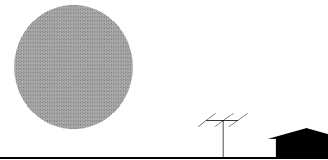


Twin City Amateur Radio Club

Champaign-Urbana, Illinois

January 2007

Milt Forsberg K9QZI, Editor



Hamfest Calendar

Jan 6 Waukesha WI
Jan 27 Collinsville IL
Jan 28 St Charles IL
Feb 2-3 Jackson MS
Feb 9-11 Orlando FL
Feb 24 LaPorte, IN

VE Exams

21-Jan-2007 TWIN CITY AMATEUR RADIO CLUB

1:00 PM (Walk-ins allowed) ARRL/VEC
DEBRA J FLIGOR (217) 244-4446
UNIV OF IL FIRE SERVICE INST 11 GERTY DR
CHAMPAIGN, IL 61820

03-Feb-2007 SANGAMON VALLEY RADIO CLUB

Also 07-Apr-2007
9:00 AM (Walk-ins allowed) ARRL/VEC
JAMES STEVE UPCHURCH (217)529-3218
AMERICAN RED CROSS
1045 OUTER PARK DR SPRINGFIELD, IL 62704

15-Apr-2007 TWIN CITY AMATEUR RADIO CLUB

1:00 PM (Walk-ins allowed) ARRL/VEC
DEBRA J FLIGOR (217)244-4446
UNIV OF IL FIRE SERVICE INST
11 GERTY DR CHAMPAIGN, IL 61820

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PO Box 2061
Champaign, IL 61825-2061

Meeting January 9

Our next meeting of the Twin City Amateur Radio Club is Tuesday, January 9, at the UI Fire Institute at 7:00 p.m.

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.

The Board meets the Thursday prior to the club meeting at 7:00 p.m. at the UI Fire Institute. Please note that this is a change from our past board meeting locations. All members are welcome to attend.

Morse Code Testing Abolished

The FCC announced on December 15, 2006, that the Morse Code element of the Amateur Radio Exam will be abolished. The effective date of the change will be 30 days after the announcement is published in the Federal Register. This should happen shortly, making the drop date in February. Until then, the code is still required. Procedures for upgrades for those holding a CSCE have not been announced. There has been no statement on charging or waiving exam fees for the upgrades. Watch for announcements soon. See the details of the ruling inside this newsletter

TCARC Auction is April 14 – Mark your calendars now!

VE Exam Session January 21

Our next TCARC VE Exam session is at 1 pm on January 21 at the UI Fire Institute. The fee remains at \$14 for 2007 and Morse Code is still required for General and Extra. Upgrades without code cannot be processed yet.

2007 Dues

Please check your address label on this newsletter. It shows the expiration date of your current membership. If it is 2006, your 2007 dues are payable. If you have not paid, please send at check to TCARC at the address on this newsletter. We need your help! If there is an error on the date, please contact K9QZI.

TCARC Officers and Board Members

President Bob Minton WA9KGU 352-4859
Vice President Ralph Cox W9PGE 396-5111
Secretary Wayne Hamilton AB9FJ 384-4310
Treasurer Milt Forsberg K9QZI 352-5075

Board Members

Al Wolfe K9SI 688-2790
Drew White K9CW 643-7327
Ben Fisher K9BF 351-7655

VE Coordinator

Debbie Fligor N9DN 244-4446

Website

www.qsl.net/w9seh

FCC Eliminates Morse Co1de as Exam Requirement!

From ARRL News

Early in 2007, the US will join the growing list of countries that no longer require Amateur Radio applicants to pass a Morse code test as the entry ticket to HF. Announcement of the pending historic rule change arrived with no fanfare December 15 in an FCC public notice. A full-blown Report and Order (R&O) in the proceeding, WT Docket 05-235, followed December 19. The best estimate of when the Morse code requirement will go away officially is sometime in February -- 30 days after the R&O appears in the Federal Register.

"We . . . believe that the public interest is not served by requiring facility in Morse code when the trend in amateur communications is to use voice and digital technologies for exchanging messages," the FCC said in its R&O. "Rather, we believe that because the international requirement for telegraphy proficiency has been eliminated, we should treat Morse code telegraphy no differently from other Amateur Service communications techniques."

The FCC says it deems the current regime of written examinations "sufficient to determine whether a person is qualified to be issued an Amateur Radio operator license."

The FCC cast aside arguments that Morse ability is advantageous in emergencies, concluding that most emergency communication is handled using voice, data, or video techniques. The Commission also turned away assertions that retaining a Morse requirement would help keep out the bad apples.

"The record is devoid of a demonstrated nexus between Morse code proficiency and on-the-air conduct," the FCC observed. It concurred with one commenter's observation that "maintaining the code requirement does not purge Amateur Radio of bad operators. Education and self-policing does."

The FCC also ordered that all Technician licensees present and future -- whether or not they've passed a Morse code test, will get privileges on 80, 40, 15 and 10 meters identical to those of Novice licensees. "In eliminating this disparity between Technician and Technician Plus licenses, we are simplifying the Amateur Service licensing structure and promoting regulatory parity," the FCC said.

The FCC took advantage of the occasion to act on the League's Petition for Partial Reconsideration in the "omnibus" proceeding, WT Docket 04-140, calling on the Commission to retain 3620 to 3635 kHz for automatically controlled digital stations by moving the Extra class phone band edge to 3635 kHz. The FCC decided instead to authorize 3585 to 3600 kHz for such operations, and leave the newly expanded phone band intact.

The Commission further amended Part 97 "to authorize Amateur Extra class privileges to all individuals who have been issued a CEPT radio-amateur license by their country of citizenship, and who satisfy other requirements in the Commission's rules."

Although the FCC's Morse code decision came as no surprise, it nonetheless revived debate on the issue. The FCC had proposed more than a year ago to drop the Morse code requirement for all license classes. The record in the proceeding, the FCC said, "reflects a division of views in the Amateur Radio community." After reviewing the more than 3500 comments and counter-proposals radio amateurs had filed, the Commission stuck with its initial proposal.

ARRL President Joel Harrison, W5ZN, had this reaction: "While the Commission's decision to delete the Morse code requirement for an Amateur Extra Class license departs from the ARRL's recommendation, it is helpful to have the matter resolved so we can move forward."

ARRL CEO David Sumner, K1ZZ, expressed a similar viewpoint. "Now that the debate is over, we can focus on learning Morse code simply for

its own sake," he said. Sumner pledged that the League would maintain its traditional support of Morse code as an operating mode and would continue to offer Morse training materials as well as such incentives as bonus credit for CW contacts in ARRL-sponsored operating events. ARRL's Hiram Percy Maxim Memorial Station W1AW will keep its schedule of Morse code practice and bulletin transmissions.

Since World Radiocommunication Conference 2003, the UK, Canada, Germany and other countries have dropped their Morse requirements. Sumner said other countries have successfully made the transition to a codeless testing regime, and he doesn't anticipate problems in the US.

The pending disappearance of the Morse code requirement seems to have rejuvenated the urge to upgrade. ARRL Sales and Marketing Manager Bob Inderbitzen, NQ1R, says sales of General Class license training materials have skyrocketed in the week after the FCC announcement.

The ARRL has posted information relevant to the FCC action in WT Docket 05-235, on its Web site: <http://www.arrl.org/fcc/morse/>

Lee Hickok W9MBX

We are sad to learn of the death of Lee Hickok, W9MBX on December 27. He was 81. He was the Chief Engineer of WLRW Radio for several years, then the City Electrician for Urbana for several more years until his retirement. He was a long time member of TCARC.

Commenting on the Morse Code Change

There are many comments on and off the air about the elimination of code testing. Tempers seem to flare and we hear personal attacks against those who have different opinions. We all have a right to express our opinions. Please respect this right and avoid personal remarks. Personal wars are detrimental to our hobby.

Kansas Balloon Rescue by KA9SZX

On Saturday, December 2, a group of students at the Kansas Wesleyan University Physics Club launched a high-altitude balloon with some help from the Salina Ham Radio Club. The balloon carried Ham Radio and GPS tracking equipment, similar to many Amateur Radio balloon flights around the country. It was expected to stay in the air about 3 hours. However, surface winds carried it higher and farther than expected. The launch team tracked the balloon into Missouri, following the path. After they lost the signal, an Amateur Radio Operator in Iowa tracked it into Illinois. It appeared that the balloon landed near Blandinsville, Illinois, which is near Macomb.

Amateur Radio Operators in Macomb heard about the landing and began to search for it. They alerted Mark Garrett, KA9SZX, about the landing. Mark, now the Assistant Director of Technology at Western Illinois University's Tri States Public Radio in Macomb, started searching for the downed balloon on Monday, December 4, after work. He coordinated with other Amateurs in the Macomb area, and on Tuesday they continued searching a smaller area. The balloon's batteries were nearing the end of their life at this point, so time was critical.

Mark located the balloon East of LaHarpe, about 2 miles north of Blandinsville, in an open farm field. It was about a quarter mile into the field. Mark was taking readings along the road when a person stopped and offered to take him into the field in a four-wheel drive vehicle. They quickly zeroed in on the balloon and retrieved it. The balloon package was in excellent condition, considering it was in the field for several days. The 9-volt battery had dropped to 5.63 volts, but the beacon transmitter was still running.

The balloon reached about 95,000 feet before descending. Mark estimated that the balloon got caught in a jet stream and traveled to Illinois at over 110 mph. The Macomb Journal carried a very nice story on this event.