



QST NFL

Newsletter for the Northern Florida Section

Come join the FUN!

Volume 12 Issue 12

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December 2025



From the Shack of the Section Manager

Scott Roberts, KK4ECR (kk4ecr@gmail.com)



Northern Florida Section December Update: A Season of Gratitude and a Bright Horizon Ahead

As we close the books on 2025, Northern Florida hams have much to be thankful for — not only for a year filled with successful nets, club activities, and community events, but also for calm skies and quiet frequencies on the storm front. Hurricane Season 2025 has officially ended, and for the first time in several years, our beloved Sunshine State was spared from any major storms making landfall. That's a blessing worth celebrating! While we always stand ready to serve when disaster calls, it's a welcome relief to have spent this season focusing our energy on building skills, strengthening clubs, and preparing for an exciting new chapter — 2026, the ARRL Year of the Club.

Florida's Fortunate Forecast: A Quiet Hurricane Season

This year's Atlantic hurricane season brought plenty of action elsewhere in the hemisphere, but Florida avoided the worst of it. Thanks to our active ARES® teams, Sky-Warn® volunteers, and county Emergency Coordinators, our readiness posture remained sharp. Even without a disaster activation, regular training exercises, emergency drills, and public service events kept our capabilities strong.

Let this "quiet year" serve as a reminder of our Section's reputation for preparedness. We've proven time and again that Florida hams are ready — rain or shine, grid up or grid down. I want to personally thank each operator who checked into an emergency net, staffed a shelter communications point, or simply kept their equipment tested and their batteries charged. Readiness is not just about responding. It's about *staying ready* — and that's

exactly what Northern Florida hams did in 2025.

2026: The ARRL Year of the Club

The ARRL has declared 2026 as the "Year of the Club", and what a fitting focus that is! Amateur radio clubs are the lifeblood of our hobby. They're where new licensees find their mentors, where lifelong friendships are built over soldering irons and field-day sandwiches, and where the community truly thrives.

Throughout 2026, the ARRL will be highlighting club stories, offering resources to strengthen local organizations, and launching on-air events designed to unite clubs nationwide. One of the most exciting elements will be a special Worked All States (WAS) opportunity using W1AW portable operations. By working each of the W1AW portable stations from all fifty states, operators can not only achieve the WAS distinction — but do so while celebrating the spirit of ham radio camaraderie that defines our community.

Imagine the excitement of tuning across the bands, logging "W1AW/3" from Maryland, "W1AW/7" from Nevada, and chasing W1AW operations across the country. These contacts won't just be about earning wallpaper — they're about connecting people, clubs, and traditions in a shared national celebration of amateur radio.

This will be a year built around connection, and I can't think of a better theme for a state like Florida, where local clubs have always served as the backbone of amateur radio growth. From Jacksonville to Ocala, Tallahassee to Tampa, and everywhere in between, our clubs represent the diversity, creativity, and heart of our Section.

Strengthening Our Clubs: The Northern Florida Way

As your Section Manager, I want 2026 to be the year we lift every club in Northern Florida to a new level. That means:

- Helping clubs attract and retain new members.
- Empowering leadership teams with training and shared best practices.
- Focusing on *fun and fellowship* alongside technical achievement.

Leveraging the “Year of the Club” events to drive engagement and visibility.

Every successful organization — whether it’s a local radio club or a global nonprofit — thrives on purpose, participation, and pride. So, let’s make this a year where club meetings are full, nets are lively, and newcomers feel truly welcomed into the fold.

To make that happen, though, I need your voices. That’s where our upcoming Northern Florida Section Town Hall Zoom Meeting comes into play.

Announcing the Northern Florida Section Town Hall Zoom Meeting

Mark your calendars! Early in 2026, I’ll be hosting a Section-wide Town Hall Zoom Meeting for all club officers, members, and interested amateurs. This isn’t just another presentation — it’s your opportunity to speak up, share your ideas, and help shape the goals and direction of the Northern Florida Section for the coming year.

We’ll talk about:

- Club growth strategies and membership engagement.
- Collaborative events that unite multiple clubs.
- How we can leverage ARRL’s Year of the Club toolkit for local success.
- Training priorities for ARES®, youth involvement, and technical programs.

And, most importantly, *what YOU want to see happen in 2026.*

I want every club — big or small — to have a voice at the table. Maybe your group has a great idea for a statewide event. Perhaps you’ve developed a mentoring program that’s working wonders with new licensees. Or maybe you’ve found innovative ways to use digital modes or community outreach projects to spread awareness about amateur radio.

Whatever your ideas, I want to hear them! The collective

wisdom of Northern Florida amateurs is enormous, and when we come together with shared purpose, there’s nothing we can’t accomplish.

Details on the exact date and access link for the Town Hall Meeting will be shared through the Section email distribution, on the Section website, and during local nets. Plan to join us — this will be a live, interactive conversation designed to energize our Section for the year ahead.

A Section of Energy, Innovation, and Service

Northern Florida has always been known for its dynamic mix of clubs, each with its own flavor and focus — from contesting and DX to satellites, digital modes, and emergency communications. Our Section is home to some of the most robust ARES® groups in the country, some of the most active repeater networks, and an ever-growing number of youth and school-based initiatives that give our hobby a bright future.

In 2026, I want us to showcase that diversity more boldly than ever. Let’s tell our stories. Let’s highlight outstanding club projects in each monthly Section newsletter. Let’s share what’s working and learn from one another to make amateur radio in Florida stronger together.

Your Voice Matters

The ARRL Year of the Club isn’t just a slogan — it’s an invitation. A call to action for every amateur to reinvest in the communities that make our hobby thrive. Whether you’re a club officer, an Elmer, or a newly licensed Technician still figuring out which end of the HF antenna goes up — your participation shapes the future of amateur radio.

So, as we roll into 2026, I challenge every reader to take one deliberate step forward:

- Attend your local club meeting this month.
- Volunteer for one event or net check-in you’ve been putting off.
- Invite a new ham (or potential ham!) to join you on the air.

Be part of a conversation that strengthens our collective voice.

Each of those small actions builds momentum, and together, that momentum becomes the heartbeat of our Section.

Looking Ahead with Optimism

We have every reason to approach 2026 with optimism and pride. A quiet hurricane season behind us, a powerful theme guiding us, and a network of passionate operators standing ready to make the new year extraordinary.

The ARRL Year of the Club gives us the platform — but it's our energy, creativity, and sense of purpose that will make it truly shine. Together, let's make Northern Florida the shining star of this nationwide celebration.

So charge up those mics, polish those keys, and clear your calendars — 2026 is calling. Let's answer with enthusiasm, unity, and the unmistakable spirit of friendship that has always defined amateur radio in our Section.

Thank you for all you've done in 2025, and for all the excitement we'll create in the year ahead. Until we meet on the airwaves or at the upcoming Town Hall — 73 and Happy Holidays from the Northern Florida Section!

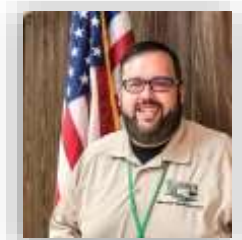
From the Section Emergency Coordinator

Arc Thames, W4CPD

It appears that we've successfully made it through hurricane season without a storm impacting our state. After the last few years that we've heard, I know this has certainly been a relief for many of our friends and neighbors.

As we head in to the winter months, I encourage you to use this cooler time of the year to get out and exercise your skills as well as demonstrate amateur radio to your community. Parks on the air is an excellent way to get out and practice, test your gear, and showcase amateur radio to visitors. Winter field day coming up at the end of January is also a fantastic way to keep enjoying the hobby in the "off season."

We're looking forward to the upcoming refresh of the State EOC, which I believe is scheduled to open in the spring. As information becomes available and resources are moved to the new building, I'll be sure to get some on the air tests in the spring so everyone can have an opportunity to make contact.



Monthly Radiogram Challenge

Want to practice using the national traffic system (NTS)? instructions on using the NTS on our website at arrrl-nfl.org/nts/. For the month of December, please send me (W4CPD located in Pace, FL) a radiogram via the NTS with your answer to this question "What do you do to keep your skills current when activations aren't happening?"

Thanks to the following hams for participating in last month's challenge:

Susan-KG4WVI
Adrienne-AJ4D
Mike-W4BZM

Website updates

If you find information that is out of date on the section website (arrrl-nfl.org), please fill out the [online form](#) and one of the team will take care of it as soon as possible.

Monthly EC Reports

Out of the 34 appointed ARES Emergency Coordinators we have in the section, we only received monthly reports for 16 last month. If you're an EC and are having trouble submitting your reports, please reach out to me. This information is so critical to knowing who of our teams are still out there and also hearing about the incredible work that's being done. Last month ARES volunteers provided over 1,004 hours of service to our communities. Thanks to the following counties for providing their reports: Alachua, Bay, Citrus, Duval, Escambia, Gadsden, Gilchrist, Leon, Seminole, St. Johns, Santa Rosa, Sumter, Suwanee, Volusia, Walton, Washington

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Newsletter, *QST NFL*

Earl McDow, K4ZSW

QST NFL is a monthly publication of the ARRL Northern Florida Section. *QST NFL* is intended for wide distribution within the NFL Section, including club Leaders and all licensed Amateurs in Florida. A current issue of this publication can be found at the ARRL South-eastern Division web site, Northern Florida Section. www.ARRL-NFL.org Opinions expressed by contributors are their own, and may not express the positions of the ARRL.

Submissions may be made to the editor:
Earl McDow earl.mcdow@gmail.com.

All submissions are subject to editing prior to publication.

Looking for Something?

Gordon Gibby, KX4Z, has taken the time to index the articles from all the 2021 issues of *QST NFL*!

<https://arrl-nfl.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/2021QSTNFLIndex.pdf>

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NFL Section Member of the Month!

We are always accepting nominations for the NFL Section Member of the Month. To submit a nomination, please email Section Manager Scott Roberts at kk4ecr@gmail.com. Include the nominee's name, call sign, county, reason for the nomination, and a photo of the nominee. Arc and I will review the nominations and contact you with any questions

Digital Library of Amateur Radio & Communications

Marty Brown, N4GL

Digital Library of Amateur Radio & Communications is now archiving *QST NFL* issues. DLARC is a project of the Internet Archive (the not-for-profit online library best known for The Wayback Machine.) DLARC is growing to be a massive online library of the past and present of ham radio and related communications. It is funded by a grant from Amateur Radio Digital Communications. You can see what we have so far at <https://archive.org/details/dlarc>.

Three years of [QST NFL are now online](#), and I am working with the curator, Kaye Savetz, K6KJN, to eventually get all the issues that I have edited since 2014. DLARC can also scan paper issues. So if you have any stashed in your attic, let me know.

Loften Highschool

Bob Lightner W4GJ



Freshmen students have been burning up 20M SSB this month. They are trying to get as much practice as they can before Winter Field Day and the Christmas break. Our kids really enjoy chatting with folks and they are hooked on HAM Radio! Annabelle and Chloe are operating like pros.

We are submitting our third attempt at getting funding from the ARDC to replace our tower with the 100-foot Aluma tower, donated to the school by the Florida State Fire College a few years ago. Let's hope that the third time is the charm!

Honoring Veterans Through Amateur Radio: A Gainesville Tradition

Lorilyn Roberts KO4LBS



Each year, the Gainesville Amateur Radio Society celebrates a special day in November that is unlike any other event on the club calendar. Veterans Day is the one time each year when ham radio and our country's heritage intersect in a historically unique way.

As I warmed myself beside a heater with two other ham radio operators, we watched as families strolled past our table. A large flag unfurled a few feet from us in the buffeting wind, and across the commons area, the orchestra bellowed out patriotic songs in honor of Veterans Day. I pondered the future of this great nation as youngsters skipped playfully amongst the crowd with their parents in tow, pushing babies in strollers wide-eyed with wonder.



My father served in the Korean War, and so Veterans Day is significant to me (Lorilyn KO4LBS). I remember my dad's youthful stories of hanging out with "the boys" and flying in the big, beautiful plane. He cherished the black and white photo he showed me from the '50s where he sat debonair in the pilot's seat. He was a pilot until he "buzzed over" his commander's residence and got grounded. Probably not my dad's finest moment, but his acumen as an air-plane mechanic was so valuable that, even though they clipped his wings, he stayed in the air force as a mechanic ensuring the planes met specs and were airworthy for the brave souls who flew them.

My dad has been gone for many years, but his stories of service and others like his live on, and we share them because they're part of our past. Their memories are etched in our psyches as we reflect on their sacrifices to keep our country safe. What heroes we've had, and what an honor it is to show our appreciation for all they have done for us on Veterans Day.



Older people and the young stopped by to talk—the vets sharing their stories, the wives who are proud of their husbands' valor, and the starry-eyed kids who will carry on the tradition when it's their turn. They may not understand what this day means, but as they grow older, they will remember the helicopter landing, the flags unfurling in the wind, the orchestra playing patriotic music to inspire the next generation—reminders of what others have sacrificially given us.

As part of the mystique, ham radio operators want to impart the history and importance of ham radio to the next generation. Participating in the Veterans Day celebration is part of the club's mission—to educate, share, and inspire young people to take up the hobby which has a special place in civilian and military history



My favorite activity on Veterans Day is helping the young ones try their hand at CW, also known as Morse Code. We set up a special booth for the children to learn what it is and hear the unique CW tones that have been sent via radio waves in defense of our country since the Civil War.

We have a chart the kids can look at to "decode" their name in Morse Code, just like the military has been doing for over a hundred years. The kids are used to typing on their cell phones and can easily figure it out on their own, especially those with a musical background.

The Gainesville Amateur Radio Society (GARS) is composed entirely of volunteers. One of the club's goals is to keep ham radio relevant in today's fast-paced world. While ham radio has been around a long time, some of the tools are state-of-the-art, including digital and high-tech radios and antennas. Highly trained volunteer operators can bounce radio signals off the moon and the International Space Station. Ham radio is not a dinosaur from the past; it's alive and well, not only here in the U.S. but around the world.



pop-up tents.

The ham radio operators who participated this year showed a heart of dedication, with the temperatures being the coldest of the season—25 degrees factoring in the wind chill. We did everything we could to stay warm, including using a couple of outdoor heaters that Debra Boal KI4CVS provided. She even assembled one of them from the box with cold fingers (see jpegs). I don't think I would have survived the cold without the heaters' warmth. I guess I have lived in Florida too long (I was born in Tampa, that's my excuse). We even had a windbreaker on one of the two

Mike Martell KK4KRZ put together the information for our radio club's participation, and I want to give a shout out to all who participated. We had 18 amateurs who braved the cold. We had an HF station at 20 meters, thanks to Earl Slown KI4OXD, Gordon Gibby KX4Z, and Ron Lewis KN4ZUJ. We also had a 40-meter station thanks to Andy Bryson KO4MYL, Dean Covey KV4RL, and Barry Nason KD0QIX. Altogether, we erected five antennas: four vertical and one 40-meter dipole

Andy set up a speaker so visitors could hear our operators make contacts and explain the events as they happened. The speaker allowed those interested and drawn to our table to hear distant amateurs respond with their Veterans Day comments.

Karyn Shander KQ4JBR operated a VHF / UHF / GMRS / FRS combination of radios to demonstrate the upper bands of amateur radio and other available radios for comparison.



Jim Carr KC4MHH organized the landing and takeoff security for two helicopters. Several amateurs were involved in this activity, including David Beatty KD4DRP, Susan Halbert KG4VWT, and Dean Covey KV4EL. We also had a demo of Meshtastic (915 MHz texting) between four devices.

Many handed out brochures explaining amateur radio to those who were curious. Others shared their ham radio stories from the Vietnam War. After learning about the Gainesville Amateur Radio Society, two young men signed up to get their amateur ham radio technician licenses.

We also want to mention Larry Rovak WB2SBV, who wanted to be with us but was unable to attend. He would have liked seeing the two ladder trucks supporting a giant American flag.

Those who helped out but we didn't mention above include Shannon Boal K4GLM, Ken Miller KF4ULO, Pete Winters K4GHP, Don Nero KR4GMI, Bill Sewell KR4EKZ, and Brett Wallace NH2KW.

As Mike Martell said, we can't thank those enough who braved the cold in support of Veterans Day and amateur radio, making it a special day we won't soon forget.

PARC, NOARC

D.J. Stewart

Gobble Gobble Gobble!

From the RF waves to the moon bounce and back again, we hope that your Thanksgiving is a wonderful time of year. The holidays that follow will be a race to the finish line for the year before the start of a new year bolstering even more opportunities to engage and show off this beloved amateur radio hobby!

This past month of November, many, many plans have been executed, ideas have taken form, and hints at the future of greatness to come have been made! What a great year this truly has been and the outlook for the upcoming is just awesome! Clubs everywhere are encouraging more participation, taking steps to deliver promises, working to retain and keep members of clubs and members around and active is a difficult feat. Creating a strong sense of community and inclusion while personalizing the member experience and delivering on promises through valuable content and activities assists with participation. It requires continuous and vigorous effort from a team of people willing to participate!

Efforts at the Playground Amateur Radio Club are underway, bringing interested parties into Amateur Radio! PARC has begun to teach their first hands on ham class for the technician license! Students have been attending the sessions with just as much enthusiasm as the instructors! Moreover, the students have been invited out to multiple events and are getting to see theory put into practice in many environments with club POTA activations, technical testing and tuning, and experimentation!



Did you make it out to Swampfest Tailgate with the Playground Amateur Radio Club?! If you did, THANK YOU! If you did not, YOU missed out on one of the best, year-end closeouts in the area! We hope to see you all again soon at another, possibly close, upcoming event! What wonderful tailgate this has been with many people in attendance from Tennessee, Alabama, Georgia, Florida, and Mississippi. Y'all, they had food and coffee trucks! Home sweet home o' breakfast and drinks! And those deals! What great deals and some wonderful finds! Be sure to put the Swampfest Tailgate on your calendar as it occurs annually in November on the second weekend in Fort Walton beach Florida!

W4ZBB.Org



That following Sunday, at the Pile-Up, we here at PARC pulled out the Fan Dipole to test and tune it. Also, we are coming up with a permanent deployment plan to install it on our tower! This will aid us in standing up at Station 3 for Winter Field Day at the Playground Amateur Radio Clubhouse! More to come on this project! PARC DX'd Paraguay with ease! Everyone on the team joined and learned from the opportunity to use unfamiliar equipment. Who needs training wheels on a bicycle anyway?!

Oh, the joy of giving back this season! The fine team of people at the North Okaloosa Amateur Radio Club have been partnering with the Live Oak Baptist Church for the Food Pantry distribution! These teams stepped up during the Government Furlough and offered more opportunities to support individuals and families alike during the stressful times and continue through the Holidays to share and assist those in the community that need food on the table. Hats off to the Activities Director N8JDD, for taking the lead and focusing on what matters most in the community and getting the volunteers to assist in the efforts!



From the Activities Director as a recap for the picture on the bottom right Another successful NOARC event supporting the Live Oak Baptist Church and the community this morning! Thanks to Vern *KR4ESD*, Don *KR4YXX*, and John *N8JDD* for making this happen. Vern also helped a motorist get his vehicle jumped started to keep them from being stranded. Way to go Vern! We had a “high average” turn out and everyone in line left with food. A great way to start off the Holiday week!

What have both PARC and NOARC been doing other than radio and community work?! Well, they both have had their annual meetings establishing the budgets for the next year and focused on their primary events! Details to be released soon to go over Hamfests, Field Days, POTAs, Road trips (What?! Yup.), and many more chances to show off your gear and capabilities while we all hunt that DX!

Coming in just a few weeks! The Amateur Radio Annual Holiday Party! Put on your slacks and go out to 114 John King Road in Crestview Florida at Samuel's Roadhouse on December the 20th at 5 pm! Social Hour, Meals, Drinks, White Elephant, SANTA!, and more! [Sign up with N8JDD](#) from NOARC or go to W4AAZ.org today! Please sign up no later than Dec 10th. Plates are \$21.95 each, gratuity not included. Choices are 8oz, New York strip steak, 1 dozen fried shrimp. Or 2 Grilled chicken breasts! Sides are a baked potato and a side salad! But hey, it's not all about the food, its about the company! We will see you all there!



Banquet Menu

Entree Options:

- 8 oz New York Strip - \$21.95
- 1 Dozen Fried Shrimp - \$21.95
- 2 Grilled Chicken Breasts - \$21.95

Each Entree is served with a baked potato and house salad.

Each Entree includes bread, soda, tea, or water. Gratuity is not included in the price.

The above prices are to include tax.

Each guest will pay for their meals that night to the waitress.

Please send your Entree Option to John Duren N8JDD via email john.duren52@outlook.com or phone 850-461-2751 NLT Dec 10th so he can let the restaurant know ahead of time.



Sumter County ARES

Amateur Radio Emergency Service
501(c)(3) Tax-Exempt Non-Profit Organization



Sumter County ARES Hearts for our Hospital Bicycle Challenge

Sumter County ARES again coordinated amateur radio support for the 10th Annual Hearts For Our Hospital Bicycle Challenge, held on Saturday, November 8, 2025.



Amateur radio operators from Sumter and Lake counties worked together to provide communications for the event. Amateur operators were positioned at rest stops along each route, while others patrolled their assigned routes in their vehicles to provide assistance to riders and to keep the command post informed of the progress of the riders.



The command post was staffed by the ARES Incident Commander, Net Control Operators, APRS Operator and the Sumter County Sheriff's Office. Our volunteers in field assignments used APRS to report their positions which were displayed on a large monitor in the command post. When incidents were reported, the location of those incidents were plotted on APRS making it easier for responding personnel to locate.

The following amateur radio crew helped make this year's event safe and enjoyable for the cyclists who participated:

Jeff Taffuri, KO4NCC	Jennifer Kasper, KN4NRY	Marty Korecky, W3MJK	Rusty Blankenship, WV1TPR
Steve Walbrun, KD8WAA	Tony Testa, W2AJT	Spike McKenzie, N4EBF	Mark Tetlow, KB1UHA
Verne Betlach, K4VEB	Larry Monroe, N2HBX	Larry Peterson, N2AMW	Roger Weed, KV4I
Greg Madore, K1MGR	Maria Monroe, KR4EIG	Paul Koch, KD2HQV	Mark Newby, KX4LEO
Dave Alford, AD5DA	Strait Hollis, KT4YA	Peter Stirpe, NV2P	

Conquering Noise From Switching Power Supply

by Gordon Gibby KX4Z



I chose a TDK-Lambda 150watt nominal 12V switching supply for my two sBitx stations, after initial tests didn't find much RF interference from the supplies. Amateur radio power supplies have shot up in price in recent years, and these were considerably more economical.

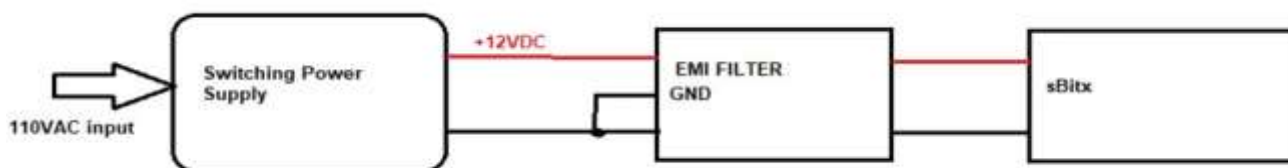
(<https://www.digikey.com/en/products/detail/tdk-lambda/LS150-12/1918822> and also <https://www.amazon.com/LAMBDA-LS15012-AC-DC-ENCLOSED-12-5A/dp/B00DED3ECQ>) These supplies have a user-adjustable output voltage from 10.8-13.2V -- perfect for the sBitx. However, after some usage I recognized RFI noise right at the frequency of a morning 75-meter net that I wished to join, at 3940 kHz. Spinning down the band, I found this was repeated at intervals that seemed to be related to a switching frequency, and when the sBitx was operated from a battery supply -- no noise! This noise appeared to be 3 "divisions" or more on the sBitx screen, above the background RF galactic noise (possibly 30dB above background noise). That made getting into the net from 500 miles away quite an issue.

Putting 1,000 uF capacitance across the power supply output to ground had little effect on the noise, suggesting it wasn't differential, but might be common mode noise. Using an FT-240-43 toroid (which is a high permeability), wrapping 6-8 turns of both the + and - power supply wiring on the toroid brought a huge reduction in the noise, confirming the common-mode character. One solution!

Would a commercial line filter also help? I ordered some 10-ampere line filter that include a 0.3 mH common mode choke. (<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B0DT41CMB5>) These are standard single-stage RFI filters very commonly used.

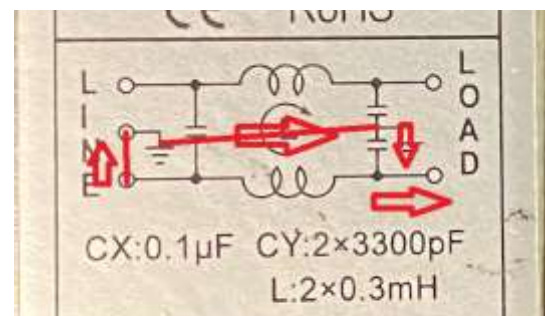


I wired it up taking the output directly from the power supply and feeding to the sBitx -- and found almost NO improvement. Why? After some investigation I found my error -- I had connected the filter's ground wire to the



But due to the capacitors included within the single-stage EMI filter, connecting the line input ground to one of the filter lines had the impact of offering RF noise a nice path right around the 0.3 mH common mode choke, as shown in the figure with the red arrows showing the RF path.

RF common mode noise on the negative power lead uses the ground to jump right past the common mode choke and passes through one of the capacitors directly to the output. Thus the common mode choke is no longer seeing the common noise on both of its magnetically coupled windings, and thus its effectiveness is nullified.



Ground pathway around common mode choke

I tested this theory by simply cutting the connection of the ground input (letting it float) and immediately I had significant reduction of the switching noise at 3940 kHz. Not as impressive as that afforded by the FT-240-43 common mode choke, but still significant. So I added the ferrite common mode choke to the wiring between the commercial filter and the sBitx input-- and no remaining discernible noise.

For others using switching power supplies with noise issues, I would simply first try the ferrite common mode choke, using suitably rated wire and either a FT-140-43 or FT-240-43 core and try for 8 - 9 bifilar turns of both + and = power supply wires. The commercial filter might be added if this isn't sufficient all by itself.

Happy HF adventures!

Even MORE on RF Noise-Free Electronic Fluorescent Ballasts

Gordon Gibby KX4Z

In the November issue of the NFL Section Newsletter, I related my experience with replacing older inductive-style fluorescent ballasts with a newer design that generates high voltages electronically. (See: <https://arri-nfl.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/01-QST-NFL-November-2025.pdf>) This was required because the older inductive-style ballasts are becoming unavailable. And our group has had bad experiences with LED style fluorescent replacement systems, which have sometimes had VERY noisy power systems. (This sent our crew on a 2-month wild goose chase once, to try and help a member who had huge interference on 2-meter FM! Turned out to be RFI from his own LED long bulbs in his garage.)

Keystone Ballast Won't Run Single Tube

After our success replacing the ballast in a 2-tube light fixture in our kitchen, a single-tube fixture in our bedroom started the death spiral. We managed to get it down from the lighting tray to work on it, and tried the 2-tube Keystone KTEB-240-UV-TP-PIC ballast described in my previous article. **Drat! No matter how I wired it, it would NOT start a single 40-watt T12 tube.**

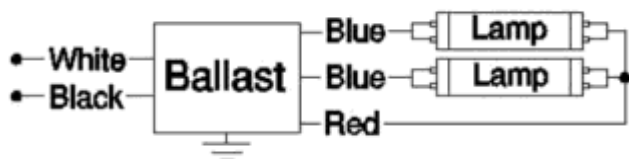
Robertson T8 Electronic Ballast

In the process of procuring ballasts, I had also ordered a different style that appears to work merely by generating a very high voltage -- it doesn't even light up the filament at the end of the fluorescent tube. (Thus it might work even if the filament is burned out!). This Robertson ballast is even slightly smaller and its literature indicates that it will work with a single tube as well. (<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B00H4HNQ44>)

However, I neglected to understand that is intended for T8 (newer, thinner) bulbs, rather than the older T12 (1.5" diameter) bulbs. Nevertheless, it is specified for running up to two 32-watt T8's or one 40-Watt T8. T8 and T12 bulbs use the same receptacle, and what I have on hand are plenty of the older T12 40-watt bulbs (F40T12).



I didn't grasp that fine point while quite frustrated trying to fix my bedroom lighting, and I just put in the Robertson electronic ballast -- which is even easier to wire because **the wiring is just one wire to each end of the bulb(s)** since



it operates merely by high voltage -- and BINGO! It instantly lit the bulb with steady light and appeared to work fine. If you're just using a single bulb, you just put insulating tape around the end of the unused blue wire (which apparently can produce several hundreds of volts!). In my case, I could use the original mounting method, but in other fixtures, you

may need to drill a single hole to hold a mounting screw to assure grounding of the case of the ballast. (The fixture metal is usually solidly grounded in these fixtures.)

No RFI With AC Chokes

Since I still had several remaining snap-on large-size ferrite chokes (type 31 ferrite), I put 4 or 5 turns of the AC wiring around the choke (Amazon: <https://www.amazon.com/dp/B07Y876CCB>). Going upstairs to the Winlink RMS HF station with an antenna right outside the bedroom, I was delighted to find NO trace of HF RFI on either 80 meters or 20 meters! So this seems to be a workable ballast for replacement also (at least when accompanied by a choke, as I didn't test it without the choke). You might wish to use the more modern T8 bulbs however!

How I Almost Set Fire To My Dual-Duty "Communications Trailer"

Gordon KX4Z

Yes, our little 2007 travel trailer has been a versatile workhorse, both as a cross-country RV for Nancy and me, and also as a frequent communications trailer for our NFARC/Alachua County ARES(R) group. But way out west, **it almost set fire** to the wiring and to the trailer itself..... Hot exhaust gases were detected by the single-use thermal fuse and correctly shut down the gas -- but lacking a spare and confused about the issue, I bypassed the thermal fuse (bad, bad, BAD idea!) and thankfully Nancy smelled smoke and we shut it down before the melted and blackened wires set much more on FIRE.

Important To Understand

WHY this happened is extremely important for any operators of a communications/travel trailer that has a gas-operated furnace or water heater (probably of either type, tank-based or tank-less). There is a protective solution that would have avoided the entire problem!

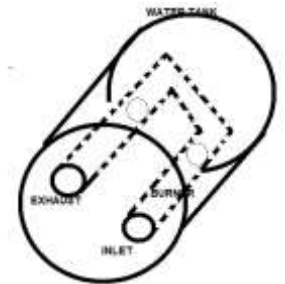
How it works



From the outside, all you see is a vent area in the cover. But upon opening up the cover, a bit of investigation shows that there is a planned air flow. You can't see it, but there is a U-shaped tube running deep into the hot water tank, turning upwards, and then exiting at the upper left of the assembly.

Gas burning at the inlet creates hot exhaust that flows upwards in this internal tube, exiting at the upper left and creating a suction at the inlet.

Outside fresh air is supposed to enter from the bottom of the external louvers and proceed down and to the right, drawn by the gas flame in the metal tunnel that runs through the water tank. That keeps the wiring bathed in fresh cooler air (if all works right).



But in my case, hot gases were *not* being drawn around this curve -- instead they were moving backwards, and then upwards outside the burner cavity and scorching both the protective thermal fuse and the wiring. I went through at least 3 of these protective thermal fuses before I figured this out and removed some of the burner system and got a really GOOD LOOK inside the U-shaped burner tube -- not just one but TWO mud-dauber nests were blocking the flow of exhaust gases! Aha!

I cleaned them out with some bent implements and then even ran water around the tube to flush out anything else that I hadn't seen. Putting it all back together again, now the exhaust goes the right way!

An Ounce Of Prevention

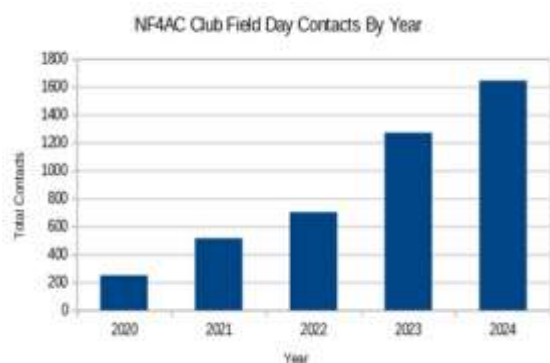
You can prevent this by using spring-attached screen covers that prevent flying insects like mud-daubers from getting in! Wished I had known that! One such product is: <https://www.amazon.com/dp/B08GS24FDJ> If your group or family operates any kind of trailer that includes propane-fired heating devices, I would encourage this! Inspect your devices during the cold of the winter and remove any obstructions to exhaust flow before something bad results.

Emergency Comms Training Conference Built Around Winter Field Day

Jan 24, 2026 -- Alachua County Team

Gordon Gibby KX4Z

The Alachua County ARES(R) team (supported by NFARC as well as other clubs) has been participating in emergency comms events such as ARRL Field Day and Winter Field Day for a few years now, and it has dramatically improved both our operating expertise, and also our available emergency equipment! Preparation for these events has resulted in the acquisition or construction of: trailer-mounted tower, multi-band antenna multiplexer, hundreds of feet of high quality coaxial cable, multiple antennas, diesel generator, multiple kinds of filters -- huge improvements in our equipment.



Our operators have gotten better and better with stunning improvements in efficiency and results based on objective measures of contacts completed.

But we used to carry out annual CONFERENCES where we held **multiple sessions of talks and training** on all kinds of emergency skillsets -- and even included a short Exercise in the afternoon. We have even published textbooks written by our lecturers, such as <https://www.amazon.com/2020-Amateur-Radio-Communications-Conference/dp/B083XX3SZR/>.

Susan Halbert KG4VWI brought up the question of whether we couldn't do another sort of Training Conference, when we were discussing involvement in the 2026 Winter Field Day (<https://winterfeldday.org/>). The WFD crew have been making their event better each year, with even sharper emphasis on skillsets valuable for emergency communications -- and the competitive portion of the event sharpens operating skills of hams who may have fallen into a "rut." It isn't quite the same as a real disaster -- but it does make you a better operator, better at dealing with all things "radio."

So we are pursuing the idea of combining the two and putting together a Training Conference that teaches all kinds of topics -- and uses preparation and participation in the Winter Field Day as a hands-on experience building application of the skills! We are blessed to have people with real disaster experience such as Susan and Brett Wallace NH2KW -- and Brett is really determined to help hams improve their **digital skillsets** after his experiences in Helene in North Carolina where he volunteered with a serving group (Grindstone Ministries, <https://www.grindstoneministries.com/>

GOOGLE FORM TO SURVEY INTEREST

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSduo7uHe2Ybs4H6dd3tkiFo3MU_OoAuaDG7kxrLv03W6DulEA/viewform?usp=header

We came up with a GOOGLE FORM to assess interest in participating in such a Training Conference in the NFL or Florida area. ***Please click on that link and register your interest!***

WINTER FIELD DAY EMERGENCY TRAINING

JANUARY 24th 2026

Possibility of 2nd Day, Jan 25

Alachua County; Location TBD

Possible Topics / Skills

The initial topics and skillsets we thought of for training included: (there may be a LOT more added!)

For Professionals/Managers:

- How amateur radio groups can add to PACE comms
- Access to State/Federal comms and training nets
- How to carry out HSEEP type exercises
- Volunteer Management



For Communicators:

- Digital techniques such as PSK31, WSJT-8, JS8, Winlink
- Computer setup skills with digital techniques
- Emergency Antenna construction / installation
- Transmission Lines / SWR
- Alternative power of all kinds -- solar, batteries, generators
- MESH networks, which can include MESHTASTIC as well

Lectures and Demonstrations Just Aren't Enough!

And we'll use Winter Field Day to give participants real, live experience not only with the setup, but also with the radio communication skills, of all types -- digital (emphasized) and voice and even CW if you need it! Our experience is that a lot of newer operators really need coaching to become successful communicators in a fast-paced environment. WFD offers a somewhat relaxed but still useful environment to get people "comfortable" with moving the equivalent of a LOT of traffic!



NFARC Explores HF Digital Voice (FREEDV)

Gordon Gibby KX4Z

The FREEDV ham radio group has been trying for several years to come up with a ham-developed, royalty-free encoding system that would allow static-free, perfect quality digitized voice communications on HF for hams. I tried some of their earlier offerings, and wasn't that impressed. Then they got a big grant from ARDC and hired some professional help and started a whole new codec -- RADE. When I looked into it a couple months back, I was blown away at the improvement in the voice quality! Despite using "linear predictive coding" it sounded very much like it should, and when you had even a smidgen of signal-to-noise ratio it was *perfect* -- like studio audio! And ham-developed, free of all royalties.



The advantages just keep coming! It is also NARROW -- currently using only 1.6 kHz (and maybe headed toward 800 Hz). It has a higher average power to peak power ratio -- so you're getting more SIGNAL out there all the time. While that can require a bit more of your finals, it means a better connection. And it IS a better connection -- my own testing and comparison suggests it already has a 6dB advantage over analog SSB voice. That means your 100-watt signal seem to have the punch of a 400 watt signal and so on. When the "SNR" meter reads even 1-2 dB on the free downloadable application for your laptop, you have PERFECT connection.

While up in North Carolina at our family's ancient vacation retreat, I tried some QSO's with some of the NFARC/ARES(R) team back in Gainesville -- and we got it to work and were very impressed with the signals! It isn't magic; if there just isn't any propagation you can't reverse that with FREEDV, but when we had any propagation, the FREEDV was much better for us than the analog SSB.

Internet Reporting

If you have an internet connection and are willing to allow reporting, it has its own system similar to the reverse beacon network: you can see every other station that is reporting, click on any you wish to contact, and see how every one of them are receiving your signal, just by transmitting!

Callign	Locator	km	Hdq	Version	MHz	Mode	Status	Msg	Last TX	RX Call	Mode	SNR	Last Update
VK3VY	QF31au	15487	245	FreeDV 2.1.0	7.0450	RADEV1	RX	Tony, Yarragon, VIC	11/21/23 01:10:17				11/21/23 18:48:24
DHCHAW	JQ43	7495	40	FreeDV 2.0.1	7.0660	RADEV1	RX Only						11/22/23 07:08:48
PDNBTB	JQ52Jg	7395	40	FreeDV 2.0.2	7.0660	RADEV1	RX	— B/U + DMR-ID: 30	11/22/23 07:08:48		RADEV1	0.0	11/22/23 07:08:39
4KPCF	PM96dp	11498	327	FreeDV 2.1.0	7.1600	RADEV1	RX		11/22/23 04:03:20				11/22/23 04:45:17
WB7UMA	DM42ki	2732	284	FreeDV 2.0.3-dev-804b	7.1729	RADEV1	RX						11/19/23 01:58:20
4KPCF	PM96dp	11498	328	FreeDV 2.0.2	7.1750	RADEV1	TX	Chikawa, Adachi-Ku	11/22/23 07:08:27				11/22/23 07:08:27
4KPCF	PM96dp	11498	328	FreeDV 2.0.1	7.1750	RADEV1	RX Only	Chikawa, Adachi-Ku			RADEV1	5.0	11/22/23 07:08:39

FreeDV Reporter. Orange station is transmitting; Blue are hearing transmitter over the air. Others are on the air but not hearing the current transmitter.

Required Gear

All told, it requires 2 soundcards somewhere. If you're using a recent radio that has one inside (like the Icom 7300) that counts as 1, and then your laptop mic/speaker system can be the second. Or if you have a USB mic/headset, that works. It is eerie to have ham radio voices coming out of your laptop and speaking into your laptop mic, but it WORKS! (Feels more like home to use a mic/headset...) If you know how to set up VARA or FT-8 then you will quickly assign the soundcard in the receive string and transmit string:

- MIC ----(soundcard)---> software ----(soundcard)---> Transmitter
- Receiver ----(soundcard)---> software ----(soundcard)---> speaker
- On their free application, you can use your mouse or space bar as the "ptt".

Having Fun In Alachua County

So after a small bunch of us had it working, we held a LabNLunch to invite others to join in and bring their laptop. We got it set up on 3 more systems that way. Brings us to about 7 locally who can run this new mode. (And Brad Swartz N5CBP of friendly rival Columbia County crew!) We have found two "hiccups" so far:



- Some installations require an upgrade to software for the "C++ Redistributable" library. (Free, just google for it)
- We could NOT get it to work on a slow slow Celeron processor -- used 100% of the processor and wouldn't decode properly. Needed any reasonable laptop from the last 5-7 years or so.

Download:

Go here: <https://freedv.org/> and read a bit, then use their download.

C++ redistributable here: <https://learn.microsoft.com/en-us/cpp/windows/latest-supported-vc-redist?view=msvc-170> (ignore the Visual Studio stuff)

Usefulness

This is still a work-in-progress with a Version 2 likely to show up. It has **big advantages**, but some **downsides also** -- you lose the ability to hear multiple stations simultaneously that you're used to on HF SSB analog voice. It works more like FM or digital -- you either hear them, or you *don't* -- and only ONE of them. That could mean a different technique for checking into nets, for example. It is already quite "usable." It allows packing more people into our crowded general-class sections of voice bands, almost twice as many! The app allows you switch easily between "analog" and "digital." And it gives you better reception for your power level. This looks very exciting for the future of voice comms on HF amateur radio!

MERT



Marion County Sheriff's Office
Division of Emergency Management



COMMUNICATIONS UPDATE

December 2025

MERT's primary role is to support all open Evacuation Shelters throughout Marion County (FL) during declared Emergency events. We also support the Emergency Operations Center Incident Commander, staff and other EMCOMM groups (CERT, HEC, ARES, MBA) with voice, image & data communications locally, statewide and across the United States.

Next Bimonthly Meeting

January 17th, 10:00 am at
the EOC

Annual Meeting Event.

All are Welcomed!

Meetings conducted in Jan, March,
May, July, Sept. and Nov.

Your **Pen** is as Important as your **Microphone**!

We Salute Bill Gillespie

This month, MERT salutes Mr. William E. "Bill" Gillespie (KW5BG) for his decade of service. His constant and steady leadership has helped guide our volunteer organization in countless ways too numerous to mention. His list of accomplishments is long, but we celebrate even more his character, wisdom, and the dedication he brought to MERT.



For the last decade, Bill has been a trusted advisor, a patient mentor, and a tireless worker behind the scenes. His calm presence in times of challenge and his unwavering commitment to excellence have set a standard we all strive to follow. Whether troubleshooting technical systems, encouraging and helping new volunteers, or reminding us of the bigger mission we serve, Bill's influence has been felt in every corner of our organization.



To honor Bill's contributions, leadership, dedication and mentorship, Preston Bowlin, Director presented him the Meritorious Service Volunteer Award citing his many contributions and decade of service during a special ceremony at the EOC on November 19th.



"I will honor Christmas in my heart, and try to keep it all the year." — Charles Dickens

As he and Vicki move to their new home in Virginia and transition to new chapters in life, we pause to honor his wonderfully kind legacy. His years of support and leadership of CERT in the Del Webb Spruce Creek community along with MERT have made both organizations stronger and far more capable of serving those needing help. Bill embodies the very spirit of volunteerism—selflessness, steadiness, and deeply committed to our community.

Thank you, Bill, for your friendship, your solid counsel, your leadership, and your dedication to serve. Your impact will continue to resonate in MERT for years to come. ***We wish you and Vicki the very best in all your future endeavors!***

21 Years, a Quiet Hurricane Season and time for Thanks!



As MERT completes its 21st year supporting the Marion County Sheriff's Office Division of Emergency Management, I want to take a moment to reflect on our journey, acknowledge the unique nature of who we are, and express heartfelt gratitude to everyone,

First and foremost, we are thankful Florida and the United States was spared from any hurricanes this season. While it is very rare to see two hurricanes closely follow each other, I know we are all feeling very fortunate they stayed far off in the Atlantic. Clearly, a quiet season is a blessing which allowed our team to continue our efforts investing time on improving our infrastructure while also expanding our training efforts, having fun with three Field Exercises, do some needed “house-keeping” while connecting with one another as friends.... and as a team.

This year marks 21 years of service, commitment and innovation by MERT members. What began as a plan by the Division of Emergency Management and a small group of volunteers with a shared vision and singular focus on putting trained radio operators in every shelter... has now grown into a resilient, technically advanced, and strategically vital organization. MERT has become a major resource available to Marion County’s emergency leaders because of **you** - our members.

Your dedication, your expertise, and your willingness to volunteer your time, make MERT what it is. As we have learned, there are very few organizations like MERT... so I share this with everyone:

New Members - Welcome! You’ve joined a team that values mentorship, technical excellence, and community service. Our members are here to help you learn and support you every step of the journey, but most of all, to embrace your friendship and interest in amateur radio supporting emergency communications. We also hope you find it a fun activity to learn some new things, enjoy new activities while meeting some truly wonderful people.

Longtime members - Thank You! Your experience and long-term dedication are the foundation of our past successes. You have shown that commitment, integrity and results are core values we embrace. You’ve also shown that all contributions are to be celebrated and that everyone’s contributions are welcomed and respected.

Members in between - Keep showing up, keep learning, and keep leading. You are helping build on past successes with new ideas and innovative recommendations which is leading us on a path to increased technical capability and excellence vital to our future success. You are building an environment of continuous improvement supporting the evolving directives we have been given today... and into the future.

As we prepare to turn the page on 2025, it is time to celebrate an outstanding year for MERT. It is even more importantly a time to spend with loved ones, family and friends with Thanksgiving and Christmas approaching. To all, I extend my sincerest wishes for a happy, relaxing, joyous and safe holiday season.

There is much to be thankful for! Thank you for being part of MERT. Thank you for your time, your talent, and your generous heart. Here’s to 21 years—and to many more ahead!

Happy Thanksgiving and Merry Christmas to All!

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be 'JRC'.



MERT supporting CERT

On Halloween morning, several members volunteered to provide communications support to CERT at the 5K run/walk event at the Stone Creek community in SW Marion County. CERT's role of having several Aid Stations was backed up by radio operators who provided a crucial role in keeping race officials and emergency services updated on the progress of runners and ensuring everyone's safety during the event.

Kudos to the CERT team who have several FCC licensed amateur operators on their radio team who were stationed at the primary radio room (in the main community building) providing a coordinated response which was ready to provide emergency support if required.

For me personally, I enjoyed the friendship, fresh air and the opportunity to have some "on air" time supporting this community's special event. As hoped, the outcome was safe for all (nearly 200 participants!)... but wow... it was COLD! (I guess my "years are showing". LOL!)

My compliments to June Benoit, CERT Community Leader, her leadership team Pam Marcus, Norm Bouchard and others, along with the CERT Radio Captain Joel Friedman KQ4LGL for the overall organizational plan. A special salute to Phil Lewis W4EVV (MERT Repeater Mgr.) and his wife Diane W4LDL for his leadership planning the radio comm's for the event along with Ray Woody WB6FKJ (MERT Shelter Mgr.); and, Nick Kiddey W4NFK (MERT New Member Mgr.) to volunteer at reporting stations along the route. It is fun being a MERT member!



An early race leader.



CERT member Rosemary Kerins directing participants.



Another early runner.



The Stone Creek event supported runners and walkers with moms, dads, kids and babies in strollers joining.



Harlan reporting from "Station Kilo".



Several groups had costumes joining in the Halloween spirit.



Mom with her baby in a stroller crossing the FINISH line!



Christmas mailbox too!

"The best way to spread Christmas cheer is singing loud for all to hear." — Buddy the Elf

Baseline Repeater Site Field Trip

Nearly everyone in our country is now accustomed to having (mostly) reliable services from the cellular telephone network, Internet Data Centers and our electrical network in their everyday lives. We've learned to expect those services being "on" and ready for any service request we have. But, wouldn't you like to visit one of those sites and see what is happening "behind the scenes"? Would you also like to learn a little more on how they operate? (LOL... as an Engineer, I would also like to know what causes all those failures!)

That was the goal of MERT members visiting the Baseline repeater site on Nov. 15th who focused on these objectives:

- Review the operational details of this site, tower and repeater facility Learn the security responsibilities for ingress and egress
- Review detailed Network Diagrams of both repeaters
 - * KK4DFC & KJ4CLL
- FCC Log Book responsibilities
 - * What is a Log Book
 - * How to complete it



**Baseline Communications Facility
for KK4DFC and
KJ4CLL**

Over the last 21-years, the Division of Emergency Management has made significant investments in the necessary hardware, radio systems, backup power and tower resources we need to provide reliable auxiliary communications (AUXCOMM) capabilities during emergencies. Members have supported those investments by contributing thousands of hours of volunteer time and significant technical expertise in keeping them functioning 24-hours per day should an emergency arise. (Note: Please thank Phil Lewis W4EVV for his leadership as our Repeater Manager and his excellent overview presented detailing the key equipment and operational aspects of this site.)

But knowing more details of MERT's communications facilities is a responsibility of every member who might be called upon to help in big or small ways should conditions warrant. Compliments to these members for participating: Royce Hagerman, Fred Herman, Jeannie Herman, Nick Kiddey, Phil Lewis, Santos Pagan, Ray Sherwood, Mark Weible and Ray Woody.



"I heard the bells on Christmas Day, Their old, familiar carols play, And wild and sweet, The words repeat, Of peace on earth, good-will to men!" —Henry Wadsworth Longfellow



New MERT Technical Library

As our systems and active locations continue growing in response to the growing mission from the Division of Emergency Management, MERT is building a Technical Library to ensure every member has clear, accessible documented resources for adjusting, tuning, and repairing our diverse equipment in inventory at every location. By creating a full catalog documenting every device, we strengthen our readiness, preserve “institutional” knowledge, and help support our key objective of having reliable communications when emergencies demand consistent communications and quality.

For now, the bookcase has been placed between Station #4 and #5 in the EOC Radio Room in making it easily accessible for everyone.

We’ve outlined these resources to start moving forward with the project:

- Equipment Operation Manuals for each station’s hardware in a separate 3-ring binder
 - * Radio
 - * Power Supply
 - * UPS
 - * Antenna Tuners, Terminal Node Controllers (TNC), Sound Cards, etc.
- All SHREK and Go Kits Manuals
 - * All electrical units (Radios, power supplies, Sound Cards, etc.
 - * Parts & Supplies
- Repeater Site Manuals
 - * ICOM D-Star & Yaesu DR-1X Repeaters
 - * Power Supplies
 - * Duplexers
 - * Tower Antennas and cables
- All cable and switch units and every location
- Winlink Gateway/Digipeater Reference Manuals
- EOC Tower Manual, Lighting Manual, Programming Manuals, etc., etc.

The current plan is to have printed and electronic versions available. I’m pleased sharing Cindy Sheffield K9LRX and our Meeting Documentation & Deputy Logistics Manager is leading our new initiative. Thank you for your help in identifying every component and sharing them with her so they can be added to the list needing completion. ***Thank you, Cindy, for your leadership driving this key project!***

An Early Christmas



Member Ray Woody WB6FKJ (Shelter Mgr.) shares Santa visited early this year as he now has a Kenwood DH-72 HT in his personal radio equipment inventory. He shares the radio supports 2 Meters, 70 cm and Winlink digital messaging.

Ray is shown (with a big smile) in his backyard making a contact over his new HT.

“For it is good to be children sometimes, and never better than at Christmas, when its mighty Founder was a child himself.” —Charles Dickens, A Christmas Carol



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Member Update

Member Bill Cummings KC2ZRZ provides this update on his very busy year with the USCGAUX.

“At FEMA’s request, I began specialized training this year to support geospatial damage assessments during major natural disasters. This initiative aligns with FEMA’s call for USCGAUX support during Category 3+ hurricanes, significant wildfires, and tornado events. I am currently progressing through the training pipeline.



Other Leadership and Operational Roles have included:

Flotilla Staff Officer – Communications (FSO-CM): Oversaw the restoration and modernization of communications infrastructure at the Crystal River facility, including radio and antenna systems compromised by age and flood damage. Led development of communication plans supporting routine operations and emergency response.

Flotilla Staff Officer – Member Training (FSO-MT): Facilitated training initiatives to enhance member readiness and operational proficiency.

Division Staff Officer – Communications (SO-CM): Provided strategic oversight and support for communications operations across four Flotillas. Ensured consistency in training standards and operational capability.

Division Staff Officer – Information Systems (SO-IS): Maintained data integrity for member service hours and task reporting. Delivered targeted training to improve member proficiency with USCGAUX systems.

My Mission Support Activities have included:

- Conducted 50 vessel safety inspections to promote recreational boating safety.
- Served as a certified instructor for multiple public boater safety courses.
- Supported Coast Guard Station Yankeetown as an AUX Culinary Assistant (AUX-CA), preparing meals for active-duty personnel.
- Collaborated with the Eastern Great Lakes District as ID Staff Officer, processing 44 member ID applications to date, including verification, tracking, and distribution.
- Will be serving as Vice Commander of USCG Aux Flotilla 15-01 for 2026. As Chief of Staff for the flotilla, I will oversee the performance of staff officers supporting the flotilla.

Bill shares his longtime support of the USCGAUX is very rewarding... but he misses being able to spend more time at MERT. We thank Bill for all he does to help keep everyone on the water safe and wish him and his wife a wonderful 2026 in their continued efforts!

For more information on the Marion County Emergency Radio Team (MERT), visit:

KG4NXO.com

All hams are welcomed to attend all MERT meetings every Wednesday from 9:00 am till Noon at the Emergency Operations Center (EOC); 692 NW 30th Ave., Ocala, FL.

FCC Testing Information

Daytona Beach Amateur Radio Assn (DBARA)

- Monthly, third Monday, 5:30 PM, prior to meeting
- Lehman Building, Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University
- Registration Required
- Info: <https://dbara.org/testing/>

Hog County Amateur Radio Association, Bushnell FL

- First Saturday, 11:00 AM
- Cross Connection Church, 1451 West County Road 476, Bushnell, FL 33513
- Info: sumterVE@gmail.com

Lake ARA, Leesburg FL

- Monthly on the 3rd Saturday, prior to meeting. (Except December)
- 8:00 AM
- LARA Clubhouse (11146 Springdale Ave, Leesburg – off of CR 473)
- For more information and registration, contact: Dave Templeton N4NG, 386-804-2806 n4ng@icloud.com in advance of the meeting.

Lake Monroe ARS FCC Testing, Sanford FL (LMARS)

- Third Saturday of every month
- Seminole County Sheriff's Office, 100 Eslinger Way, 1st Floor, Sanford, FL
- Registration Required
- For more information and registration, contact Bob Cumming, W2BZY, 407-333-0690 or w2bzy@cfl.rr.com

Milton Amateur Radio Club, Milton FL

- Check date at miltonarc.org
- Walk-in
- Bagdad United Methodist Church
- Info: Chuck, N4QEP, merlinman3@yahoo.com

Orlando Amateur Radio Club

- First Wednesday
- 5:30 PM, Walk-ins allowed
- ARRL/VEC
- William Beardall Senior Center 800 S Delaney Ave Orlando FL 32801.
- Info: testing@OARC.org Robert Cumming, 407-333-0690

Santa Rosa County FL ARES® Testing (Walk-in)

- Information and dates can be found at srcares.org

Seminole County

- Every month on the third Saturday
- 9:15 AM
- Seminole County Sheriff's Office off SR 17-92, on 100 Eslinger Way in Sanford, FL
- Info: Bob Cumming, W2BZY, w2bzy@cfl.rr.com

Silver Springs Radio Club, Ocala FL (SSRC)

- Go to <http://k4gso.us/class/> to signup for classes
- Go to <http://k4gso.us/test-signup/> for testing. Testing is held on the 2nd Tuesday of odd months at 7 PM.
- Note <http://k4gso.us/ncvec605/> is requested to be filled out before you show for testing. It is best to download the form and open it as a PDF so you can fill in the blanks.

Suwannee ARC, Live Oak, FL

- Last Saturday of the month
- Suwannee Regional Library
- Contact Gerald Guy, geraldguy@gmail.com

Tallahassee Amateur Radio Society (TARS)

The Tallahassee Amateur Radio Society (TARS) has begun limited License testing. Please refer to the following for the updated testing dates and requirements for individuals wishing to take exams. <https://www.k4tlh.org/getting-started/license-testing>

West Volusia Amateur Radio Society

- Second Saturday of each odd numbered month
- 6:00 AM
- St. Johns Lodge #37, 2557 N. Spring Garden Ave, Deland FL
- Info: <https://westvars.org/testing>

Gainesville Amateur Radio Society

- 1st Saturday of even numbered months
- Tech day two weeks after testing
- <https://gars.club/Testing.html>

Hernando County Amateur Radio Association (HCARA)

2nd Thursday of each month at 6:00 PM
For details and to register—<http://www.hamstudy.org> and go to **Find A Session**
Exam cost is free. FCC charges do apply

Statewide Digital Radio Resources

Designated ARES® DSAR Reflectors & a DMR Talk group? DSTAR Reflector 046

REF046A – Florida Statewide

REF046B – NFL ARES®

REF046C – NWS Mobile, AL SKYWARN

DMR Florida State ARES® TG 31127

Link your local repeaters to help create a digital repeater network throughout the state!

Testing information is subject to change. Check with the testing venue to confirm the testing session and requirements.