

Hamfest Calendar

2016

Jan 17 St. Charles, IL
 Jan 23 Collinsville, IL
 Feb 12 Orlando, FL
 Mar 6 Sterling, IL
 Mar 12 Brazil, IN
 Apr 2 AES Superfest, Milwaukee WI



VE Exam Schedule

Jan 24 2016 Twin City Amateur Radio Club
 1:00 PM (Walk-ins allowed) ARRL/VEC
 Debra J. Fligor (217) 762-3232 n9dn@n9dn.net
 Univ of IL Fire Service Inst 11 Gerty Dr Champaign

Apr 17 2016 Twin City Amateur Radio Club
 1:00 PM (Walk-ins allowed) ARRL/VEC
 Debra J. Fligor (217) 762-3232 n9dn@n9dn.net
 Univ of IL Fire Service Inst 11 Gerty Dr Champaign

No other exams through April within 50 miles of CU are listed on the ARRL Web at the time of this publication.

Twin City Amateur Radio Club

Champaign-Urbana, Illinois

January 2016
 Milt Forsberg K9QZI Editor



Meeting

Our next monthly meeting is 7 pm Tuesday Our program is a presentation on the National Parks on the Air event. This is an ARRL activity for the year 2016 where Amateur Radio Operators may operate from all US National Parks and many other Federal areas. It is an interesting concept, designed to increase activity on our bands.

There is an informal gathering at Culver's on South Neil around 6, prior to the meeting. All are welcome.

To get to the Fire Institute, go south on First Street from the Assembly Hall to the UI Credit Union - That is Gerty. Go West on Gerty to the end of the street. You will be in the Fire Institute parking lot. We are in one of the classrooms inside.

TCARC Board Meeting

The TCARC Board meets on the first Wednesday of each month at 5:30 p.m. at Culver's on South Neil Street. This arrangement allows Board Members who are also ARES members to go directly to the ARES meeting at 7, and lets them spend one evening for 2 meetings instead of taking 2 evenings. No meetings are planned for July and August.

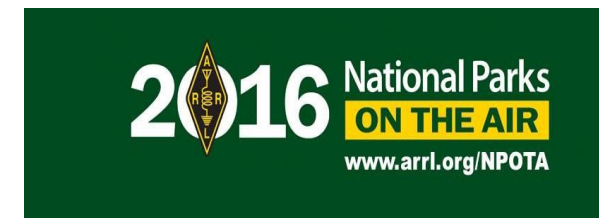
Our Next VE Session

January 24, 2016
 UI Fire Institute

Please contact Debbie Fligor, N9DN, for information.

Local Nets

ARES	444.100	Tuesday 9 p.m.
Illinois D-Star	443.48125	Wednesday 9 p.m.
Champaign Co	146.760	Thursday 9 p.m.
Illini Net	14.320	11:30 a.m. Daily
		◆Except Thursday



2016 Dues

This is just a reminder that 2016 dues are now payable. Thanks to everyone who paid already. There is a note with your newsletter email indicating your status. Dues remain at \$20 per year. All licensed family members living in the same household are included with for just \$1 more, making the total payment \$21. Dues can be paid at the club meeting or mailed to our PO Box on page 4. Please contact Milt K9QZI if your status is in error.

New Extra Pool Questions Released

The July 1 2016 Extra questions are available at:
ncvec.org

TCARC Officers and Board Members

President	Wayne Hamilton AB9FJ	384-4310
Vice President		
Secretary	Chris Anderson W9CMA	403-1599
Treasurer	Milt Forsberg K9QZI	352-5075

Board Members

Kevin Coogan	KC8RFE	2016	
Al Wolfe	K9SI	2017	722-8803
Tom Lea	K5LEA	2018	586-5377

VE Coordinator

Debbie Fligor N9DN	244-4446
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Website	www.w9seh.org
Analog Repeater K9CU	146.760
D-Star Repeater W9YR	443.48125

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TCARC
 PO Box 2061
 Champaign, IL 61825-2061

Bill Butler WB9KMD sk

It is with much sadness that we report the passing of Bill Butler, WB9KMD, on January 5. Bill was a member of TCARC for many years, farther back than most of us can remember. He was very active with the club and Amateur Radio most of his life. He and his wife, Pat, WB9PAT, rarely missed any of our activities until 2 years ago when their health declined. They moved to Mahomet to be near their sons and daughter. Pat passed away in October. Bill's funeral is 1 pm Tuesday, January 12 in Sidney. Visitation is prior to the funeral. We will miss Bill and Pat.

Auction Date April 9

We are confirmed for April 9 for our 2016 auction. The Windsor Road Christian Church is booked, Amateur Accessories will attend, and we ordered good weather! It's not too soon to dig through your equipment and make a pile to bring to the auction. We always appreciate donations to the club where we sell the item and retain the sale price. Of course, everyone may bring items to sell where the club retains 10% of the selling price. This is our main fund raiser. More details later.

Echolink

Echolink is now operating normally. With the new computer installed, the system sounds good. There was a minor problem with the control feature, but that was resolved. It was due to a name change on the new computer and is now working well. Thanks to Matt KD9CYR and AB9FJ for their efforts in locating and fixing it.

W9IPA Update

The W9IPA D-Star repeater is back on the air. Technical problems caused Kevin KC8RFE to take it off the air around the end of last month. It is located at Parkland College and is open to all D-Star users. It normally is linked to a reflector, but users may unlink it and re link to wherever they wish. At present it is linked to REF001C. Last month, we reported an incorrect frequency for this repeater. The correct one is 443.76875 MHz. We apologize for the error.

VE Exams

Our 2016 VE Exam Schedule is set. We are a little late with the confirmation of dates, but the holidays slowed the communication necessary to confirm the location. The exams will be held at the UI Fire Institute, as usual. The April session might be in one of the other buildings, but we will notify everyone if that happens. The dates are January 24, April 17, July 17, and October 16. All are on a Sunday, starting at 1:00 pm. Please contact Debbie Fligor, N9DN for information.

Illinois Repeater Association

Annual meeting to be hosted by TCARC

The Illinois Repeater Association (IRA) will hold the annual meeting in Champaign on April 16. Al, K9SI, arranged for the meeting to be at the Windsor Road Christian Church. The IRA is the group that coordinates repeater frequencies for the state of Illinois. Meetings were held in Bloomington in past years, but rising costs caused the group to look for alternate locations, not as expensive as the Bloomington conference centers. Al was able to provide the space at the church, where we hold the auction, at a much lower price, the same as TCARC contributes for use - \$100. The TCARC Board agreed to host the meeting with setup and tear down, as well as coffee and donuts. We look forward to several volunteer club members to help with the operation. The meeting is open if our members wish to attend. Only IRA members may vote. This is an opportunity to give back to the volunteer organization that keeps our repeater frequencies organized. Milt K9QZ1 will coordinate our helpers.

Six Meter Christmas Present

Six meters gave us a present on Christmas Day. The band opened nicely a good part of the day and late into the evening. Contacts were easy and many stations appeared on the band. It was one of the best openings of the year. Very unusual, it was still open at 10pm our time. It pays to tune around.

Transformer RF Interference?

From ARRL

The ARRL has again complained to the FCC to allege illegal marketing of electronic RF lighting ballasts, operating under Part 18 of the Commission's rules, on the part of two major retailers. Letters went out this week to the FCC Enforcement Bureau and its Office of Engineering and Technology claiming Part 18 marketing regulations violations by Lowe's and by Walmart stores. At issue is the sale of non-consumer RF lighting ballasts to consumers who, in several instances, were told by store personnel that it was okay to install these in a residential setting. In addition, non-consumer and residential-class ballasts are intermixed in store displays with inadequate signage to direct consumers to the correct choice. Both letters asked the FCC to investigate and commence enforcement proceedings with respect to the two stores' marketing and retail sale of RF lighting devices in the US.

"ARRL purports to show that the [retailer] is...marketing and selling to consumers (by retail sale) non-consumer Part 18 RF lighting devices which are not intended for residential deployment, to consumers who have specifically noted their intention to deploy the devices in residential applications," ARRL Chief Counsel Chris Imlay, W3KD, said in similar complaint letters to the Commission on December 28 and December 29 (attached below). Part 18 emissions limits for consumer devices are far lower than those allowed for non-consumer devices.

"ARRL has received numerous complaints from Amateur Radio operators of significant noise in the medium (MF) and high frequency (HF) bands between 1.8 MHz and 30 MHz from 'grow lights' and other Part 15 and part 18 RF lighting devices," Imlay continued. "These devices are easily capable of emitting RF noise sufficient to preclude Amateur Radio MF and HF communications (and, as well, AM broadcast station reception) throughout entire communities."

Supporting both complaints are extensive and detailed reports by ARRL Laboratory EMC Specialist Mike Gruber, W1MG. The reports recount incidents of actual purchases of Part 18 RF lighting devices intended for commercial use to consumers who made clear to store personnel that they intended to use the devices at home. Gruber's report includes multiple photographs that depict in-store displays of the products in question and showing signage that does not adequately explain which devices may be sold to whom.

The ARRL has asked that all non-consumer devices be removed from retail sale and marketing at the stores and to track and recall non-consumer devices already sold to consumers.

In his report, Gruber concluded that retailers should require purchasers of non-consumer Part 18 RF lighting devices to provide a valid contractor's number. He also advised that the stores improve display signage to make it clear that non-consumer Part 18 devices may not be used in residential settings.

Earlier this year, the ARRL sent similar complaint letters to the FCC regarding the marketing of Part 18 RF lighting devices by The Home Depot. The League also has complained about specific RF lighting "grow light" devices that it has alleged exceed Part 18 emission limits.

More Articles

Please see the extra page attached for more news. Two articles are larger than can fit into the normal format, so they have been added as an extra page. The first is about TenTec. The company was sold again and the new owner has several items of news. They appear to be scaling back on service for the present time. Al;so, repair charges are listed, and they appear to be much above prior rates. It is disappointing to see this, but the new owner is attempting to make it profitable. Please be sure to read this

Also, an article appeared on the Internet by Jeff Davis, KE9V, from Muncie, IN. His article presents some very interesting ideas and comments about our hobby. He discusses 3 main points that are critical to the health of Amateur radio. They are:

**Intentional Interference to DXpeditions
We're Losing Ground in the Brain Game
Declining Activity and Interest**

Please be sure to read his comments!

Yaesu Fusion Repeater

The Fusion repeater is now with K9BF while he works on the controller for it. The Motorola repeater is back on the K9SI system.

Ten Tec

from the Ten Tec Web Page

Greetings and welcome to Ten Tec's temporary web page where we will provide updates about the change of ownership.

Effective January 1, 2016 the Ten Tec assets for RKR Designs, LLC were acquired by Dishtronix, Inc.

There are many things in transition at this time such as the telephone numbers and website. We ask you to be patient and not overload us with questions and email.

At this time we are fully occupied with our commercial business and restructuring and moving some things around. There are no plans at present to leave the Knoxville area.

SALES ORDERS

Any outstanding transceiver purchase order at the fire sale price is cancelled. All sales orders shipped after 1/1/16 are invoiced at the list price without exception. You may cancel your sales order without any penalty by contacting sales@tentec.com

SERVICE POLICY

We have changed how service is conducted. Effective immediately for all units in for repair, there is a minimum charge on one hour labor at \$140.0 for any unit sent in, even if it is not repaired. It takes the service department one hour to receive, unpack, set up on the bench, evaluate, estimate the repair, repack and box the unit, prepare shipping documents and prepare the invoice. If your unit is repaired during this time period there will not be additional labor charges. If further work is required it will be billed at 125.00 per hour in quarter hour increments. Parts and return shipping is charged additionally. It takes on the average two hours to repair a unit.

To clarify this labor structure we have prepared the following chart for your convenience:

TOTAL REPAIR TIME

CHARGE

DESCRIPTION

00-59 minutes

\$140.00

MINIMUM CHARGE

60-74 minutes

\$171.25

75-89 minutes

\$202.50

90-104 minutes

\$233.75

105-119 minutes

\$265.00

TWO HOURS

Third or more hours

ADD \$31.12 every 15 minutes

At this time we are unable to offer extensive telephone or email support. We are monitoring the service@tentec.com email address but may not respond in a timely manner. We are rearranging the service department and trying to sort out things after the previous service manager elected to retire. If your radio was here, it is still here. If you object to our repair policy we will cheerfully return your radio to you at your expense. Just email us and someone will contact you to make arrangements. Otherwise, we will resume repairs in February.

Going Forward

There are a lot of things to be done. It is our plan to reincorporate Ten Tec as an independent corporate entity. Meanwhile it is an operating subsidiary of Dishtronix, Inc. an Ohio corporation.

The Future

Although Ten Tec has changed hands several times in the last couple of years, I would like to state that Ten Tec has changed hands for the last time in the foreseeable future. Dishtronix has been continuously operating for 17 years, is financially stable and will continue managing in a manner that promotes and maintains fiscal responsibility and financial stability. My vision as the owner is strictly long term. I have no plans to leave this business and will continue to operate Ten Tec as long as I am physically able to do so. I believe the Ten Tec transceivers to be some of the best transceivers available at any price and personally have been operating an Orion II until the first change of ownership. Everyone who uses a piece of equipment long enough, develops a personal wish list of things they would change or improve. I feel extremely fortunate to now be in the position where I can use my skills and expertise from more than forty years of ham radio and SWLing to implement changes which I hope will make fantastic products even better.

Unfortunately I have had to make some tough decisions which were made for the long term health and viability of the company. The Ten Tec team is the nicest bunch of people you could hope to work with and have overall reacted positively to the changes. Some team members have chosen to pursue retirement or other opportunities but the core competency remains. We are extremely fortunate to have retained former engineering manager John Henry on a consulting basis and I must give him the greatest credit. I certainly would not take on this project without him and the other team members like Boyd Lichlyter and Patty Gann. Ten Tec is like a big family, and I do not view this as me acquiring Ten Tec but more like me joining an extended family of talented and skilled people. I hope anyone reading this who is in the market for a new radio will help me support this great group by at least trying one of their radios. Of the present production the Eagle is my favorite for having the best sound out of the box, and that is what my personal preference is always based on – good sound. My all-time favorite is of course the Orion II so an Orion III is on my personal wish list for the future. There are numerous Ten Tec user nets on the air and it is my intention so support them by posting the time and frequency schedules on the website. If I can accomplish one thing at Ten Tec it will be to be more customer-centric. I want to build the radios that you the customer wants! I am looking for ways to reliably engage with our customers so we can do that, and I think factory support of the nets is one way to start.

The Ten Tec team is working on production improvements to our facility and business. We are fully occupied with our commercial business at this time. When I have capacity the next step is to run the first batch of Omni 7+ which is the Omni 7 with some minor cosmetic changes and improvements such as a flat metal front for improved shielding. Following this we are releasing the Super Eagle which brings into the Eagle most of the DSP features found on the Orion II and is the first step on the path to the Orion III. This is different hardware from existing product so it is not a firmware upgrade. There are no firm dates or guarantees for when these things will occur.

The blow out sale prices are over and any outstanding orders at those prices are terminated. Those prices were previous owners intent to liquidate all inventory and will never be repeated.

I am pleased to state that we have completed some firmware updates which will soon be posted on the new Ten Tec website once it is up and running to entice people to visit the site.

Dishtronix has other new products under development as well. The DX2400MKII replaces the DX2400L1 legal limit + solid state amplifier and should be unveiled at Hamvention, to mention just one. We are close to beginning production of our Emtron DX2/3-SPd tetrode amplifiers which will also be shown at Hamvention. We may even decide to build and service these at Ten Tec.

There are some other exciting things happening which we may announce in the near future.

Thank you for your patience during this transition.

Sincerely,

Mike, N8WFF

President,
Ten Tec, a Dishtronix Company
Dishtronix, Inc.

Danger in Calm Seas

by Jeff Davis, KE9V

We don't need more licensees. We need more active hams.

It's tempting to say that amateur radio is about to close the book on its best year ever.

The number of licensees is up, attendance at Dayton Hamvention was up, participation in contests and other on-the-air operating events is up, the number of ARRL members is up too. The League has spent much of the year promoting the Amateur Radio Parity Act in Washington and is seeing real progress on that front.

When it comes to publicity, ham radio is HOT. Not a day goes by without a news item about our activities appearing in major publications — we've finally figure out how to proselytize our service!

Yes, it's been a very good year for ham radio and it's certainly nice to savor this moment...

There. Enough.

Now let's look at the work that lies ahead in the New Year...

Amateur radio has weathered all kinds of storms, and there seems no immediate threat to our service. Of course, that might have been said by almost any US ham radio enthusiast on December 6, 1941 too. Still, our position seems as secure as it can as we face another year. But just like owning a home, our hobby requires constant maintenance and attention if we want it to be a secure dwelling that lasts a long time.

There's always room for improvement, but I've compiled here a list of just three things that I believe to be the most vexing to the amateur radio service. These three things present a clear and present danger to our continued growth and enjoyment of the radio hobby.

Intentional Interference to DXpeditions

Whether you enjoy it or not, DXing is the crown jewel of amateur radio. There's nothing else that we do that captures the imagination of fellow hobbyists and the unwashed masses, the way a DXpedition can. The human spirit craves adventure, like climbing into a boat to cross dangerous stretches of ocean only to arrive at some of the most remote and inhospitable places on the planet, for the sole purpose of handing out contacts to home-bound hams half a world away.

It is exhilaration squared!

"But sadly, there are a few around the globe who derive pleasure from interfering with the activities from these exotic locales. And it's enough of a problem to erode the patience of even stalwart DXers to continue the practice. After all, major DXpeditions require untold hours of planning and preparation. Large sums of money must be raised and passage on planes and boats booked. Permission must be obtained from whatever country pretends to be in charge of some rock in the ocean. And having cleared those hurdles and being completely at the mercy of HF propagation, to beat all those odds only to be foiled by some idiot intent on jamming the operation — who wouldn't throw in the towel?

With no hope of convincing all of the mentally disturbed people around the planet who own transmitters to cut it out, the big operations are turning to technology for a solution. Maybe it will work or maybe it will become such a hassle that we all just give up in despair?

This is a big problem not only because we could lose an integral activity inside the hobby, but if a handful of radio terrorists can so easily ruin a DXpedition, then it's fair to question the value of our service during an actual emergency.

And yes, these same mentally ill terrorists jam those communications too.

We're Losing Ground in the Brain Game

Life on this planet is driven by technology yet shockingly few of its inhabitants have a clue about how anything works. I'm purposely trying to avoid the phrase, "the dumbing down of amateur radio", because it might offend, but I believe it captures the essence of a festering problem. Our hobby is based on radio which in turn, is based on electronics. The days of new radio discoveries made by teenage radio hams burning the midnight oil in their basement laboratories is long past. But there needs to be at least a modicum of knowledge to keep this thing moving forward.

I don't believe this trend was caused by changes in amateur radio licensing methodology. Eliminating the code requirement didn't suddenly make people ignorant. Rather, it mirrors the trend of the general populace who now carry more technology in their shirt pocket than we took to the Moon in 1969 and yet have no clue how any of it works — or harbor any interest in finding out.

Fortunately, radio has advanced to the point where high-quality equipment can be purchased ready to use. We no longer have to build our stations from parts salvaged from a junked television chassis. Not all of us will have the knowledge or wizardry to design advanced electronic circuits or develop cutting edge software. But all of us have the ability to understand antennas, radio propagation, to learn how to properly check into a net, pass traffic, or prepare for emergency communications.

If the sum of your radio knowledge is how to work the push-to-talk button and chew the fat with your buddies, you might have an amateur radio license, but you're not a radio ham.

Local clubs could take the lead here. We need a "no ham left behind" training policy. It is virtually impossible to run out of ideas for club meetings. Sessions on how to build a dipole, soldering, how and when to best use radio filters, repairing a rotor, working a satellite with a handheld, how to call CQ, how to work DX — including a lesson on split operation. The list is endless once you fully buy into the notion that every radio ham needs to know a hundred things and needs to be curious enough to learn a thousand more.

It's no coincidence that Apple has become the most valuable corporation on the planet by selling high-tech gadgets that "just work". That attitude may work (for a season) in the outside world, but the contagion of not knowing and not caring to learn technical things is a certain slow death for amateur radio.

Declining Activity and Interest

I've saved our biggest problem for last. While amateur radio licensing may be on the upswing in the United States, interest in our hobby continues to wane. We've gotten really good at getting "them" in the door, but we're downright lousy when it comes to inspiring "them" to take advantage of all this hobby offers.

All of us use the excuse of not having 'enough time' to do all the things we would like to do. But that's something of a cop out. The number of hours in a day, week, month or year haven't changed from one generation to the next. What we choose to do during those hours is subject to change. It's an attention deficit problem. During those times I've become very passionate about a particular activity, I've managed to pursue it almost without limit. Admit it, you have too.

Over 700,000 licensees in the FCC database yet only about one-third of those are actually "active".

350,000 Technician licensees are floating out there yet one of the biggest complaints in all of hamdom is that thousands of repeaters sit silent and unused. When the random stranger does break squelch, no one answers his call.

Full participation isn't realistic. There are doubtless thousands who continue to hold a license yet now reside in a nursing home or senior living facility without access to radio. Some are young and busy with career or starting a family. Others have taken time off to pursue a degree or specialized training. Since licenses are issued for ten years with a grace period before cancellation, it wouldn't be surprising to discover that thousands of licensees are dead — their call signs not yet purged from the database.

Approach the data any way you like, it's a major problem.

We're going to have to discover new methods for getting hams motivated and activated. Sorry, the old ways are no longer valid. Just coming up with a new contest, for instance, won't cut it because our lifestyle arrangements are considerably different in this new century. We're more mobile, constantly on the move. Few of us under 60 years of age want to be quarantined in a radio "shack" for an entire weekend.

(I predict two-hour sprints will completely replace contest weekends in the coming decade).

The ARRL may have a hit on its hands with the upcoming National Parks on the Air event where they've combined the opportunity to operate from the trail with online 'leaderboards' to encourage further participation. I don't know if this was intentional or merely leftover serendipity from their hugely successful Centennial QSO Party but it's brilliant and we need more like it.

The decline in solar activity certainly won't help motivate HF operators so we're going to have to think outside the box. More VHF/UHF activities, six meters, and I'm hopefully optimistic that we will soon see a lot more ham radio activity in space — given the many new planned transponders and even a geo-synchronous payload.

Rekindling the flame for many who have lost interest and become radio inactive won't be easy but it should become our top priority. In fact, I would suggest that clubs who are too busy cranking out new licensees to focus on this problem — are actually hurting the amateur radio service.

We don't need more licensees. We need more active hams. Chew on that and see what you can come up with because, we need a solution and we need it fairly soon.