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## October Brings Annual Pumpkin Patrol

The 2024 Pumpkin Patrol will take place on Wednesday and Thursday October 30-31st on bridges that span the New York State Thruway. Amateur Radio operators staff the patrol, watching for any suspicious activities that might endanger motorists below, contributing to the safety of travelers on the New York State Thruway.

It is a statewide event and is held in cooperation with the New York State Troopers and Amateur Radio groups. In the Capital District, the Troy Amateur Radio Association has traditionally coordinated local participation.



The Pumpkin Patrol was initiated as a volunteer effort in 1976 by Katherine St. Jacques in Fort Johnson, Montgomery County. She was talking to a truck driver on her citizens band radio when the windshield of his vehicle was struck by an object thrown from an overpass. The driver sustained injuries from the broken glass of his windshield. St. Jacques and two companions decided to stand watch on the three overpasses that crossed the Thruway in the Fort Johnson area.

The State Police assumed control of the Pumpkin Patrol in 1990 as part of the State Police crime prevention effort. More than 300 volunteers are expected to participate in this year's safety efforts. Club members interesting in assisting should contact Karen Smith, KS2O, at 518-273-6594 or [ksmithkb2uuc@aol.com](mailto:ksmithkb2uuc@aol.com).

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### Fall Hudson River Trip Set

EGARA's annual fall cruise aboard the Spirit of Albany is being planned for Saturday, October 26th. The trip leaves the Port of Albany at 10 am and returns around 1 pm. Club members are provided with lunch and refreshments.

The event gives club members the opportunity to enjoy the Hudson Valley's fall foliage while testing repeater coverage that could be employed during the need for emergency communications on the water.

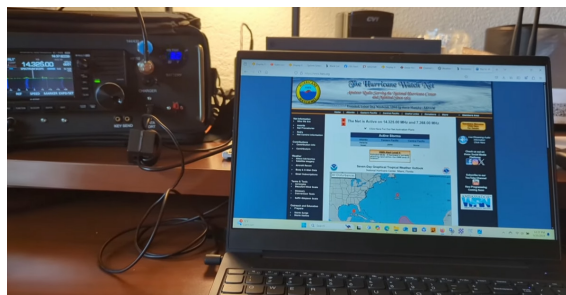
Those who wish to participate are requested to reserve space by emailing Club President Bryan Jackson at [W2RBJ@outlook.com](mailto:W2RBJ@outlook.com) by no later than Tuesday, October 22nd as space is limited and needed for ordering food and beverages.

As always, the trip is weather dependent and members should check their email the day before the trip in case it needs to be canceled.

# Hurricane Helene Activates Net

As Hurricane Helene strengthened to a Category 4 storm, volunteers with the Amateur Radio Emergency Service (ARES) were activated throughout the region being impacted. Preparations included having ARES members embedded in emergency operations centers across Florida and the south to provide critical communications to the agencies they serve.

On Thursday evening, Hurricane Helene made landfall near Perry, Florida, with winds of 140 miles per hour, making it the strongest hurricane on record to slam into Florida's Big Bend. As it moved further inland, Helene was downgraded to tropical storm status but left more than four million homes and businesses without power across Florida, Georgia, the Carolinas, and Virginia according to PowerOutage.US.



In preparation, the Hurricane Watch Net activated Thursday morning at 10:00 AM EDT on both 14.325 MHz and 7.268 MHz. Amateur operators were asked to avoid both frequencies to allow for emergency traffic.

The activation schedule was as follows:

Thursday:

- 20 meters: 14.325 MHz (USB) at 10:00 AM EDT (1400 UTC) until propagation is lost at night.
- 40 meters: 7.268 MHz (LSB) at 10:00 AM EDT (1400 UTC) throughout the day and overnight for as long as propagation allows.

Friday:

- 20 meters: resumption of operations on 14.325 MHz at 7:00 AM EDT (1000 UTC).
- 40 meters: resumption of operations on 7.268 MHz at 8:30 AM EDT (1230 UTC).

"I've heard it all my life: when all else fails, ham radio still works. And let me tell you, it's true," wrote Thomas Witherspoon, K4SWL, on an Internet post. Despite losing electric service and suffering heavy damage to his home in western North Carolina, he was able to maintain contact using backup battery and solar power.

"Throughout the storm, our normally quiet repeater systems were buzzing with activity. The traffic became very organized, with hourly nets helping pass messages to family and friends, sharing detailed on-the-ground reports, and identifying areas where help was needed. Even though our emergency services are overwhelmed, we're able to connect with them via amateur radio networks like ARES. Right now, being a ham feels like a superpower. For many people, it's the only form of communication that still works."

In many areas hit by the storm, regular communications was knocked out, including 911 emergency services.

The Hurricane Watch Net closed operations for Hurricane Helene after operating for 25-hours. During the activation, members of the Hurricane Watch Net collected and forwarded over 100 surface reports to the National Hurricane Center.

# QSL Cards: An Enthusiast's Guide

by Kate Lin

QSL cards play a crucial role in amateur radio by serving as confirmations of two-way communications between operators. Well-designed QSL cards reflect the operator's personality and creativity while providing essential information such as call signs, dates, and signal reports. Effective QSL card design ensures accurate and efficient exchanges within the ham radio community. This guide aims to educate readers about the importance and usage of QSL cards.

## QSL Card Origins

QSL cards originated in the early 20th century when radio operators needed a reliable way to confirm their communications. The term "QSL" comes from the Q code, which means "I confirm receipt of your transmission." Early QSL cards were simple postcards, often handwritten, used to verify contact with other stations.

As radio technology advanced, so did the design and purpose of QSL cards. Initially, operators relied on handwritten notes, but as printing technology improved, printed QSL cards became more common. These cards often included essential information such as call signs, dates, and signal reports, and their designs grew more elaborate. Collectors began to value unique and creative QSL cards, turning the practice into a hobby in its own right.



## Purpose and uses

QSL cards serve multiple purposes in the ham radio world. Primarily, operators use these cards to confirm two-way radio communications, providing a record of the contact, including call signs, dates, and signal reports. This confirmation is not merely a formality; it signifies the successful completion of a communication effort, often requiring complex technical skills and conditions.

Beyond their primary function, QSL cards also serve as collectibles for many operators. The thrill of collecting cards from different regions and countries adds a unique element to the hobby. Each card tells a story of successful communication, and collectors often seek rare cards to enhance their collections. Additionally, QSL cards help operators qualify for various awards and recognitions within the amateur radio community.

## SWL: Shortwave Listening

SWL stands for Shortwave Listening, referring to the hobby of listening to shortwave radio broadcasts. Unlike amateur radio operators who actively communicate with each other, SWL enthusiasts listen to broadcasts from various stations around the world. This hobby allows listeners to experience a diverse range of programming, from news and music to cultural broadcasts and emergency communications.

## Differences between SWL and QSL

While QSL cards confirm two-way communications, SWL enthusiasts often seek confirmation of their listening activities through SWL cards. These cards serve as acknowledgment from broadcasters to listeners, confirming that a particular broadcast was received. The primary distinction lies in the nature of communication: QSL cards are for active operators, while SWL cards cater to listeners.

## Technological advancements

Technological advancements have significantly influenced QSL cards. Digital printing allows for high-quality designs, making it easier for operators to create visually appealing cards. Online databases and software help track and manage QSL card exchanges, streamlining the process for both operators and collectors. Electronic QSL cards, or eQSLs, have become increasingly popular, offering convenience and speed. Operators can send and receive these digital confirmations instantly, eliminating the wait associated with postal delivery. However, traditional QSL cards remain cherished by many enthusiasts for their sentimental value and the personal touch they offer.

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# QSL Cards...

## Current trends in QSL card usage

Current trends show a blend of traditional and modern practices. Many radio operators still prefer physical QSL cards, as these cards serve as tangible records of communication achievements. The act of sending and receiving a physical card adds a personal element to the communication process. Others embrace digital methods for efficiency, utilizing online platforms that facilitate global exchanges. Despite technological changes, QSL cards continue to hold sentimental value, representing connections made across distances.

## Types of QSL Cards

Standard QSL cards follow a common format, typically measuring 5.5 inches by 3.5 inches. These cards include essential information such as call signs, dates, times, and signal reports. Many operators prefer standard QSL cards for their simplicity and ease of use. The straightforward design ensures that all necessary information is presented clearly.

## Custom QSL Cards

Custom QSL cards offer more flexibility in design, allowing operators to personalize their cards with unique graphics, logos, and layouts. This customization enables operators to showcase their creativity and personality, making a memorable impression on those who receive their cards. Many operators use custom QSL cards to reflect their interests, such as including photographs, special event themes, or club logos. The possibilities for customization are endless, transforming each card into a unique piece of art.

## The Anatomy of a QSL Card - Essential Elements

**Call signs:** Serve as unique identifiers for radio operators. Each QSL card must include the call signs of both the sender and the receiver. These identifiers help verify the authenticity of the communication and provide information about the operator's location and licensing.

**Date and time of contact:** These are crucial details on QSL cards. Operators must record the exact moment of the communication. This information helps confirm the validity of the contact and assists in tracking communication history and achievements.

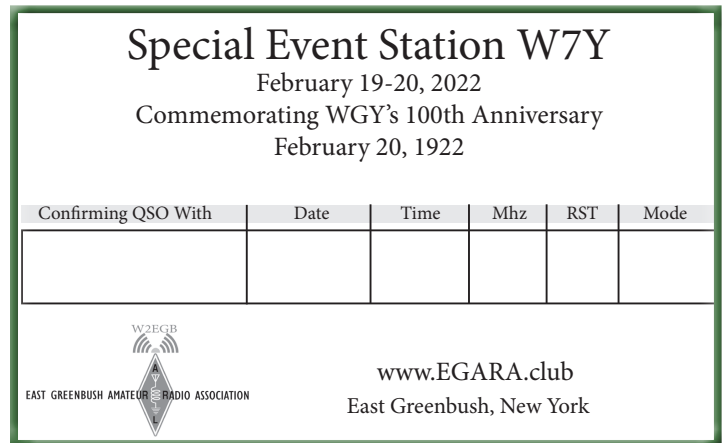
**Signal report:** This report evaluates the quality of the received transmission. QSL cards often use the RST system for this purpose, rating the readability, strength, and tone of the signal. Signal reports provide valuable feedback to operators, helping them improve future communications.

## Design and Aesthetics

QSL cards often feature common design themes. Many cards display images related to radio equipment, antennas, or maps highlighting the operator's location. Flags and emblems can represent national pride, creating a visual connection between operators. Personalization adds a unique touch to QSL cards, with operators often including photographs or custom artwork. Creative designs make QSL cards memorable, and collectors value cards with distinctive and creative designs.

## The Process of Exchanging QSL Cards

**Direct mail:** Direct mail remains a popular method for exchanging QSL cards. Radio operators send physical QSL cards through postal services, providing a tangible record of communication. Operators often include a self-addressed, stamped envelope to ensure a higher chance of receiving a reply. This method allows enthusiasts to collect unique and personalized QSL cards.



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# QSL Cards...

## Bureau services

Bureau services offer another traditional method for exchanging QSL cards. National radio organizations often manage these services. Operators send their QSL cards to a central bureau, which then forwards the cards to the intended recipients. This method reduces postage costs for international exchanges and facilitates large-scale QSL card exchanges. Many operators use this method to confirm contacts with distant stations.

## Digital Methods

**Online QSL services:** These services provide a modern approach to exchanging QSL cards. Websites and databases allow operators to upload and exchange digital QSL cards. These platforms offer convenience and speed, enabling operators to confirm contacts without waiting for postal delivery. Online services also help track and manage QSL card collections, making it easier for operators to stay organized.

**Email and electronic confirmations:** These confirmations represent another digital method for exchanging QSL cards. Operators can send digital QSL cards directly to each other's email addresses, providing instant confirmation of radio contacts. This method reduces the need for physical storage space, making it easier for operators to manage their collections. However, some enthusiasts still prefer traditional QSL cards for their sentimental value and the joy of receiving a physical card in the mail.

## The Role of QSL Cards in the Radio Enthusiast Community

**Building Connections:** QSL cards facilitate connections among radio enthusiasts worldwide. Each card exchanged represents a successful communication, building a network of contacts that spans the globe. Enthusiasts often form lasting friendships through these connections, sharing experiences and knowledge about the hobby. The shared interest in radio communication creates a strong bond, fostering a sense of community among operators.

**Participating in Contests and Events:** QSL cards play a significant role in radio contests and events. Participants use these cards to confirm their contacts during competitions, with each confirmed contact potentially earning points or awards. Contests encourage operators to reach out to new stations, expanding their networks and enhancing their skills. The excitement of receiving a new QSL card adds to the thrill of the competition, motivating operators to engage with others in the community.

## Collecting and Displaying

Many radio enthusiasts enjoy collecting QSL cards, with some cards being rare and highly sought after. Collectors value cards from distant or unique locations and special event stations often issue limited-edition cards that become prized possessions. Collecting QSL cards can become a lifelong hobby, with enthusiasts constantly seeking to add to their collections.

Displaying QSL card collections allows enthusiasts to showcase their achievements. Many choose to frame their favorite cards, while others create albums or scrapbooks. Displaying collections can inspire others to start their own, and the visual appeal of a well-displayed collection adds to its value. Each card tells a story of a successful communication, making the collection a testament to the operator's journey in the world of amateur radio.

## Conclusion

QSL cards hold significant value in the amateur radio community, providing tangible proof of communication achievements. Engaging in QSL card exchanges fosters global connections among radio enthusiasts, enhancing the sense of community. The enduring appeal of QSL cards lies in their historical and sentimental value, making collecting and displaying these cards a rewarding hobby. Whether you're an active operator or a shortwave listener, QSL cards symbolize the rich tradition of amateur radio.

In an increasingly digital world, the tactile nature of QSL cards serves as a refreshing reminder of the personal connections forged through amateur radio. The thrill of sending and receiving these cards, the stories they tell, and the friendships they foster are what make this hobby so special. As technology continues to evolve, the spirit of amateur radio and the importance of QSL cards will undoubtedly endure, bridging gaps and connecting enthusiasts across the globe.

## On the Beam News & Notes

### Celebrating WWV at 105



The 105th anniversary of WWV will be celebrated by the WWV Amateur Radio Club (WWØWWV) until October 1st. Club members will operate on CW, sideband, and digital modes across the bands.

WWV has a history that dates back to the beginning of radio broadcasting. The call letters WWV were assigned to National Bureau of Standards (now the National Institute of Standards and Technology, or NIST) in October 1919. Although the call letters WWV are now synonymous with the broadcasting of time signals, it is unknown why those particular call letters were chosen or assigned.

Testing of the station began from Washington, D.C. in May 1920, with the broadcast of Friday evening music concerts that lasted from 8:30 to 11 p.m. Today, WWV operates in the high frequency (HF) portion of the radio spectrum, radiating 10,000 watts on exactly 5 MHz, 10 MHz, and 15 MHz; plus 2500 watts on 2.5 MHz and 20 MHz. Each frequency is broadcast from a separate transmitter.

The WWV ARC was created in January 2019 to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the station, located near Fort Collins, Colorado since 1966. After the successful 100th anniversary special event in October 2019, several of the organizers kept the club operating. The WWV ARC is now a recognized ARRL affiliated club.

### Special Event Station Recognizes First Trans-Global Communication

Celebrating the Dawn of Mass Global Communication, a centenary event, will be re-enacted in October 2024, by amateur radio operators in New Zealand and the United Kingdom.

The first trans-global two-way radio communication was achieved on October 18, 1924, by amateur radio operators Frank Bell, 4AA, a sheep farmer in Shag Valley, South Island New Zealand, and Cecil Goyder, 2SZ, a student operating from Mill Hill School, North London. Two special call signs will be in operation for this year's event. At Mill Hill and Shag Valley stations on October 18, radio amateurs will recreate and re-enact the first contact, hopefully on a frequency close to that used in 1924.



In addition, two other amateur radio stations with call signs reflecting the centenary will be active. GB2NZ will be operated from September 29 - October 26 from a number of United Kingdom locations. ZM1ØØDX will be operated from early September 2024 - December 26 from a number of New Zealand locations on CW, SSB, and a number of other modes.

Awards and QSL cards will be available for those who make contact with these special stations. For additional information visit <http://www.gb2nz.com> or <https://www.zl4aa.org.nz>.

## Some Medicare Advantage Plans May Help with ARRL Dues

ARRL's increase in dues has caused many former members not to renew their affiliation with the Amateur Radio organization. But a new partnership formed by the League may help soften its higher rates,

Through a new partnership with Grouper, eligible members who are age 65+ with a participating Medicare Advantage or Medicare Supplement plan can get a paid benefit for being an ARRL member and being active in group activities -- such as attending ARRL Affiliated Club meetings, hamfests, and participating in other amateur radio gatherings and events.

For those who qualify, Grouper will send an initial payment of \$50. Then, for every three months of recorded activity, participants will receive an additional \$20.

To check eligibility, the only information Grouper requires is the name of your health plan and your age. To see if you're eligible, go to [www.hellogrouper.com/arrl](http://www.hellogrouper.com/arrl).

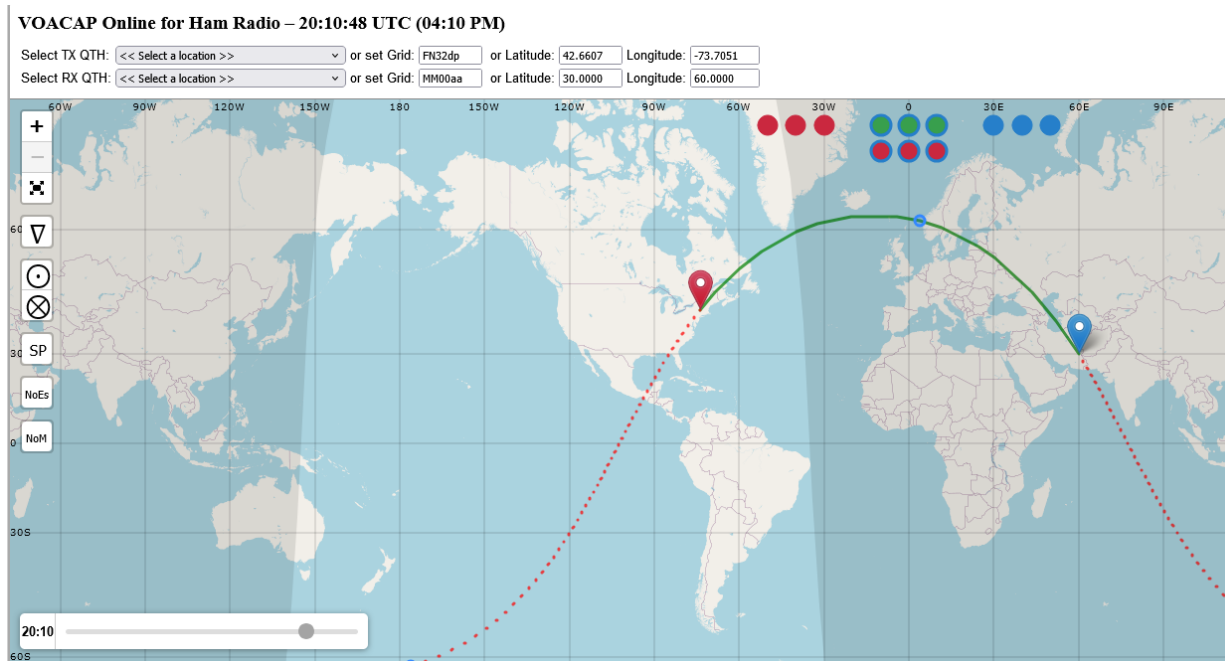
Grouper does not have access to ARRL member information (name, call sign, email), unless you provide it to them to take advantage of the paid benefit. Grouper also says it does not share personal information except to service your benefit. ARRL members with additional questions about the benefit can visit the FAQ from Grouper or contact ARRL Member Services.



## VOACAP for Free Propagation Predictions

VOACAP is free professional high-frequency (3-30 MHz) propagation prediction software originally developed for Voice of America (VOA). There's an online guide on the site at <https://www.voacap.com/> and should get you well started with the software. In addition, a new and improved Ham radio user manual can be found at: [https://www.voacap.com/2023/documents/VOACAP\\_Manual.pdf](https://www.voacap.com/2023/documents/VOACAP_Manual.pdf)

A more comprehensive discussion about the finer details of using the software can be found in George Lane's book Signal-to-Noise Predictions Using VOACAP. A User's Guide. The book is available online at: [http://www.greg-hand.com/pc\\_hf/rockwell/](http://www.greg-hand.com/pc_hf/rockwell/)



# Zello PTT: A Versatile Backup Tool for Amateur Radio

Zello PTT has become a popular mobile phone application, offering a reliable and efficient platform for real-time voice communication. While primarily used for personal and professional purposes, Zello can also serve as a valuable backup tool for amateur radio operators, turning their cell phone into a push-to-talk walkie talkie with worldwide reach.



## Key Features for Amateur Radio Use:

- **Push-to-Talk Functionality:** Zello's core feature, push-to-talk (PTT), mirrors the operation of traditional amateur radio transceivers. Simply press and hold the PTT button to transmit your voice.
- **Channel-Based Communication:** Zello organizes users into channels, similar to amateur radio repeaters. You can join various channels based on your interests, location, or specific events.
- **Global Reach:** Zello's network extends worldwide, allowing you to connect with amateur radio enthusiasts from different countries and regions.
- **Text Messaging:** In addition to voice communication, Zello also supports text messaging within channels. This can be useful for sharing information or coordinating activities.

## Best Practices for Amateur Radio Use:

- **Backup Battery:** Ensure you have a backup battery or power source to keep your device charged during extended use.
- **Headset:** Using a headset can improve audio quality and reduce background noise.
- **Data Plan:** If using Zello for mobile data, be mindful of your data usage limits.
- **Emergency Procedures:** Establish procedures for using Zello in emergency situations, such as coordinating rescue efforts or providing updates.

Zello can be downloaded to your phone using the Google Play or Apple Apps store. Create a personal account and test your phone using the echo channel.

For more information, see Android User Guide at: <https://support.zello.com/hc/en-us/articles/17954095093389-Android-User-Guide> or the iOS User Guide at: <https://support.zello.com/hc/en-us/articles/17578715747981-iOS-User-Guide>.

By leveraging Zello PTT as a backup tool, amateur radio operators can enhance their communication capabilities and stay connected in various scenarios.

Zello can be tried for free for 14 days. After that it is available for a monthly fee of \$8.00 per user each month, but it also offers discounted annual payment plans. However, it offers the service for free to first responder organizations.

# New Club Repeater Update

EGARA has acquired another piece of gear needed for its proposed new VHF repeater -- a Sinclair duplexer. The device is used to isolate the repeater's input and output signals and eliminate interference between the two frequencies. The device was purchased from former club president Tom Scorsone, KC2FCP, at a deep discount.

The duplexer will be paired with the club's new Motorola repeater (photo right) which was acquired by member Pete Sochocki, NY2V, as a donation. The unit is commercial grade and rated for continuous duty at 100 watts output.



EGARA is continuing to search for a location for the repeater and has most recently been in contact with WTEN-TV. The club is seeking to install the system at the station's former analog transmitter site on the Helderberg Mountain escarpment in the town of New Scotland.

## EGARA Repeaters

### Grafton

- 147.33, K2RHI

PL 146.2

Echo Link: 48899

IRLP: 4889

P25 capable with

Network Access Code (NAC) 293

### Albany

- 147.27, KC2FCP

PL 94.8

EchoLink: 582934

### Troy

- 145.110, KC2FCP

PL 94.8

### Troy

- 224.800, W2EGB

PL 94.8

### New Scotland

- 444.700, KC2FCP

PL 94.8

# Some Help for AM Broadcast Stations by Using a “HEBA” Antenna?

**Developer believes antenna’s smaller footprint can help reduce property needed for AM stations**

By Nick Langan

A big challenge for many AM broadcast stations is the amount of land often needed for their antennas. Some stations have even been taken off the air because the property being used was worth more for housing or commercial use than the station itself was worth.

With that in mind, the FCC has licensed WQVR(AM) 940 in Webster, Mass., to operate using a High-Efficiency Broadband Antenna or HEBA, developed by Worldwide Antenna Systems. Now the daytime-only station has been granted a construction permit to extend its operation into nighttime hours.



The HEBA is a dual-feed antenna designed to have a much smaller footprint than a standard guyed tower with a quarter-wavelength ground system for a medium-wave antenna. WorldWide Antenna Systems partnered with WQVR to prototype different designs of the HEBA under experimental daytime operation. The station began full-time broadcasting with the HEBA during the day at 1,000 watts after its RF proof was accepted by the FCC.

“The nighttime grant is the culmination of six years of research and we are thrilled to have the authorization of the FCC to validate this remarkable technology,” WorldWide Antenna Systems Managing Partner Tom Poulos said.

Using NEC-5 modeling software, WQVR’s engineering team — which includes the HEBA’s architect, Kurt Gorman — ran nighttime interference analysis to confirm whether its interference contour was within the necessary FCC limits. It submitted its findings to the Commission’s Media Bureau in February.

WQVR’s HEBA is 75 feet above the ground, situated on 2,500 square feet of land. With just one tee-joint welding, Poulos said the antenna has sustained through multiple New England nor-easters and severe weather outbreaks.

Poulos believes that with its reduced height, and no need for a large, buried ground system, the HEBA could be a way for AM stations to monetize the current property they operate from, which was the genesis of WQVR’s initial partnership with WorldWide Antenna Systems.

“There is also no longer a need to tune the station in the spring and fall because of the change in the weather,” Poulos said, which he believes could reduce station operating and maintenance costs. The station has received a license from the commission for transmitting from the HEBA after sunset.

## Need to Pay Your Club Dues?

It’s as easy as [www.EGARA.org/pay-dues](http://www.EGARA.org/pay-dues)

*Thanks to Our 2024 Hamfest Sponsors!  
Please Support Them!*



# CALENDAR

October 7, 2024 - Monthly Club Membership Meeting,  
7 pm at Rensselaer County Search & Rescue.

October 30-31st - 2024 Pumpkin Patrol. Monitor safety of  
area Thruway bridges in cooperation with NYS State Police.  
To participate, contact Karen Smith, KS2O. 518-273-6594  
or ksmithkb2uuc@aol.com



### Pro Tip: The Amateur Code

**The Radio Amateur is:**

**Considerate:** Never knowingly operating in such a way as to lessen the pleasure of others.

**Loyal:** Offering loyalty, encouragement and support to other amateurs and clubs.

**Progressive:** With knowledge abreast of science, a well built and efficient station and operation beyond reproach.

**Friendly:** With slow and patient operation when requested, friendly advice and counsel to the beginner, kindly assistance, co-operation and consideration for the interests of others. These are the hallmarks of the amateur spirit.

**Balanced:** Radio is an avocation, never interfering with duties owed to family, job, school or community.

**Patriotic:** With station and skill always ready for service to country and community.

**The East Greenbush Amateur Radio Association**

Organized in 1998, by Bert Bruins, N2FPJ, (SK) and Chris Linck, N2NEH, the East Greenbush Amateur Radio Association, an ARRL affiliate, is committed to providing emergency services, educational programs, and operating resources to amateur radio operators and residents of the Capital Region of New York State. The club station is W2EGB. The club also has several VHF and UHF repeaters open to club members and the public.

## GEAR FOR SALE

- **Heathkit SB-200 Linear Amplifier** - Rebuilt with new filter block kit, soft start, soft key, new door knob caps. Wired for 100 volts. 80 watts of drive gives up to 700 watts output. Excellent and clean unit. Asking \$700 or discounted to \$600 for a EGARA club member.

**Contact Justin Cummings at:  
KG2RG@hotmail.com**

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- **Classic Hallicrafters SX-130 Receiver.** Freshly overhauled and aligned. Offers a 4 band, 7 tube superheterodyne receiver covering AM (broadcast band) and shortwave from 1.725 to 31.5 MHz. The frequency range covers foreign and domestic shortwave broadcasts, amateurs, aircraft, marine and standard AM broadcasts. The receiver also provides for the reception of code (CW), voice (AM) and upper and lower single sideband (SSB) signals. \$125.

**Contact Bryan at: W2RBJ@Outlook.com**

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**Sell your unused gear with a  
free ad in Sidebands!  
Send details to: W2RBJ@Outlook.com**