

THE KEY

The Riverland Amateur Radio Club is a Special Service Club affiliated with the American Radio Relay League

Riverland Amateur Radio Club

P.O. Box 621
Onalaska, Wis. 54650

Repeater

146.970 PL 131.8

RARC Net

8 p.m. Sundays on the
146.970 repeater.

Club meetings

7 p.m., Tuesday, meeting room 1, lower level, Gundersen/Lutheran La Crosse. **Elmer session** 6 p.m.

RARC Web page

<http://rarc.qth.com/>

Ham numbers up

Amateur Radio growth in the US continues to soar to an all time high of 726,275 at the end of 2014. The trend has continued into 2015. Over the past decade the number of Amateur Radio licenses grew by 8.1 percent.

At the end of 2014, there were 136,405 Amateur Extra, 169,524 General, and 357,236 Technician class licensees all record numbers.



A properly dressed Matt Welch, W8DEC, provides communication for a public service event. He says Hams helping with such events must dress and act professionally.

Tuck in your shirt and be on time

By Bob Seaquist, KC9IWE

Image is everything for Hams in public service events, according to Matt Welch, W8DEC. Welch is very involved in public service communication including being Section Emergency Coordinator for the ARRL Ohio Section.

“If we look like slobs we will be treated like slobs,” Welch told a large crowd at AES Su perfest in Milwaukee March 21. “If a guy shows up with his shirt hanging out and five HT’s on his belt we ask him to go home. These folks are killing our reputation as Amateur Radio operators.”

Welch urges Amateur Radio groups helping at an event to dress professionally, and above all, come prepared. He says assignments must be given ahead of time; communications planned using the ICS 205 form; frequencies programmed ahead; equipment gathered; maps printed; your vehicle loaded the night before; equipment charged; and then, arrive early. “In the Navy if you were 15 minutes ahead of time you were on time,” Welch said.

Operators have to arrive prepared to operate, added Welch.

On air performance is critical for Amateurs working an emergency communication event or a bike ride. “If you sound like a lid, you will be treated like a lid.” He said “Q” codes must be avoided and ITU phonetics must be used for clarity. “When I’m on the air rag-chewing it’s okay to have fun phonetics for my call but when I’m serving in public service then it is critical to use the phonetics that everyone understand.”

Welch emphasized the Amateur Radio operator’s mission is to communicate. “But it is okay to help,” he said. That means operators may set up tables and other chores if they are needed. “If you are asked to do First Aid and you do not have that skill say so,” he advised.

President's Frequency Modulation

By Greg Miller, KA9FOZ

Did you enjoy the recent six plus inches of snow we got? I didn't. I worked all weekend on an antenna project and was hoping to get it mounted on Sunday when low and behold, snow. I shouldn't be surprised, after all, it is Wisconsin and it is winter. My antenna project can wait for another day. I did make a contact on 20 meters instead, which was also enjoyable.

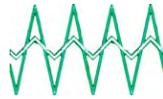
The time is coming where we need to get out and see what type of damage the winter months have done to the antenna systems in our back yards. Along with that comes the word "safety." This cannot be emphasized enough when it comes to the hobby of Amateur Radio. Keeping one safe all the while swinging aluminum poles around in what we hope is a wide open space can surprise us when a power line is partially hidden by a tree, or in most cases the power line was known to be there but was forgotten about for just an instant. This is where the danger comes in. Always know your surroundings when doing that antenna work. I recommend you have a second or third party there to observe and help you watch for that potential danger. Most people get hurt because of what you would think was a simple and very obvious danger but was overlooked in the haste to get the job done. Step back and think about your next move and ask someone to observe from a distance and scream at you when something looks wrong. What it boils down to is your attitude toward safety. Think your plans through first and



think safety while going through the mental moves. See your safety dangers before you start the work so you can avoid them. Let your spotters know what your next moves are so they can watch for the safety issues in real time. If something does not feel quite right, then don't do it.

Now that you have thought about your safety, how about others? Do you have a tower? Does that tower have a tower shield installed? Some people reading this may not even know what this is. It may be the single most safety feature you may install that will save the life of some youngster in your neighborhood. We all know kids like to climb, as my mother in law found out when she came out of the house and saw her four year old daughter not my wife sitting at the top of the farm's windmill. Even if the kid gets down safely it could have caused a heart attack. Get on the Web and Google "tower safety" and you will see several suggestions on a tower shield. The cost is minimal but worth millions if it keeps kids off of your tower.

Enjoy Ham Radio and I will see you at the next meeting.



Calendar

Tue. Apr. 7

♦ Riverland Amateur Radio Club meeting, 7 p.m., meeting room 1, lower level, Gundersen/Lutheran La Crosse. Elmer session 6 p.m.

Wed. Apr. 8

♦ Skywarn training On Line Webinar, 1:30 p.m. Register by e mailing todd.shea@noaa.gov

Sat. Apr. 11

♦ Madison Amateur Radio Association Hamfest, 8 a.m. to 1 p.m., Mandt Arena, Stoughton.

Wed. Apr. 15

♦ Skywarn training, 6:30 p.m., Marycrest Auditorium, Mayo Clinic Health System, Franciscan Skemp, 700 West Ave. South.

Sat-Sun., Apr. 18-19

♦ "The Town That Saved Itself" 50th Anniversary special event WIN, 1400Z to 2200Z each day, Winona ARC. 7.21965, 10.11965, 14.31965, 21.31965

Sun. Apr. 19

♦ ARRL Rookie Roundup

Sat. Apr. 25

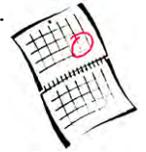
♦ La Crosse MS Walk communication.

Sat. May 2

♦ RARC license testing, 9 a.m., Church of Christ, 3506 28th St. South, La Crosse. Register at least five days in advance with Roger Reader, KA9BKK, 608 783 0723 or readers@centurytel.net.

Sat. June 27

♦ ARRL Field Day



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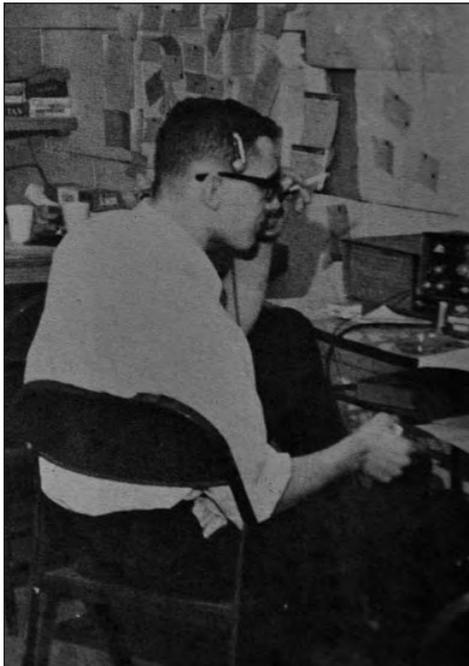


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This newsletter is sent by e mail to current and past RARC members and others. If you wish to change your address or subscription, e mail KC9IWE@arrl.net

Communicators commemorate Winona's '65 flood



Amateur Radio operator Les Hittner, now KØBAD, provides communication support for Winona's 1965 flood effort.

The great Mississippi River flood of 1965 could have drowned Winona if thousands of volunteers had not rushed to the city's aid. Among them were Amateur Radio Operators Les Hittner,

KØBAD, Walt Kelly, KEØXI, and Ken Spittler, NØJP, who helped keep lines of communication open with those working on dikes as well as the outside world

Hittner, Kelly and Spittler will be back on their radios for an Amateur Radio special event station "The Town That Saved Itself" 50th Anniversary Saturday and Sunday, April 18 and 19. The special event station with the call sign "WIN" will be organized by members of the Winona Amateur Radio Club.

The Mississippi River jeopardized Winona 24 days of 1965 going way past the 13-foot flood stage to 20.75-feet, 7.75-feet above flood! Volunteers did the impossible, raising dikes, laying 1,300,000 sandbags, plugging sewers with air bags, and rushing families from homes. There were doubts the city would survive, but the efforts of thousands made Winona a miracle city, "The Town That Saved Itself."

One weapon in the city's war on water was a WWII army surplus amphibious "Duck" (DUKW) St. Mary's University lent to the cause. Kelly and Hittner

and several Hams used the lumbering vehicle a number of ways: "Radio Station KAGE sponsored the Duck for emergency use," recalled Kelly. "One of the first uses was to travel up Wis. HWY 35 past Alma to check on road conditions. When KAGE radio could not communicate back to the station, the Amateur system on the Duck was used to give a report on conditions up the river," said Kelly. KWNO recorded that audio and then promised to deliver the tape to KAGE. "After they played it multiple times, of course!!" quipped Kelly.

Spittler worked a full eight hour day as an automobile mechanic then went to the command post in city hall's basement for another four or five hours on the radio. He recalled communicating with the US Coast Guard which had cautiously set up its headquarters on Garvin Heights, high above Winona.

Amateur Radio operators from across the world may attempt to contact WIN when it is on the air and earn a special certificate for their efforts.

The Extra Class Challenge: taking the test

By Bill Wood, KE9XQ



These last four issues I've encouraged you to upgrade. Today we'll wrap things up.

Test taking strategies

✓ It's only a test, and if you took the book and practically reversed engineered it, no sweat; if you took the test online 400 times, and ace it 99.9 percent of the time, again no sweat. If this is not the case, then take a few

hints that work taking tests.

✓ Do all the easy ones first. Sometimes those help answer the harder ones.

✓ Do the harder ones next, and skip the ones you do not know.

✓ Now do the hard ones, the ones you just couldn't understand, or you think might be a trick there are no trick ones. There are going to be one or two that are obvious. If the light bulb does not go off yet, skip it and go back to it when you are done.

✓ Make sure all your answers go in the right spot. It would be terrible to ace

the test, and fail, because the answer key does not match your answers.

✓ If that happened, you can usually ask for a second test, but just don't let that happen.

✓ Now go back to that impossible question or two, and answer them. Omit the obvious detractors, and if you can't get the answer, you still now have a 50/50 percent chance to get it right, so guess. One sure thing though, a blank line is just as wrong as a wrong guess, so take the pencil and mark one of them.

✓ Sometimes a first guess

is correct. I don't really buy this, if your gut tells you this, but you are not sure, write that number down on your scratch sheet of paper and go back to it. Truly don't over guess it or make it more of a problem than you had at first, but if you want to go with the gut feeling, then in my book it is still a guess, and close only counts in horse shoes...

Enjoy the test, don't fret it. The FCC, ARRL your test team and your comrades all want to see you make it, so relax and prepare, we all know you can do it.

A Pole is a pole

By Carl Thurston, KC9HDS

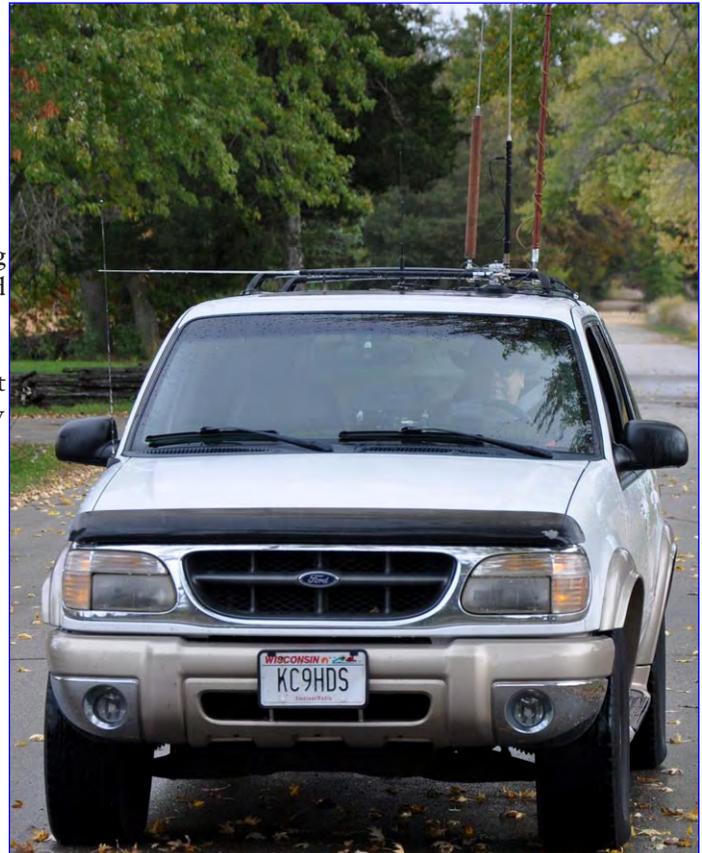
As spring is rapidly arriving, many think about the implications of the many uses of a pole. Hams are especially tuned into this. When the fair spring winds blow, the need for a sturdy pole becomes more and more important. With Field Day in June, one must consider the support needed for those necessary temporary antennas that are a mainstay of all Field Days. Lately there has been a bit of a discussion going on about various poles for antennas, both commercially obtained and also home built. Some feel that the advantages of a Buddipole antenna warrant the expense, while others who are less affluent, but perhaps more imaginative, prefer a less expensive alternative. Several Hams have made use of painter poles to achieve the desired results. Others have resorted to those heavy duty fiberglass poles that can be had from Army surplus dealers. The latter poles are both sturdy and easy to erect. They work especially well for the support of G5RVs, Mystery Antennas, or other dipole type arrays. What ever type that you choose, if you are successful in your efforts, then who can criticize your methods? It is a lot easier to set up and use a Buddipole antenna, and the likelihood of anyone making fun of your setup is slight, even if you are not very successful in getting the number of QSOs that you would like. On the other hand, if you are working with a painter pole sort of arrangement, and you are unsuccessful in piling up a lot of QSOs, you can always blame it on the shoddy set up that you are using. However, if you are able to perform as well as some one with a Buddipole antenna array, while using a painter pole array, then you can feel extra proud of your accomplishments having persevered with a minimum of expense.

Nearly all of those sorts of arrays are basically variations of dipole antennas. There are other types of poles as well. The simple vertical antenna is quite effective as well and it offers a middle ground alternative to either the expense

of the Buddipole or the makeshift cheap painter pole types. Yes, you will say that “verticals are lightning rods that transmit and receive equally poorly in all directions!” They aren’t the easiest antennas to tune, they often have very peaky band coverage and they are easily over powered by Hams with more sophisticated equipment, but they are relatively cheap, easy to set up, and when everything is just right, you can achieve wondrous results. You will have the doubters dismissing your antenna as a “mere dummy load!”

This happens a lot. When you have a multi band vertical that is fine tuned and the DX is rolling in while those doubters are not getting many QSOs, the result is truly sweet.

Every Ham has his or her favorite antenna array. Whatever array you have that you are successful with is the right antenna array. In the end, it really doesn’t matter whether you are using a multi element beam or an antenna made from an old coat hanger, the main thing is how well you can work with it. Not everyone has the where with all to afford an upscale array. In fact, it is rare that beginning Hams have either the money or the knowledge needed to be able to put together a sophisticated antenna array. One of the nice things



KC9HDS arriving to operate with his “poles” atop his vehicle.

about Field day is the fact that innovative designs for antenna arrays are encouraged. After all, the whole idea behind Field Day is to set up a station in a remote location with little or no connection with the normal power grid while using minimal equipment, thus demonstrating the versatility of Ham radio operation in a stand alone situation. Another important reason for Field Day activities is what it can do for beginning Hams. It is a very good time for new Hams to learn the basics needed to be a successful HF operator. Even older, well seasoned Hams can learn a thing or two at Field Day. Besides, there is always good food, beverages and friendly company at a Field Day site. Be sure to grab your pole, no matter what type, load up your rig and come to Field Day. You will have a good time and even if there isn’t much more that you can learn from the experience, perhaps you can help out a few new Hams who are trying to get going on HF. Lets gather around the pole and show the new guys how it is done.

