

Hamgram

March 2018

Winona Amateur Radio Club
Winona, Minnesota



Skywarn training Thursday at club meeting

The people of Winona County depend on the storm spotting skills of Winona Amateur Radio Club Hams. To assure member skills are top-notch there will be storm spotter training at the club's March meeting, 7 p.m., Thursday, March 15, at the Winona County Office Building, 202 W. 3rd St.

Training is intended for storm spotters or potential storm spotters, but is open to the public and free of charge. Warning Coordination Meteorologist Todd Shea, KB9YXS, teaches the signs of severe weather, illustrates the kinds of cloud formations that can lead to severe weather and he will give a review of recent and past severe weather.

The National Weather Service is responsible for issuing severe weather warnings that alert people when a potential threat will affect their area. To do this, NWS meteorologists study the environment leading up to a severe weather event in great detail and monitor advanced Doppler Radar data. This technology does have limitations though. By adding in real-time reports from what the storm is actually doing makes warnings that much more accurate, credible, and timely. Spotter reports help verify if severe weather is or did occur during the official warning. The NWS will always need storm spotters. There are roughly 1,500 storm spotters in the 14 country La Crosse NWS warning area.

It is recommended that storm spotters attend the class at least every other year.

The NWS relies heavily on actual storm reports from "spotters", which can include sheriff's departments, local



emergency management officials, police and fire departments, amateur radio operators, or anyone else that has attended one of these classes. These reports can prompt warnings that save lives – a proven fact seen many times in our region.

The class will last around two hours and includes a multimedia presentation. Shea organizes the training annually and encourages large groups and active volunteers to receive training as well as to retake it at least every other year.

Members of the Winona Amateur Radio Club believe strongly in the training and are sharing their monthly meeting with the public so the

community is better prepared for severe weather.

"Accurate and timely reports of severe weather, by trained individuals, not only helps our office, but can save lives in the local community," says Shea. "We always need more eyes to the sky."

Winona County, as well as other areas of southeast Minnesota, always need more "ground-truth" weather reports to pass along to the National Weather Service.

There are alternative Skywarn training sessions:

March 13, Houston, 6:30 p.m.

March 14, on-line webinar, 10 a.m.

April 3, La Crosse, 7 p.m.

http://www.weather.gov/arx/skywarn_schedule

The regional NWS training schedule is available at:

www.weather.gov/lacrosse/skywarn_schedule

CW, SOTA, ski hills and the Canary Islands

By Peter Ebertowski, KDØYOB

I took advantage of good weather Feb. 14 to enjoy portable radio operations for Summits on The Air (SOTA) activity. The summits were hilltops in the Merrilan- Alma Center area of Wisconsin: Bruce Mound; and an unnamed ridge south of Alma Center. There was about eight inches to a foot of snow cover, sunshine, and a projected high temperature of 40 degrees F.

I wasn't sure that I would have access to Bruce Mound, since it is an operating ski area. It's usually closed Wednesdays but when I arrived it was open for Gale Ettrick Trempealeau elementary students to go snow tubing. At the ski shop I spoke with an employee who confirmed that it was okay for me to hike to the top of the hill. After a short climb with a few breathers, my pack full of radio gear and I were at the top. I set up an end fed half-wave antenna for twenty meters as a sloper from a tree limb, connected it to the Yaesu FT857D, and connected to an external lithium battery. I used a APRS-capable handheld to spot myself on the Sotawatch webpage - KDØYOB QRY on 14.347 SSB.



I worried about band conditions on 20 meters because it seemed that it was poor earlier in the week when I used the club's remote station to chase SOTA activators. I decided to stick with my usual power of 40 watts for SSB, and I was happy when I got 55 signal reports from both coasts. After the fourth contact I heard EA2LU in Spain. Not bad! A few calls later, I logged DJ5AV in Germany, then two Belgium stations toward the end of my time on 20 meters. Great!

Using the same tree, I put my antenna for 40 meters up as an inverted vee and was able to log another dozen chasers before packing up and heading back to the parking lot. I had spent 40 minutes of radio time, and an equal amount of time scouting, setting up, grabbing a granola bar and water, and breaking down.

Lunch was a turkey sandwich and chips while driving to the second site. The trailhead for it is a gated unused road that provides access to a quarry owned by the town of Alma. When I arrived at the start of the road, I saw a snowbank over two feet high that made driving the hundred feet in to the gate impossible. Fortunately, the shoulders of the county road had been plowed and were wide enough to park safely. I grabbed my portable CW paddle and put it into the top pocket of my pack, strapped on my snowshoes, and stepped up onto the snowbank. A half mile of walking on the quarry road put me in the continuous area below the

summit that is considered 'close enough' vertically according to SOTA rules. The actual summit was on adjacent private property.

It took several tries to toss a water bottle with line tied to it over a sufficiently high tree branch. I attached the end of the 20 meter EFHW antenna and pulled it up as a sloper. APRS worked well again for spotting, and I was calling "CQ SOTA" on USB at 2100 UTC. I made about 12 contacts in as many minutes, then called CQ for a few more minutes with no response, before getting ready for 40 meters.

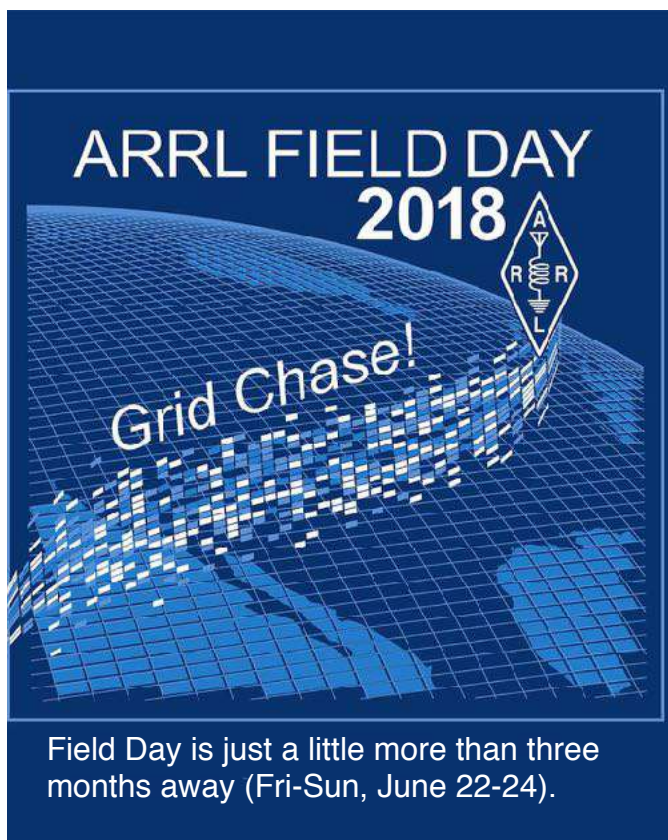
I had a hard time finding a clear frequency for phone on 40m, so plugged in the portable CW paddle and affixed it to the top of the radio. Finding a quiet frequency, I sent

"QRL?" and listened two times before beginning to sending "CQ CQ CQ SOTA DE KDØYOB KDØYOB K". I left plenty of space between words to set a pattern that I hoped the chasers would also use. I paused to send another APRS message to SOTA on the handheld that spotted myself on 7.059 and included a request for QRS CW.

I was more than a little

nervous (this was my third time using CW for a SOTA activation), but the only difficulty with the initial QSOs was being able to hear anything in the mini-pileup except a trailing couple of letters. The calls were familiar ones belonging to the most active chasers. I followed the typical SOTA exchange: the complete call, a signal report, and the prosign BK. Listening, I logged the signal reports and time next to the chaser's call, and when it was my turn, responded RR TU 73 dit dit, and listened for the next discernible callsign fragment from the chasers.

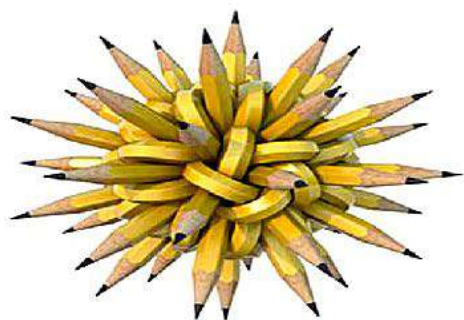
As a CW newbie, I felt good about copying callsigns, and signal reports were no problem, though the occasional GL for good luck and other comments gave me pause. Then came a strange string of letters and numbers that left me befuddled, even after a few repeats. I was a little tired by then, so after sending SRI, I decided to close station. I signed off, and began packing up, all the while wondering what callsign or information I had been unable to copy. I later learned that it was EA8/HB9FIH in the Canary Islands. I ended up making 15 CW contacts and left with a mixed sense of accomplishment and awareness of my limitations as a CW operator. The frustrations I felt were more than matched by the thrill of communicating.



**ARRL FIELD DAY
2018**

Grid Chase!

Field Day is just a little more than three months away (Fri-Sun, June 22-24).



VE testing availabilities

Rochester

- Thursday May 3, 6:30 p.m.
- Thursday Aug. 2, 6:30 p.m.
- Thursday, Nov. 1, 6:30 p.m.

American Red Cross Building, 310 14th Street SE, Rochester
Pre-Registration needed. Contact Bob Dubke, 507 398-5964 or K0SIR@arrrl.net.

La Crosse

- Sat. April 28, 9 a.m.
- Sat. June 1, 9 a.m.
- Sat. Aug. 4 (RARC Swapfest), 9 a.m.
- Sat. Nov. 10, 9 a.m.

Register five days in advance with Roger Reader, KA9BKK,
608 783-0723 or readers@centurtytel.net.

Basic HAZMAT incident guidelines

Approach the scene cautiously--from uphill and upwind. If you have binoculars, use them!

Try to identify the material by the four-digit number on a placard or orange panel.

Call for help immediately and let the experts handle the situation. Do not attempt to take any action beyond your level of training. Know what you are capable of doing.

Case Study

You are traveling through a rural area right behind a tornado, reporting damage and casualties to the local agencies as you go. Cresting a hill, you see a tank trailer overturned on the road ahead. No one else is present. A variable wind is blowing the leaking fumes in several directions unpredictably. You cannot see the placards on the truck from where you are. What would you do?"

Suggestion: Stay far away from the accident, first of all. Try to obtain binoculars, and if possible to see far enough with them, read the hazmat placards for the four-digit number. Try to read the name of the material on the placard. Do not try to get closer. Use whatever means available to call for help, report the incident and let trained professionals respond and handle the situation. Even ordinary firefighters and police are prohibited by federal law from taking certain actions at some HazMat incidents, so do not personally take any action beyond reporting and warning others from approaching.



There is a cool boost for those participating in the ARRL International Grid Chase: Gridmapper, (<http://wg7j.reinalda.net/gridmapper/gridmapper.php>) a Google Earth mapper, courtesy of Johan, WG7J, that slurps up an ADIF log file and spits out the grid squares we have worked and confirmed. It's easy enough to just use but if the options puzzle you, click the question-mark-diamond at the top of the web page.



Villagers required in school and on the radio

By Bob Seaquist, W9LSE

I am a “villager,” that is, one of the nameless kids in the background of the school play. Remember in grade school when three or four talented kids (probably brown-nosers) got the lead parts and the rest of us became “villagers” meant to provide a chorus or a background? It’s important to have a background, not only so parents can see their kid on stage but also to improve the show. It’s the same with QSO parties and other radio contests: the big guns need the rest of us to help fill their logs. Speaking as an operator lower than a spit wad, it’s fun to play even if your station is basic and your skills are not developed.

I am writing this March 11 with the hiss and crackle of the Wisconsin QSO party sputtering from my headphones. It’s been a difficult afternoon in the ‘party’ because the noise levels are horrible; earlier, at the party’s open, no one was on the air. At least I could hear no one. I persisted though because every show needs “villagers.”

Real contesters love to have us stumbling around the airwaves simply because we are one more contact in their logs. Sure, there are a few jerks out there who tell you, in clear terms, how bad you are as a Ham, but real contesters won’t give you a bad time, instead they’re happier n’ heck you’re there. And, with a few times trying it, maybe you’ll be a real contester too.

I persisted also because I really like QSO parties, at least the ones in Minnesota and Wisconsin. Even the hardcore guys are easy going. One who said I was a dupe then took a lot of time to find our contact and help me figure out what I did wrong (one missed letter of his call). He may have missed several Qs in the meantime, but it’s that kind of friendliness that makes QSO parties fun.

Once scores are tabulated I’ll probably be on one of the last pages with my paltry entries but, for me, it was an afternoon worth spent in headphones.

Are you planning?

A couple short snowstorms from now and it will be time to take a fresh look at your outside gear. Did your tower and wires make it through the winter? Is your co-ax and its connectors working the best? Do you need new antennas? (and who doesn’t need more aluminum in the air?)

It’s time to start planning those projects because, before you know it, the ground will be frozen and the snow flying.



[The Empire of Noise](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nXV4nTfGHuI) (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nXV4nTfGHuI>) is a documentary about radio jamming used during the Cold War era. The producers incorporated jamming noise as part of the audio narration, which amply demonstrates why it can be such a deterrent to listening.

Club executive board proceedings were not available at the Hamgram's deadline.

Articles Wanted!

Without your help we cannot reproduce a quality newsletter so consider submitting an article!

All relevant articles are welcomed for inclusion in the Hamgram. If not an article, let us help you flesh out your idea.

The deadline is at least a week before the club's monthly meeting. Send your material to Bob Seaquist, W9LSE at seaquist.robe@eagle.uwlax.edu. Don't worry about the formatting, we can take care of that.

WØNE Repeaters

146.640 PL 100.0 Hz *

146.835 PL 131.8 Hz **

444.225 PL 100.0Hz FM Voice C4FM Digital *

442.150, 100 Hz. FM Voice C4FM Digital *

SkyWarn Net when activated.

** Sunday Night Net—8:30 p.m.



Winona Amateur Radio club meetings are 7 p.m., third Thursday of the month at the Winona County Office Building, 202 West Third St., Winona. The monthly program is open to the public.



Winona Amateur Radio Club, Inc. P.O. Box 1451, Winona, MN 55987

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At Large: Dan Goltz, WKØW; Mike Foerster, WØIH

Dues: \$25 per calendar year per license holder. \$30 per calendar year for all licensed members of the same family within the same household.

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Distribution to individual members by USPS is available upon request. Editor: Bob Seaquist, W9LSE. Address comments and

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club programs are held on the third Thursday. The submission deadline for the Hamgram is Wednesday of the week prior to that of the club programs

