Sidebands

The Newsletter of the EAST GREENBUSH AMATEUR RADIO ASSOCIATION

W2EGB

www.egara.org

January 2026

Next Up: Winter Field Day!

EGARA will kick off the New Year with Winter field Day on Saturday, January 24th. The club will combine the event with a free breakfast at the Rensselaer County Search and Rescue Building.

Winter Field Day first evolved in 2006 and has grown every year since. In addition to a being a fun activity and social activity, the event is designed to sharpen operating skills and simulate preparations for emergency communications when needed.

The creators of Winter field Day believe that ham radio operators should practice portable emergency communications in winter environments as the potential for freezing temperatures, snow, ice, and other hazards present unique operational concerns. The goal is simple: Help increase our members level of preparedness for disasters and to improve their operational skills in subpar conditions.

The day will begin at 9:30 am with a pancake breakfast being prepared while club members set up and check equipment. On-air operation will begin at 11:00 am and continue as long as members are available to operate. EGARA expects to run two HF stations. Members will receive an email prior to the event to let the club know if they plan to participate. This will provide the information necessary to ensure enough food and beverages are on hand.

For EGARA members who hold a Technician License, Winter Field Day is also an excellent opportunity to get on the HF bands, as higher class operators will be on hand to partner with them.

Winter Field Day 2026 includes several notable changes, and a summary can be found on page two.

In This Issue

The New Year is Here!

EGARA needs to refill its coffers to support the many activities it's planning for the year ahead.

Renew your membership today easily online at:

www.EGARA.org/pay-dues

or pay at a club meeting.

And many thanks for your support!

Membership Meeting - January 8, 2026 - Winter Field Day Prep

Notable changes for Winter Field Day 2026

Several new objectives have been added for this year's Winter Field Day (WFD). Here's a summary of the changes and additions. The complete rules can be found at: **https://winterfieldday.org/downloads/2026-rules-v3.pdf**

- Alternative Power objective has changed; pay attention to the laptop and HVAC Requirements
- An additional 12 Band objective have been added.
- Additional clarification has been added to the appendix

Objective: WFD is a multi-objective event. The primary objective is to set up an amateur radio field station and successfully make multiple contacts. Successful participants are those who can set up their equipment and correctly log the designated exchange during the operational period explained below. All participants are encouraged to complete as many additional objectives as possible. After the event, submit a log of stations worked and any additional documentation.

Eligibility: All licensed amateur radio operators are encouraged to participate in the emergency communications exercise known as Winter Field Day.

Operational Period: Winter Field Day is held the last full weekend in January. For 2026, it will be held on January 24th and 25th. The 30-hour operational period starts at 1600 UTC on Saturday (11 am EST), the 24th, and ends at 21:59 UTC on Sunday, the 25th (4:59 pm EST). Stations may begin setting up no earlier than 16:00 UTC (11 am EST) on the Friday before. However, cumulative set-up time shall not exceed 12 hours.

Location Restraints: A WFD operation must ensure all stations operating under a single call sign are located in the same physical area. All operators and station equipment, including antennas, feed lines, and accessories used, must be located within a circular area whose diameter does not exceed 1,000 feet (300m). This 1,000 ft area does not have to remain constant throughout the event. ***Note:*** Safety, weather, or other elements may require you to relocate during an emergency. We allow this during the WFD activity as well. You could, in theory, operate from one location for a set amount of time, then tear down and move the whole operation to another location, say from a state park to a school parking lot across town. Just note that your exchange must remain the same even if you are located in different ARRL/RAC sections or states. You must use the same exchange throughout the entire event!

Exchange: The designated Winter Field Day exchange includes your call sign, a category number, a class identifier, and a location identifier.

Category: A number designated by the number of transceivers (stations) at your location that are capable of transmitting simultaneously. 1, 2, 3, etc. This means you have the people needed to operate the number of transmitters you choose. Don't count a station if it must be left unattended while you make contacts on another. If you decide to operate a satellite station, the satellite station does not increase your category number.

Class: You must choose which class you will operate in. If you are operating as a group under one call sign, choose the class that applies to the majority of the stations at your field day site. Class Options are:

- **H** - Home station: is any station located inside a permanent livable residence.
- I - Indoor station: is any station operating away from Home but from inside an insulated, weather-protected building (or structure) on a permanent foundation. Indoor stations typically have plumbing, heating/cooling, and running water. Church, EOCs, a club shack, a cabin, and community centers are all examples of an Indoor station.
- **O** - Outdoor station: Outdoor stations operate from a partly or fully exposed building or shelter that does not typically have plumbing, heating/cooling, or running water available. Operating from a picnic table, park pavilion, tents, or under pop-up canopies are all places that could be considered Outdoor. These are locations where you may have to provide your own heat source and/or protection from the elements.

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Winter Field Day 2026...

- **M** - Mobile / Mobile Stationary: These stations are operations from a mobile or potentially mobile structure like an RV, car, van, sailboat, cargo trailer, mobile EOC, bus, plane, ETC. Mobile stations do not have to be mobile during the event. They must have the ability to be mobile, should it be necessary to move during the event. RVs and cargo trailers with external antennas set up are still considered Mobile.

Location Identifier: US and Canadian stations will use the ARRL / RAC Section as designated by those organizations. Mexico stations will use MX, and all other stations outside of the US will use DX.

Exchange examples: If you have two stations and you are mobile in East Pennsylvania, you are 2M EPA. One station at home in Georgia would be 1H GA. Four stations outdoors in West Texas would be 4O WTX. Six stations indoors in Minnesota would be 6I MN.

Additional Information: The goal is to copy and record the full exchange accurately. Your Category, Class, and Location Identifiers must remain the same throughout the whole event. If your location changes sections during the event, such as a long-haul trucker, your section is the first section you made a contact from. For example, if you are operating with two people using two transmitters from an RV in Arizona, your exchange would be 2M Arizona. Signal reports and other additional information are not a required part of the exchange; however, it is encouraged to practice exchanging additional information, which may include- signal reports, county location, grid square, temperature, weather conditions, antenna configurations, etc. In an emergency, you may be asked to relay anything from a list of supplies to GPS coordinates. Collecting and correctly copying down this information is an important skill that should be practiced during Winter Field Day.

Bands: All Amateur bands may be used except 12, 17, 30, and 60 meters. To qualify as a band worked, at least one valid, two-way QSO must have taken place on the said band during the event.

Modes: All modes, except WSJT modes3, may be used. Modes are combined into three groups: CW, Phone, and Digital, may be used. Phone includes SSB, AM, FM, DMR, C4FM, etc. If the end result is voice, it's Phone. Digital includes PSK, RTTY, Olivia, Packet, SSTV, ATV, JS8Call, and other sound card modes. If the end result is text or a picture, it's Digital.

QSO Points: Phone contacts count as one point each, and all CW and digital modes count as two points each. You may only contact other field day stations once per band-mode combination, for a maximum of three times per band. So K4FUN may be contacted on 20m using Phone, CW, and Digital for a total of five Points (one point for Phone, two points for CW, and two points for Digital). Any additional contact with K4FUN on 20m would be a duplicate and not give any additional points.

Objective & Multipliers: More than points, achieving objectives should be your primary goal during WFD, these objectives, combined with your own, should be your main focus during the exercise. As an incentive to focus on objectives, an Objective Multiplier (OM) has been assigned to each objective. We will add 1 to your objective multiplier, so you still get your QSO points if you do not complete any objectives. To calculate your overall score, we will take your OM+1 and multiply that number by your total QSO points. The percentage of objectives completed will also be tracked and recorded.

Operate 100% on alternative power: Operate exclusively on alternative power, defined as any power source not connected to the commercial power grid. You may use generators, batteries, solar power, wind power, or anything else. All batteries, whether in use or charging, should only be recharged using alternative power. WFD stations should run all station equipment, including all laptops and other accessories, from an alternative power source. Lights and HVAC are exceptions and may be connected to the power grid or any power source available. OM x1

Operate away from home: Operating away from home is one of the main reasons for "Winter Field Day." Do you have the ability to walk into any shelter, parking garage, hospital, or community center and set up a portable Amateur radio station? Now is the time to start planning what you will do if your home location is destroyed during an emergency. For this objective, set up your field station more than ½ mile from your home. OM x3

Send and receive at least one Winlink email: Winlink has proven useful during emergencies and is considered a digital mode. Successfully send and receive at least one email from a winlink.org email address to any Winlink or commercial email address via amateur RF. All time stamps on Winlink contacts must fall within the operational period. OM x1

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EGARA December Meeting Minutes

- The club's annual holiday party was held as its regular monthly meeting. This year's event was held at the Schodack Diner and began at 6:30 pm. A total of 22 members attended and each introduced themselves;
- A quick series of updates was provided by board member Bryan Jackson, W2RBJ. These included a status report on the club's repeater upgrade which noted that the items required for the antenna relocation had been acquired but that the project would depend on favorable weather. He also noted that efforts were underway to replace the refrigerator that had stopped working at the Search and Rescue Building;
- Old Business: None;
- New Business: Members voted to reassign the club's repeater Trustee to comply with FCC regulations;
- New member Santos Rodriguez Andres, NK2R, introduced himself to the group and expressed his gratitude for the welcome he has received from other members. Originally from Madrid, Spain, he now maintains an Amateur station in Coxsackie. He said he looks forward to participating in club events and getting to know all of the other members;
- Tickets were sold for a 50/50 raffle. The raffle was won by Pete Sochocki, NY2V.
- Following dinner Each member and their guests were given raffle tickets for presents from Santa's gift bag.

-- Minutes recorded by Secretary, David Jaeger, K2DEJ

EGARA Christmas Party - December 11, 2025

(Left side, front to back) Shannon Hildenbrandt; Dave Haughton, KD2WAD; Hisen Zhang, WA2WDX; Jim Pendolino, KC2HRO; Gina Pendolino, KC2QJC; Don Mayotte, KB2CDX; Ridge Macdonald, KB2HWL; Santos Rodriguez Andres, NK2R; Bonny and Pat Negus, Sr., N2PMN;

(Right side, back to front) Dave Gillette, KC2RPU; Andy Sullivan, KC2WWJ; Chris D'Allaird, AK2CD; Art Hoddick, N2TAP; Matt Saplin, W2SAP; Peter Brickman, KD2YLG; Walt Snyder, N2WJR; Dave Jaeger, K2DEJ.

Standing (front to back): Peggy Donnelly, KD2LMU; Bryan Jackson, W2RBJ; Pete & Cheryl Sochocki, NY2V.

Winter Field Day 2026...

Deploy and make at least one contact on multiple antennas: Deploy two or more antennas that have not been previously installed and make at least one contact on each. Previously installed antennas are any antennas that were deployed or installed before the WFD set-up time. Previously installed antennas do not count. You must deploy the antennas during the WFD set-up time or event to achieve this OM. Multi-band antennas do not count as separate antennas. OM x1

Make an FM satellite contact: Make at least 1 FM satellite contact during the operating period. Dedicated satellite transmitters do not count toward your Category number. Satellite contacts do not count towards your total QSO points. Only the multiplier applies. OM x2

Make a SSB or CW satellite contact: Make at least one contact using SSB or CW. Dedicated satellite transmitters do not count toward your Category number. Satellite contacts do not count towards your total QSO points. Only the multiplier applies. OM x3

Note: Satellite QSOs do not count as a regular QSOs credit. Adding a satellite transmitter station does not increase or count toward the number of transmitters used to decide your category. A simple CQ is sufficient. The designated WFD exchange does not and should not be used. Satellite QSOs follow a different protocol. You should be prepared to give a signal report and your Grid Square to the other station. The other station will likely not be a WFD participant and will want a confirmation of the contact afterward. Please be considerate and comply.

Copy the Winter Field Day Special Bulletin: Accurately copy the WFD Special Bulletin message and submit with your log submission to achieve this objective. The frequencies and times are published on our website prior to the event. OM x1

Make three contacts on at least six (6) different bands: Conditions may change throughout an event. Log operations on at least six different bands by making a minimum of three contacts per band. You should be able to accomplish this objective by utilizing HF, VHF, and UHF frequencies. Remember 1.25 meters (220)! It's an excellent band for local emergencies. OM x6

Make three contacts on at least twelve (12) different bands: Was six too easy? You may have to pull out your microwave equipment to achieve this one. Log operations on at least twelve different bands by making a minimum of three contacts per band. The six bands from the previous objective count toward this one. OM x6

Use multiple modes: Increase your versatility by using multiple modes during the event, such as Phone and CW, CW and Digital, or Phone and Digital. Using all three modes does not increase this OM. OM x2

Operate the event QRP: Operating on QRP means every station in your Winter Field Day operation is using 10 watts or less on Phone or 5 watts or less on CW or Digital for the entire time you choose to operate during the event. OM x4

Operate six continuous hours during the event: Emergencies may last days or even weeks. You may be expected to man a radio station between 4-12 hours if you are operating alone or in shifts. Can you sit and operate for extended periods of time with enough backup power? This does not necessarily mean you are making contacts the whole time, but you are in front of the radio, monitoring, and ready to pick up a microphone if you are called. OM x2

Submitted logs will indicate completed objectives. The total points formula is: Total score = (total QSO points) x (OM+1)

Additional Details: 1) All stations are limited to a maximum of 100 Watts PEP. 2)All rules governing amateur radio at your location must be observed. 3) All participants submitting a single entry must be using one call sign. Entrants may not count for QSO credit any contact with anyone who is or was a participant in their WFD operation. 4) QSO credit: Any mode/modem/software normally used in a cross-band, relayed, meshed, or Internet-linked manner (APRS, Winlink, Meshtastic, Packet, etc.) can only be used directly from one station to another (not across a mesh or relay), over amateur RF, and without cross-banding to receive QSO credit. QSOs may be solicited during the event only over amateur RF. Cross-band contacts are not permitted (satellite QSOs are exempted for the objectives). No repeater contacts are allowed, including DMR or YSF-type modes. Multiple transmitters are not allowed to operate on the same band-mode simultaneously. Any mode used must be able to fully transmit the exchange intact and must be able to pass additional information.

Certificates & Log Submission: A downloadable certificate will be available after the event. Logs must be submitted by 23:59 UTC on March 1st to be considered. Late entries cannot be accepted.

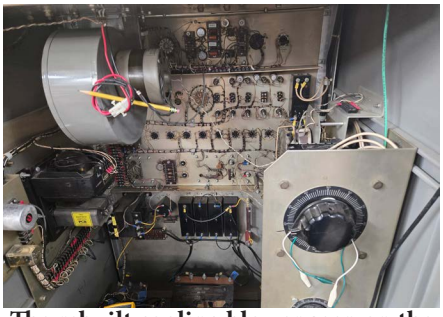
Update on the CCA1000D Broadcast Transmitter Rebuild

By Steve VanSickle, WB2HPR

In November 2022, the original WABY-AM studio and transmitter site in West Albany was razed after many years of service to the local community as a source for news, weather, pop music and commentary. The transmitter, a vintage CCA-1000D AM unit was saved from the scrapheap by a group of dedicated EGARA volunteers, with hope to save this historic apparatus and convert it to Amateur Radio use.

Saving the old WABY transmitter from the scrap heap in November 2022

Its been over 3 years since it was brought to my home in Troy, where it began a S-L-O-W repair and restoration. Previous newsletter articles detailed much of the initial work that had been completed, but more has been done since the last update, so another status report is due -- although the project has been akin to watching a chorus line of snails trying to keep up with the Radio City Rockettes.



The rebuilt cooling blower seen on the upper left was brought back to life after a complete overhaul

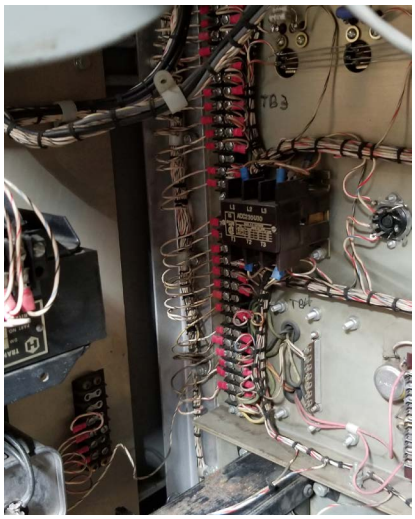
The cooling blower -- used to keep all those glowing tubes from overheating -- has been re-installed and generates gale force winds throughout the various chassis and sub-assemblies. Don Chittenden, N2USM (using his super-human strength) helped reinstall the power cutback variable auto-transformers, which are used to vary the RF output power. A dedicated earth ground/buss-bar was installed to ensure that the metal chassis and frame and all the electronics were bonded to actual earth ground. This is in addition to the ground connection which is a part of the power wiring to the transmitter. The 240 volt power to the transmitter is supplied by a dedicated service (sub) panel. While all these details may seem to be yawn-inducing, they are necessary to ensure that work can proceed in a "Safety-First" environment. And installing of all this takes a LOT of time.

As 2025 drew to a close, the cabinet was finally re-powered after a lengthy hiatus, and the cooling blower ROARED to life! - along with a pilot light indicating "START". The safety interlock remained unlit. With the "Filament" switch set to ON, and after a 75 second delay (by design) – the "READY" light lit up – a very good indication that much of the transmitter control circuitry is functioning. The transmitter driver tube, a 6146 began to emit a nice warm glow from its filament. Another hopeful sign. Before proceeding further, it is necessary to troubleshoot and repair the cabinet safety interlock wiring. Again – it's *SAFETY FIRST*.

That's the very latest with the CCA-1000D restoration. However, as further progress is made, there will be another update. The goal is to get the transmitter on75 meters – and already Joe Ostering N2CJF has donated a Johnson VF-122 VFO for that part of the project. By using the VFO, the transmitter will be able to operate anywhere AM mode is permitted. Without the variable VFO tuning, the unit would be "Rock-Bound" – that is being limited to a single crystal controlled frequency, as it was originally designed.

To say the least, the work is tedious, and a little tricky because the schematics and blue prints are close to correct – but not exact. It appears many undocumented modifications and design changes were made during the production of this equipment. The cabinet, although cavernous, is cramped quarters and requires a lot of planning and patience to access most of the test points and wiring. This really slows down the repair process. After each series of measurements, the equipment is shut down, unplugged, and the breaker turned to "OFF" to prevent equipment damage – or worse! Again – very time consuming. Sadly, those who designed this equipment in the 1960s and 1970s are no longer with us, and many mysteries remain to be solved.

As they say -- stay tuned!



The control circuit wiring has required tedious checking as the schematic is close, but not exact because of undocumented changes

2026: The Year of the Club

The calendar has turned to a new year and ARRL is launching a year-long celebration that puts the spotlight on radio clubs like EGARA. The "Year of the Club" is designated to honor the vital role clubs play in sustaining, growing, and energizing Amateur Radio.

Radio clubs are the backbone of ARRL and of the Amateur Radio Service itself. For countless hams, a club is the first welcoming doorway into the hobby — a place to learn, to operate, to build, and to belong. Clubs create opportunities for mentoring, public service, technical exploration, and lifelong friendships. Simply put, when clubs thrive, Amateur Radio thrives.

Throughout 2026, all ARRL Affiliated Clubs are invited to participate in special programs, operating events, and recognition opportunities designed to celebrate club accomplishments and inspire new ideas. ARRL will be rolling out initiatives focused on supporting club growth, strengthening activities, and recognizing clubs that help expand ARRL membership or reach significant milestones, including 100 years of ARRL Affiliation.

New Ways to Celebrate and Compete

Two exciting contests are already under way to kick off the Year of the Club, highlighting how clubs connect with members and the broader community. The ARRL Club Newsletter Contest recognizes that newsletters are often the heartbeat of a club — sharing news, and keeping members connected and involved. And Club websites play an increasingly important role in outreach, public service visibility, and attracting new members to Amateur Radio. EGARA has already sent entries in for the ARRL Club Newsletter Contest and ARRL Club Website Contest. The winners will be notified in May 2026, honored at the ARRL National Convention being hosted by the Huntsville Hamfest in August, and featured in QST.

A New Home for Clubs Online

In preparation for the Year of the Club, ARRL has launched a new Clubs website, offering a modernized, accessible hub for Affiliated Clubs, prospective clubs, and individual hams looking to get involved with a club. The site brings together information about club benefits, locations, resources, and ARRL Affiliation — all in one place.

A standout new feature is the Club Map search tool, which lets users locate radio clubs by ZIP code and displays both an interactive map and a list of nearby clubs. It's available at: **clubs.arrl.org/map.**

A new, streamlined, online application also simplifies the process for becoming a new ARRL Affiliated Club. And all clubs can use the new Member Verification tool as they set a club goal to increase ARRL membership among club members. The result is faster service, easier updates, and better support for the Affiliated Clubs. Everyone is encouraged to explore the new site and pages at ***clubs.arrl.org*** and ***affiliatedclubs.arrl.org***.

Clubs Featured in QST

During 2026, every issue of QST will include club photos, showcasing the people behind amateur radio's local success stories. Clubs are encouraged to gather members for photos, pose with banners or signs, and submit high-resolution photos along with names, call signs, and club information. It's a simple way to highlight club presence on the national stage. As part of this opportunity, EGARA plans to submit photos to QST highlighting its activities.

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The Year of the Club...

Inspiration, Innovation, and the Year Ahead

ARRL will promote innovative ideas and best practices throughout the year, including content inspired by the MARCONI program — Motivating Amateur Radio Clubs to Open New Initiatives. Clubs are also encouraged to explore creative projects — from kit-building nights and technical workshops to hilltopping, antenna expeditions, and new operating challenges.

The Year of the Club also coincides with the nation's celebration of the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence.

ARRL will mark this national anniversary with special America250 Worked All States awards, including WAS and WAS Triple Play, and clubs will have opportunities to participate through W1AW/portable activations across the country — echoing the excitement of ARRL's Centennial in 2014. The first state activations begin on January 7th. Details can be found online at: ***www.arrl.org/america250-was***.

Be Radio Active in 2026

The message for 2026 is clear: Celebrate what clubs like EGARA already do well, try new things, and be radio active.

Follow all Year of the Club programming at ***clubs.arrl.org/year-of-the-club.*** EGARA encourages all of its members to make 2026 a year to remember — for our club and for Amateur Radio.

Here's a New Years Resolution that's Easy to Keep!

Visit www.EGARA.org/pay-dues

Ham Humor

On the Beam
News & Notes

Feiden Appliance Saves the Day!

The crew from Feiden's Appliance had the new refrigerator installed exactly when promised -- and took the defective unit with them when they left.

When the refrigerator died at the Rensselaer County Search and Rescue building, the problem was clearly serious and some professional troubleshooting was needed. Feiden Appliance was contacted and a service technician quickly determined the compressor had gone bad... and just a month or so after the warranty had expired.

A few days later, a follow-up call delivered even more bad news -- about $450 in parts, with the labor extra. It was beyond the club's budget -- and even worse, the parts were not available.

Hoping that a scratch and dent refrigerator might be available, Feiden's was contacted and the situation was explained. Within an hour, the appliance retailer reached out and offered to replace the defective unit no charge!

On December 30th, Feiden's delivery crew arrived right on time and had the new refrigerator installed in just a few minutes. They also took the defective unit when they left.

In an era that often seems lacking in customer service and help when you need it, Feiden's Appliance clearly showed they stand behind the products they carry -- and that customer service is alive and well when you need it from them.

FCC to Drop Outdated Regs

The Federal Communications Commission is expected to eliminate four obsolete Part 97 provisions on February 10, 2026.

Last October, the FCC adopted a Report and Order to delete almost 400 out-of-date rules pertaining to its wireless services. Among the deletions are four in Part 97 that govern the Amateur Radio Service.

Federal Communications Commission

They include:

- § 97.27. This provision is duplicative of a statutory provision related to the FCC's right to modify station licenses.
- § 97.29. This provision specified an obsolete procedure to replace paper licenses. ARRL proposed deleting this section in comments filed earlier this year.
- § 97.315 (b)(2). This obsolete provision grandfathered HF amplifiers purchased before April 28, 1978 by an amateur radio operator for use at that operator's station, and grandfathered those manufactured before April 28, 1978, for which a marketing waiver was issued.
- § 97.521(b) and Appendix 2. This rule and appendix relate to obsolete VEC regions.

Objections to the changes needed to be filed by January 2nd.

Amateurs Get Expanded 60 Meter Band Privileges

Hams will be getting new operating spectrum in the 60 meter band following the release of a much anticipated Report and Order adopting a new Amateur Radio spectrum allocation in the 60-meter band.

The action follows approval for world-wide use on a secondary basis by the World Radio Communication Conference Final Acts. The Commission also agreed with a petition from ARRL to continue Amateur operations on four existing 60-meter channels outside the international allocation, each with a full 100 watts. The new rules will go into effect 30 days after publication in the Federal Register, when Amateurs may then begin using the allocation.

Specifically, the Commission allocated 5351.5 - 5366.5 kHz (60 meters) to the Amateur service on a secondary basis with a permitted power of 9.15 watts ERP. The Commission also authorized Amateurs to continue using four existing channels outside of the 5351.5 - 5366.5 kHz band centered on 5332, 5348, 5373, and 5405 kHz on a secondary basis with a permitted power of 100 watts ERP. There are no antenna restrictions, but antenna gain must be used to calculate ERP.

The 60-meter allocation is available to Amateurs holding a General Class or above license. The maximum permissible signal bandwidth is 2.8 kHz.

Amateurs are cautioned that this allocation is strictly on a secondary basis, and operators must avoid interfering with non-Amateur stations using this spectrum. This obligation includes the responsibility to monitor for such stations using appropriate receiver bandwidths. The FCC emphasized that "allowing Amateur operations in this band while fully protecting incumbent primary Federal operations is our priority, and even intermittent interference in this band could jeopardize important Federal operations."

The Commission left open ARRL's 2017 Petition for Rulemaking to implement this WRC allocation (RM-11785), stating that "we expect the Commission may address any necessary power adjustments for the new 15 kilohertz international allocation in that proceeding." ARRL will be observing operations in the new band to evaluate the effect of the 9.15-watt limit and already has been monitoring the regulations and experiences of amateurs in other countries.

In addition, the same Report and Order, the FCC updated 420 - 450 MHz coordination and contact information for geographic areas where the peak envelope power (PEP) of Amateur stations operating is generally limited to 50 watts. There was no substantive change to the areas covered by the power limitation.

Celebrate America's 250th Birthday with 250 Contacts

This year will mark a historic milestone for the United States -- the 250th anniversary of its founding. To honor this once-in-a-lifetime event, QRZ is introducing a special commemorative operating award -- The USA 250.

The USA 250 Award is available to Amateur Radio operators worldwide and is granted upon the successful confirmation of 250 two-way contacts with US-based amateur radio stations made during 2026.

Award Requirements

To earn the USA 250 Award, operators must:

- Make 250 confirmed QSOs with US-based Amateur Radio stations (operating from DXCC entities 291, 6, 110, 9, 103, 202 or 285)
- Contacts may be made on any band and any mode, Transmission may not make use of a relay, repeater or Internet linking.
- Licensed operators in any country are eligible
- QSOs must take place during the 2026 calendar year only
- The operating window opens at 00:00 UTC on January 1, 2026

All contacts must be confirmed on QRZ Logbook (imported LoTW confirmations accepted)

The official rules can be found here: ***https://www.qrz.com/page/qrz-operating-awards***

Operating Period: January 1, 2026 00:00:00 – December 31, 2026 23:59:59 (UTC)

A Once-in-a-Lifetime Celebration

From coast to coast and across all bands, the USA 250 Award celebrates the spirit of amateur radio, international friendship, and the shared history of the United States. Whether you're chasing states, filling your log, or just enjoying special-year activity, 2026 will be the perfect time to get on the air.

Get ready to log, confirm, and celebrate USA 250!

Santa Net Connects Kids Through Ham Radio

EGARA Members to Consider Joining the Net Next Christmas

Children across the U.S. were able to check in with Santa again this past holiday season thanks to Santa Net -- an annual holiday tradition for the past twenty years.

Santa Net runs each holiday season on 3.916 MHz and operated from November 28th and through December 23rd. It began running Thursday through Saturday night until December 18th -- at which point the net ran nightly operations.

"We enjoy helping young people and their families have a shared Christmas experience that they'll always remember," said Pete Thomson, KE5GGY. "Christmastime is a very special time for our nets every year. And we're thrilled to introduce young people to the excitement of Amateur Radio."

Youngsters talk to "Santa at The North Pole" via strategically placed operators who relay the voice of Santa. Thomson said that The Santa Net is a team effort that involves the efforts of a number of "3916 Net" members. He said, "In our first year, we connected 10 kids to Santa on Ham Radio and it's grown steadily since." This past Christmas over 1,000 children had the chance to speak with Ol' St. Knick.

A typical conversation would start with a familiar voice crackling on the radio and then becoming clear.

"Ho, ho, ho, Merry Christmas to Pennsylvania," Santa said this holiday season to two youngsters listening in at the ham radio at the University of Scranton where volunteers help kids connect to the North Pole. Nathaniel Frissell, associate professor of physics and engineering, answered the call: "This is Whiskey Three Uniform Sierra Romeo… we can hear you," Frissell said.

The Santa Net is actually operated by several groups who work through the main Santa Net organization. They include The 3916 Nets. The Rag Chew Crew, The Tailgaters and The Freewheelers -- all Amateur Radio nets that meet every night on the 80 meter band at 3.916 MHz.

Ham radio operators have coordinated the holiday tradition through Santa Net and this year marked its 20th anniversary of holiday operations. The 3916 Nets, a group that calls itself the "friendliest nets in all of Ham radio," provides the experience at no charge to families.

At the University of Scranton, its Amateur station welcomes youngsters, with students and community volunteers helping them speak to Santa on ham radio. "People are just so excited to be able to do it. They love hearing him laugh, you know, 'ho ho ho' on the radio, and just get to talk to him," Frissell said. "It's really, really nice."

"Last year, we had a lot of fun with it, and the kids seemed to really love it. So this year, we figured we'd get a little more organized and try to do it every night that we could get the kids in," Martin said.

Before Santa starts his radio calls, families or Ham radio operators put their information in a digital queue through the Santa Net website (***https://www.cqsanta.com/***). This past holiday season Santa first talked to kids from New Jersey, then Kansas. Pennsylvania was next. "It's really great for ham radio, because it really shows families that this is one more reason why ham radio is interesting," Nathaniel Frissell said. "I think it really brings an extra sparkle to the holiday season."

EGARA members will be asked to consider participating with the Santa Net during the next holiday season, allowing Capital District youngsters the opportunity to also speak directly with the North Pole and Santa.

New Technician Class Question Pool Released

The first release of the 2026 Technician class license exam question pool is out, and can be found at: ***https://ncvec.org/index.php/2026-2030-technician-question-pool.*** The questions are created by the National Conference of Volunteer Examiner Coordinators (NCVEC), which administers Amateur Radio licensing tests on behalf of the FCC. EGARA has several accredited Volunteer Examiners (VEs) who periodically offer licensing exam sessions.

The new pool includes 409 questions, compared to 412 in the prior pool, incorporating significant changes compared to the prior pool. Also included are three diagrams used for some of the questions. The questions were checked for technical accuracy and relevance to current Amateur Radio practices, as well as for grammar, syntax, format, clarity, and for redundancy.

What Changed?

Here's a quick breakdown:

- 27 new questions added
- 30 questions removed
- 69 questions with changed wording
- 8 questions moved to different IDs (same content, new number)

The New Stuff

The new questions also cover some topics that weren't previously in the Technician pool. These include:

- **Licensing details:** How you receive your license (email from the FCC), when you can renew (90 days before expiration)
- **Digital modes:** More emphasis on DMR (code plugs, color codes), Winlink for emergency email, and FT8 privileges for Technicians
- **Station control:** Clearer definitions of control operators, remote control, and auxiliary stations
- **Propagation beacons:** Where to find HF beacons on 10 meters (28.200-28.300 MHz)
- **Practical knowledge:** How ohmmeters work, VFO function, foam vs solid dielectric coax, weatherproofing connectors

Wording Updates

Many of the "changed" questions are minor cleanups, such as adding hyphens to "2-meter" instead of "2 meter," spelling out abbreviations like DTMF and CTCSS, or rewording questions slightly for clarity. However, a few notable wording changes worth mentioning:

- The ionosphere question now says "reflect" instead of "refract or bend" (same concept, different terminology—and yes, hams will argue about which is more correct)
- Auroral backscatter is now described as having a "raspy sound" rather than "varying signal strength"
- FT8 setup now references generic "FT8 software" instead of specifically naming WSJT-X
- The dummy load answer now explicitly includes "50-ohm" in the description

What Got Removed?

Some questions that were removed include the 219-220 MHz segment restrictions, the definition of a beacon (replaced with a question about where to find them), and a few that were consolidated or replaced with updated versions.

VECs and Volunteer Examiners must use test designs based on the new pool starting on 1st July 2026. Current ARRL VEC Technician Class exam booklets (2022 series) and computer-generated Technician Class exams created from the 2022 question pool are valid until 30th June 2026. After that, old versions should be destroyed.

Anyone studying now and who plans to test before July 1, 2026, will still be tested on the current 2022-2026 pool. The new pool only applies to exams administered on or after that date.

By May 2026. ARRL plans to have new editions of Technician Class study materials, including The ARRL Ham Radio License Manual, Gordon West Technician Class License Prep book, and ARRL's Tech Q&A.

CALENDAR

January 8, 2026 @ 7 pm - Regular Monthly Club Meeting, Search & Rescue Building

January 24, 2026 @ 9:30 am - Winter Field Day and Pancake Breakfast

Pro Tip: Choke It, Twice

Is interference and noise ruining your enjoyment of the HF band? It just might be CMC -- or Common Mode Current.

CMC occurs whenever there's an electrical imbalance. End-fed and Off-Center-Fed antennas are often susceptible to it, but it can happen on dipoles too (even though they're theoretically balanced).

When an imbalance occurs, it can force RF back down the outside shield of your coax line, and also pick up noise and interference from external sources.

Finding and eliminating such external interference sources is one way to improve your HF listening experience, but that's not always possible.

A better solution often is to install a choke, preferably near the antenna feed point. And an even better solution is to install another choke on your coax feedline just before it enters your transceiver.

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

- **Hallicrafters Model SX-28-A Super Skyrider receiver. The receiver was refurbished in 2008 and has not been used in several years as the owner became an SK shortly after. Estate sale.**
- **Contact: fitzgerald.judith.a@gmail.com**

- **Yaesu 891 HF All Mode Mobile Transceiver. Like new with box and manual. Used only twice for field work. Legendary receiver design in a compact package, providing exceptional performance for both the mobile and stationary Amateur operations. High end 32-Bit floating point DSP enhances the operating experience providing a cleaner, clearer signal and reducing overall operator fatigue. Retail is $650. Offered at $500.**
- **Kenwood TS-690S Transceiver, 160-6 meters, with user and service manuals. Includes microphone. Runs on 12 volt PS. Great radio in excellent condition and ready to go. $450.**

Contact Bryan @ W2RBJ@outlook.com

- **Any Tone 5555N 10 meter Radio. AM, FM, SSB, and CW. 30 WATTS. Like New. Radio, Mic, Power Cord, mounting bracket and Manual. 28 to 29.7 MHz. Nice and clean. Factory carton. $155.00 Runs on 12V. Includes shipping From FL to NY.**

Contact John at: radiowizzz@aol.com

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