to operate and maintain the station on a regular schedule.

In addition we have also funded several university and technical school scholarships and supported various charitable organizations such as the Shriners Hospitals and Boston Burns Unit. We also help to preserve our radio frequency spectrum allocations and have initiated a program providing for fund-matching grants to expand and enhance the amateur radio digital repeaters and networks throughout New England.

HOPE TO SEE YOU THERE!

MARA
MERRYMEETING AMATEUR RADIO ASSOCIATION
KS1R