Sparks from the Spa

Saratoga County
SCARA
Amateur Radio Association

Our Annual Swapfest

This is a reminder that the Swapfest will be held on Saturday March 14, at the cooperative extension building, 50 West High St in Ballston Spa. The doors will open around 7:30, and there will be an exam session at noon.

Test Session requirement

If you are going to take a test session for either a new or upgraded ham license, here are a few things you MUST bring along.

- A copy of your current FCC license. We need to attach the license copy to the paperwork when you upgrade. If you are unlicensed, the FCC form 605 requires a FRN. You can obtain a FRN in just a few minutes before the exam session by visiting https://www.fcc.gov/wireless/systems-utilities/universal-licensing-system You simply apply for the FRN on line, and you will have it with you when you come to the test session.
- Another form of ID, a driver's license is great, or any other form of ID. If you don't have a driver's license, (perhaps you are too young for the DMV) the ARRL suggests something as simple as a library card, or even a piece of mail addressed to you at your residence.
- A pen and pencil (with a good eraser). The pen is for filling out the FCC form 605, and the pencil is to fill out the bubble answer sheet.
- The proper testing fee. Currently it is $15.
- Your WITS. It is not a hard exam, so don't get too anxious about it.

Please arrive at least 15 minutes before the exam start time in order to fill out the paperwork, and for the VE's (Volunteer Examiners) to review it.

Another thing to bear in mind, is that for many of the testing sessions, the VE team will have alternate versions of the various exam elements available for you to try a retake of the exam. If you do desire to take an alternate version, we must you charge you an additional testing fee.

If you DO NOT NEED to take any alternate versions, you may take the next higher level of exam for NO additional costs. For example, if you take and pass the Technician exam, you may take the General exam if you so desire, and there will be no additional fees. I have witnessed a few people who have come into the session unlicensed, and walk away with the Extra Class license.

GOOD LUCK.

Australian Bushfires Causing Major Telecommunication Outages, Hams Asked to Remain Alert   From ARRL

01/03/2020
[UPDATED 2020-01-05 @1704 UTC] Wireless Institute of Australia (**WIA**) President Greg Kelly, VK2GPK, says the bushfires in Australia have caused or are expected to cause significant disruption of telecommunication services in the states of Victoria and New South Wales. "The scope and range of these impacts is unknown at this stage but are predicted to cover all internet and phone (fixed and mobile) and other commercial radio services," Kelley said. Radio amateurs are supporting relief operations and communication.

WICEN (Wireless Institute Civil Emergency Network) in New South Wales reports it has been active assisting in a number of multi-agency activities during the bushfire emergency, in its role as a support squad of the NSW Volunteer Rescue Association (VRA) operations center in Bega. WICEN teams in NSW and in the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) have sent a team to Bega, to help re-establish radio communication services, disrupted by fire activity.

WICEN and other VRA squads continue to support the Rural Fire Service (RFS) at various Fire Control Centers and the Bushfire Information Line. Other WICEN members remain active with the RFS and the State Emergency Service.

Kelley has asked radio amateurs in International Amateur Radio Union (IARU) Region 3 to monitor the emergency communications frequencies, per the IARU Region 3 band plan, whenever possible, as well as repeaters. "Amateurs seeking to establish emergency communication should use these EMCOMM frequencies in the first instance, or repeaters if available," he said in a statement posted on the IARU Region 3 website.

"Radio amateurs who are volunteers for [WICEN and other emergency communication organizations] should keep themselves updated," Kelley advised. "Emergency communication is one of the main reasons radio amateurs have access to RF spectrum. Please assist if and when you can."

The IARU Region 3 emergency "center of activity" frequencies are 3.600, 7.110, 14.300, 18.160, and 21.360 MHz. These are not net frequencies, but they are recommended as starting points for emergency traffic, and activity may extend 5 kHz above or below the designated center frequency.

South of NSW in the state of Victoria, WICEN VIC reports that the amateur repeater network is largely off the air, possibly due to a lack of power. "Some sites may have been directly affected by fire," WICEN VIC reported on January 4.

"It could be some weeks until the sites can be reached for inspection. The Mt Taylor UHF repeater, which is currently linked to the Carrajung UHF repeater, is still operational, although Mt Taylor has been under direct threat a few times, and currently has an 'Evacuate Now' warning to the area immediately north."

Radio Amateurs of Canada Announces a New Section   From ARRL

01/02/2020

The number of Sections needed for a clean sweep in the ARRL November Sweepstakes (SS) will rise to 84 in 2020, with the addition of a new Prince Edward Island (PE) Section. Radio Amateurs of Canada (**RAC**) announced this week that the new Section will become effective on April 1. RAC said its Prince Edward Island members have been working for some time to create a separate Section for RAC ARES activities there. The provinces of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick will continue to be in the Maritimes (MAR) Section. In addition to Field Day and Sweepstakes, the new Section in Canada will affect the ARRL 160-Meter Contest but *not* the ARRL 10-Meter Contest, which uses states/provinces for US and Canadian multipliers.

The change will mean that logging software developers will have to update their software to include the PE Section as a valid exchange element for any affected operating events.

RAC also announced an adjustment in two of its Ontario Sections. Effective April 1, radio amateurs in the City of Hamilton and in the Regional Municipality of Niagara will shift to the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) Section from the Ontario South (ONS) Section.

W1AW to be on the Air for Winter Field Day   from ARRL

01/02/2020

Members of the Warren County (New York) Amateur Radio Club (**W2WCR**) will activate Maxim Memorial Station W1AW for **Winter Field Day** 2020 over the January 25 – 26 weekend. Winter Field Day is sponsored by the Winter Field Day Association (WFDA), which believes that emergency communication is important throughout the year. Winter Field Day is open to radio amateurs worldwide.

The WFDA's goal is to help enhance operating skills and to prepare participants for all environmental conditions. Winter Field Day runs for 24 hours. Station set-up may start no earlier than 1900 UTC on the day before the event and may not take any longer than 12 hours in total. Expect activity on all amateur bands except 12, 17, 30, and 60 meters. All modes that can handle the required exchange are welcome; this does not include FT8. Entry categories include indoor, outdoor, and home.

Full details are on the Winter Field Day website.

New England Radio Amateur Hosts Video on Tower Safety   from ARRL

12/31/2019

Jim Idelson, K1IR, of Sudbury, Massachusetts, recently provided a club meeting program on ham radio tower safety for the Billerica Amateur Radio Society (BARS). Kayla Creamer, W2IRY, recorded and edited the presentation and **made it available online**. It runs approximately 1 hour and 10 minutes.

In his presentation, Idelson said an estimated 38,000 amateur radio towers are standing in the US, with 24 hours of climbing time per tower each year. He noted that two tower-climbing fatalities have occurred in the past year, with a calculated fatality rate that's twice that of commercial tower workers. In more than half of amateur tower incidents, the climber fell while tied into the tower, while another 37% involved falls. Idelson advised radio amateurs to plan, identify, and mitigate risks in advance of a climb, to focus and be patient, and not to get distracted.

"Risks of tower work are far too high," Idelson told his audience. "Success depends on creating a culture that values safety."

Computer Bulletin Board System Co-Inventor Randy Suess, ex-WB9GPM, SK   from ARRL
12/31/2019

The co-inventor of the Computer Bulletin Board System, Randy Suess, ex-WB9GPM, died on December 10. He was 74. According to his **obituary** in *The New York Times*, Suess and IBM engineer Ward Christensen collaborated on the system in 1978, during the dial-up era, a year before Compuserve began offering online consumer service. The computer bulletin board was a forerunner of today's proliferation of social media outlets.

Suess and Christensen were members of the Chicago Area Computer Hobbyists' Exchange (CACHE), and the system was initially developed so that club members could more easily communicate with one another. By the time the Chicago BBS was retired in the 1980s, it had been accessed more than 500,000 times. — *Thanks to Wes Plouff, AC8JF*

ARISS Next-Generation Radio System Ready for Launch From ARRL

01/06/2020

Amateur Radio on the International Space Station (**ARISS**) reports that its first Interoperable Radio System (IORS) flight unit — serial number 1001 — has been delivered to NASA's Johnson Space Center for launch in early March. The IORS represents the first major upgrade in ARISS equipment on the International Space Station since Amateur Radio gained a permanent presence onboard the ISS in 2000. In December, ARISS received approval from NASA Safety to launch the IORS on SpaceX CRS-20 and stow the radio system on the ISS for future installation.

"The IORS is a foundational element of the ARISS next-generation radio system and is an incredible engineering achievement by the ARISS hardware team," ARISS International President Frank Bauer, KA3HDO, said. "This first element delivery will support easier radio mode transitions and enable new, exciting capabilities for hams, students, and the general public."

The new system includes a higher-power radio, an enhanced voice repeater, and updated digital packet radio (APRS) and slow-scan television (SSTV) capabilities for both the US and Russian space station segments. The IORS consists of a custom-modified JVCKenwood TM-D710GA transceiver, an AMSAT-developed multi-voltage power supply, and interconnecting cables. The IORS set to launch in March will be installed in the ISS *Columbus* module.

Bauer said a second flight unit is expected to be launched sometime later this year for installation in the Russian Service module. The ARISS hardware team will assemble four flight units — and 10 IORS units in all — to support onboard flight operations, training, operations planning, and hardware testing.

"Future upgrades and enhancements to the next generation system are in various stages of design and development," Bauer said. "These include a repaired Ham Video system — currently planned for launch in mid-to-late 2020, L-band (uplink) repeater, ground command operations capability, LimeSDR signal reception, a microwave 'Ham Communicator,' and Lunar Gateway prototype experiment."

Bauer said a lot of "heavy lifting" remains to prepare the IORS for operation on the space station. "ARISS has 92 engineering requirements and our operations Phase III safety review to complete," he explained. "The space agencies take a position of 'trust, but verify.' Thus, these engineering and safety 'verifications' all need to be closed out before the IORS can be unstowed and turned on. This will be the ARISS hardware team's focus over the next few months."

Bauer reminded that ARISS is almost entirely run by volunteers and encouraged **donations** for next-generation hardware developments, operations, education, and administrative functions.

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Dues Time

Its that time of the year again. Our dues run on the calendar year. Many of you have already paid your 2020 dues, and I thank you. If you don't know when you're due you can contact me, KG2H@ARRL.NET and I will let you know. Your can always send me your dues anyhow, and if you are current, I will just add another year to your record, so don't let doubt dissuade you from sending your dues in. Thanks.

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Thanks go out to :

KD2FKH, KC2CKL, W1NBX and W2RWA

Saratoga County Amateur Radio Association   Membership Information
Please Print CLEARLY

Name _____

Callsign _____   License Class   N   T   G   A   E

Email Address _____

Address   _____

City State Zip   _____

ARRL Member   YES   NO

Dues are $10 per year, Payable to **Saratoga County R.A.C.E.S.**

You can mail your dues with this form to Jim Polewczak KG2H, 231 Northline Road, Ballston Spa 12020

Admin – Amt _____   Cash   Check #   # of years_____   Was   Now

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Have you checked the expiration date on your license? It's very easy to do. One way to do it is to go to WWW.ARRL.ORG, and just fill in your call sign in the search box on their home page. You do not need to be a member of ARRL to use this service.

K2DLL repeater system:

Corinth NY
147.000 MHz +600KHz 91.5 Hz CTCSS encode/decode
448.225 MHz -5.00 MHz 91.5 CTCSS encode/decode

Providence NY
147.240 MHz +600 Hz 91.5 Hz CTCSS encode/decode.
147.360 MHz +600 Hz (add 91.5 Hz CTCSS to connect to the NYS Network

Sacandaga Resevoir
147.03 MHz +600 KHz 91.5 Hz CTCSS encode/decode

Middleburgh NY
448.925 PL 107.2 WA2TTP-R Steve's Repeater is linked to ours via UHF

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Please be sure to visit our webpage for any late breaking news or newletter archives.

WWW.K2DLL.ORG

Got News or information you would like to get published? How about your own projects or other things you think would be of interest to Club Members? How about (GASP), a letter to the editor? Contact us at our email address :
SparksFromTheSpa@gmail.com

Upcoming program note

We are looking for input from the membership as to what YOU would like to hear. Program suggestions are always welcome. Please let any of the Board Members know of you ideas. Thanks