

## Time to check the tower before snow blows



W9LSE's tower has been up only a year but it still needs a pre-Winter inspection.

It has been almost exactly a year since my erection meaning it is time to prepare for the snow, cold and radio operating of the coming winter. It would be no fun if the tower or any part of it failed leaving my station crippled until Spring's warmth.

It seems like only yesterday that a bunch of elderly gentlemen, a sign company crane, a 40' aluminum self-supporting tower and myself were gathered in my front yard. Erection of the tower went well due to the expertise of the crane operator and despite the advice by friends gathered to "help."

In the intervening 12 months there has been sun, rain, wind, lightning and wide temperature variations. Clearly the tower needs a once-over to make sure it's ready for another winter's safe operating. For sure it'd be a catastrophe if it fell in my neighbor's bedroom and if coax came apart ending use of an antenna 'til Spring.

Better organized Hams with deeper pockets assure their safety and good technical operation with more frequent inspections. "Each year, W1AW and W1HQ get two antenna and tower inspections, one in the spring and one in the fall," explained ARRL Test Engineer Bob Allison, WB1GCM.

I borrowed a checklist from the ARRL book "Antenna Towers for Radio Amateurs" by Don Daso, K4ZA. He has you start at the bottom and work your way up, from the tower base, anchors, guy wires, turnbuckles, ground system condition, tower hardware, antennas and finally cables.

Keep track of what you saw and what you did. A station notebook is essential, according to our own Mike Cizek, W0VTT. He, and Daso, suggest the notebook be fleshed out on details for your installation.

Make up a check list and go over it several times over several days so you get every thing down on paper, then proceed

to check everything, tick it off as you do, so nothing will be forgotten.

Writing it down makes sense. You will forget details as time passes, so having a written record makes your job much easier.

Some Hams use a three-ring binder notebook and some keep a log on their computer, complete with digital images to back up observations.

### Your shack notebook

Your memory may be good but it's sure nice to have some backup for details like wiring details and technical parameters in your shack. A shack notebook can be a lifesaver. Here are some good things to include in that notebook

**Serial numbers:** when you purchase gear record relevant data including model number, serial number, purchase date and price.

**Antenna system:** beside the usual SWR or impedance readings and descriptions include data on the type of coax or feed light, date installed, information of connectors and the color code used.

**Towers:** installation and maintenance information including guy tensions, hardware used, relevant data on tower bases and guy anchors, etc. It helps point out changes from inspection to inspection.

**Rotator System:** voltage and resistance readings, color codes etc.

**Station Signal Flow Chart:** block diagram of every signal or circuit path in your shack. It is helpful when bad things happen to remind you what each box and connector does.

**Work List:** a place for "to-do" thoughts as well as dreams and experiments.





Operating Special Event Station N2B for the Great River Shakespeare Festival helps Dale Cohenour, KEØEKD, and other club members be better public service operators in community emergencies.

## SET Oct. 1-2

The annual Simulated Emergency Test (SET) is Oct 1-2 as a way to check your strengths and weaknesses in emergency preparedness and communications.

During SET, a nationwide radio communications network is set up that links every major city and most of the country. This infrastructure is set up from scratch within a few hours at locations that vary from state and local government Emergency Operations Centers to isolated areas without utilities of any kind. Every mode of radio communications is utilized including analog, digital, voice, data, simplex, duplex, satellites and even automated relay stations launched on aircraft and with weather balloons. This radio communications network is exercised with the objective of proving the system's readiness and capabilities. Then as quickly as it was set up, the system.

The system has demonstrated its value during earthquakes, hurricanes, forest fires, terrorist attacks and other disasters.

## Fun before emergencies

Having fun is a good way to have fun, especially in a multi-faceted radio club. Members of the Winona Amateur Radio Club participate in a number of activities, each helping reinforce another. Scott Davis, N3FJP, author of the many N3FJP logging programs, wrote an article for the August 2016 issue of QST titled "Kick-start Your Group with Club Contesting." He tells of his club's experience – and success – when it engaged in contesting. They had the camaraderie of working together on a shared goal. It was fun and it built interest in the club.



There's more! Contesting requires operators to be good at many things like technical knowledge, very good radio operating skills, very good listening, accurate copy and very good communication. Those are the same kind of skills we need in our public service activities!

Net Control Station operation for the Trinona triathlon works more smoothly for Lance Tagliapietra, AD0UT, and other club members because they've participated in club contesting such as the Minnesota QSO Party





# September is National Preparedness Month

September is recognized as National Preparedness Month, a reminder that we all must take action to prepare, now and throughout the year, for the types of emergencies that could affect us. This year's theme, "Don't Wait, Communicate. Make Your Emergency

Plan Today," is a continuing emphasis on preparedness for youth, older adults, and people with disabilities and others with access and functional needs. For more information go to [www.ready.gov/](http://www.ready.gov/)



## When All Else Fails...

Some Hams doubt they'll ever be needed for emergency communications. Some also doubt public emergency responders would ever call on them to help. Yet an incident May 8 involving an LP propane tanker rollover on Hwy. 61, near La Moille, offers some insight:

The propane tanker over corrected and rolled into the ditch. A recording of the radio traffic showed communications broke down and was confusing. Minnesota's statewide 800 MHz radios were supposed to fix this, but it has not. Again, each agency was using its own frequencies and though dispatch opened "ops channel 9" for all responders, it was not used. In addition, traffic from the incident and routine traffic overwhelmed dispatch.

Add to that, the accident site has poor radio propagation. The initial cell phone calls reporting the accident were poor because of drop outs, and GPS coordinates were not available because the calls had to come from a Wisconsin cell tower, and Wisconsin data is not forwarded with the calls to Minnesota. 800 MHz traffic included some "digitizing", making some calls unreadable.

Incident command broke down also as some responders were making decisions and reports that should have been left to the incident commander, resulting in confusion about responders being cancelled mid route.

The Pickwick Fire Department knows it has the worst possible area for radio coverage. It is prepared to call for Amateur Radio operators to assist because Amateur Radio gets through in the woods, ravines or swamps.

If the tank would have ruptured, an evacuation area of 1/2 mile would have been needed. If it had caught fire, the protocol is to evacuate everyone within a mile of the site, and let it burn out which could last days. That would have been a whole new scenario with a whole bunch of new communications challenges.



The scenic bicycle event, Ride The Ridges, will be a communications challenge for Winona Amateur Radio Club members Saturday, Sept. 17. The ride takes riders through some of the most scenic areas in Southeastern Minnesota – from lush valleys along streams to bluffs overlooking the Mississippi River. That, in radio language, means places that radio avoids. Ride sponsor, the Winona Rotary Club, called on amateur radio operators after some serious incidents occurred in areas with sketchy or non-existent cell coverage.

The ride is extensive and covers routes in southern Winona County and Northern Houston County. We'll be working with Winona County SOAR, and SOAR is not able to cross county lines.

Club Public Service Chair Dan Goltz, WKØW, has reviewed the route and plans to use the 146.97 machine in La Crosse and the WARC 440 repeater which has very good coverage into the southern part of the county. "The routes are very challenging for communications and a combination of amateur radio, cell phone, and 800MHz county radios will be used to provide reasonably reliable communications," says Goltz

The club had experience with bicycle events in extremely challenging areas by providing support for two Trempealeau County rides.



## WARC Board Meeting

**August 9, 2016, Watkins Hall, Winona State University**

*Present: Board members: Lance Tagliapietra, ADØUT, Syed Faruque, ACØVA, Paul Schumacher, KØZYV, Dan Goltz, WKØW; Non Board Members: John Kowalik, K2OPT, Mike Foerster, WØIH, Bob Seaquist, W9LSE.*

Called to order by Paul at around 7 PM.

### Minutes

Lance Tagliapietra, ADØUT (ex KBØYJU) updated call sign was not in the Minutes. Will be corrected. Minutes approved.

### Treasurer Report

Dan had a question on budgeted items and how much of the budgeted item spent. Paul stated we approve the expenses and budget and we do not track that detail. Treasurer Report was approved.

### Committee Reports

#### Public Service Report

Dan added that SKYWARN/Emergency alert system worked world wide (Ireland where Erik was vacationing and in Hawaii, Les was there).

Dan also explained little bit on the SKYWARN activation process.

Mike stated to visit Witoka tower will need good bug spray.

Paul distributed a copy of loan agreement between club and members as discussed during earlier Board Meetings. Paul explained more details agreement. Dan explained the intent and goal of the

loan. It will be used for particular projects and will be paid back in two years. Dan mentioned it is a way of speeding up the procurement as fundraising takes shape. Dan also stated this is standard practice of non-profits. Treasurer and designated fund manager (Les) will manage loan. Currently club would like to procure a HF radio. Lance mentioned we need to keep some funds for functional emergencies as we are getting low on our funds.

A motion to approve the loan agreement was approved.

Lance in his report stated he is working on APRS issues. He has the APRS node that was part Rushford Peterson APRS on his bench. Lance working on regenerating the program as this particular unit had damage from lightning. Lance is particularly interested to find out what are the issues at Roosters Ridge APRS site. A comparison of these two APRS setups might lead to some solutions. Grounding is one of prime suspect per Lance.

Paul updated board on work of Education Committee. Paul is working with Melanie on the classes. We will have General Class license and possibly Technician Class License. Mel agreed to spearhead the efforts per Paul.

John had ideas about making cheap name tags at a local key store. John had some copies made. Lance mentioned we

can bring this up during monthly general club meeting.

Dan did not have an update on T-shirts and such from a new supplier from Winona. Supplier contacts Dan once in a while. Lance mentioned we can bring this one also during upcoming general meeting and see if people would be interested to order club gear. Bob mentioned Tee- Shirts/ Jackets from last time around were very nice. Dan will bring the catalog to the club meeting. Lance mentioned he might be out of country on job related travel and might not be able to co-ordinate next month's general meeting. Details to follow.

Mike updated board on work on Witoka tower like updating PC and other stuff. Everything is documented. Lance mentioned everything is working fine in Witoka tower. Also, Lance proposed to Mike to do a presentation on how to run remote operation from Witoka tower during our upcoming general meeting. Mike then talked more about possibility of Witoka tower, its usage and new HF Radio unit. Dan mentioned general club member is very less knowledgeable on use of remote operation. We can change that with presentation and sharing information. Discussion continued more on usage of Witoka tower.

Meeting was then adjourned.

#### WØNE Repeaters

146.640 PL 100.0 Hz \*

146.835 PL 131.8 Hz \*\*

444.225 PL 100.0Hz FM Voice C4FM Digital

\* SkyWarn Net when activated.

\*\* Sunday Night Net—8:30 p.m.

**The Winona Amateur Radio Club meets the Third Thursday, 7 p.m. at the Winona County Office Building, 202 West Third Street**

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

President: Paul Schumacher, KØZYV, [pschumacher@winona.edu](mailto:pschumacher@winona.edu)

Vice President: Lance Tagliapietra, ADØUT, [lancetag@hbc.com](mailto:lancetag@hbc.com)

Treasurer: Harro Hohenner, KG6RLM, [Harro@hohenner.com](mailto:Harro@hohenner.com)

Secretary: Syed Faruque, ACØVA, [sfaruque@yahoo.com](mailto:sfaruque@yahoo.com)

Custodian: Erik Brom, WBØNIU, [ewbrom@hbc.com](mailto:ewbrom@hbc.com)

At Large: Dan Goltz, WKØW; Leslie Hittner KØBAD

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

Send dues to: Harro Hohenner, Treasurer, P.O. Box 1451, Winona, MN 55987

Hamgram is published monthly by The Winona Amateur Radio Club, Inc. Distribution is via e-mail and the [WØNE.org](http://WØNE.org)

Web site. Distribution to individual members by USPS is available upon request. Editor: Bob Seaquist, W9LSE.

Address comments and Hamgram correspondence to: Bob Seaquist, 202 Zephyr Circle, La Crosse, Wis. 54601 or [seaquist.robe@eagle.uwlax.edu](mailto:seaquist.robe@eagle.uwlax.edu)

Monthly 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

