



QST NFL

Newsletter for the Northern Florida Section

Come join the FUN!

Volume 13 Issue 7

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July 2026



From the Shack of the Section Manager

Scott Roberts, KK4ECR (kk4ecr@gmail.com)



Well... We Did It Again.



I'm going to be honest with you — I'm still tired. My feet are still sore, I'm pretty sure I left a camp chair somewhere I'll never see again, and I think I ate enough hot dogs over the weekend to last me until Christmas. But you know what? I wouldn't trade a single minute of it.

Field Day 2026 is officially in the books, and from everything I've heard and seen across the North Florida Section, it was a great one. Not perfect — Field Day never is — but great in all the ways that actually matter.

Before I get into anything else, I just want to say thank you. Genuinely. To every operator who showed up, set up, and got on the air — thank you. To every club officer who spent weeks or months planning logistics, coordinating volunteers, securing sites, and wrangling equipment — thank you. To every Elmer who sat next to a nervous new ham and talked them through their first Field Day contact — that might be the most important thing that happened all weekend, and thank you for doing it. And to the family members and friends who came out and supported their operators — the folks who aren't licensed but showed up anyway because they believe in what we do — thank you too. We don't say that enough.

I heard from clubs all over the section this weekend. Some of you had fantastic conditions and logged impressive numbers. Some of you battled rain, heat, generator gremlins, and band conditions that had no business being what they were in June. Some of you ran big multi-transmitter setups, and some of you kept it simple and just had a

good time. All of it counts. Every QSO in every log across this section is something to be proud of. And I want to say something specific to the folks who may have only made a handful of contacts — the ones who might be tempted to look at another club's totals and feel like they came up short. Don't. Please don't do that. If you made one contact, you set up a station, you figured out how to operate under field conditions, and you put a signal on the air. That is the whole point. Field Day isn't about winning. It's about being ready. It's about knowing that when the lights go out and the internet goes down, you can still communicate — and you proved this weekend that you can.

Okay, Now the Part I Really Need You to Do

Here's where I'm going to ask something of every club in the North Florida Section, and I want to be real with you — this part matters more than the contact totals.

Please do a Field Day Debrief.

I know, I know. The antennas are down, the equipment is back in somebody's garage, and everyone is exhausted. The last thing you want to do is schedule another meeting. I get it. But here's the thing — the two or three weeks right after Field Day are the most valuable time you have for making next year better. The details are still fresh. The emotions — both the highs and the frustrations — are still real. Once August rolls around, people will have moved on and you'll be starting from scratch next June trying to remember why the feedline situation was such a mess.

So carve out an hour. Do it at your next regular club meeting if you need to. Grab some coffee, pull up your Field Day log, and work through three questions together as a club.

First: What went well?



Start here. I mean it — start here, not with the problems. It's easy to jump straight to everything that went sideways, but before you do that, make yourself sit in the wins for a few minutes.

Did your setup go faster than last year? Write it down. Did your logging software actually behave itself this time? Write it down. Did a club member step up and surprise you — someone who handled something you didn't even ask them to handle? Write their name down and tell them you noticed. Did your antenna farm come together smoothly? Did the food situation work out? Did you have a really solid operator rotation this year? Whatever it was, document it.

This isn't just feel-good stuff. The things that went well are the things you want to deliberately repeat. Institutional memory in a volunteer club is fragile — people move, life changes, and the "we always do it this way" knowledge walks out the door with them. Write down what worked and *why* it worked. That's how you build on success instead of reinventing the wheel every June.

Second: What didn't go well?



Now you can open it up. And I'd encourage club leaders to set the right tone here — this isn't a blame session, and it's not a complaint pile-on. It's just an honest look at where things got wobbly.

Every Field Day has something. The generator that decided 2:00 AM was a great time to quit. The coax run that had an intermittent connection nobody could track down. The operating schedule that looked great on paper and completely fell apart by Saturday evening. The band that never opened the way you expected. The food that ran out too early, or the setup crew that showed up two hours late, or the antenna that took three times longer to get in the air than it should have.

Name these things. Don't sugarcoat them and don't catastrophize them either — just say what happened. And when someone brings up a problem, the room's job is to listen and understand, not to defend or explain it away.

The goal here is clarity. What happened, and what caused it? Sometimes it's bad luck. Sometimes it's a process that needs fixing. Knowing which is which is really important before you move to the next question.

This is the good stuff. For every problem you named in question two, now you get to ask — what would better have looked like, and what would it have taken to get there?

Maybe better means getting a second generator and a proper transfer switch so you're not white-knuckling it all night on one machine. Maybe better means building your operating rotation schedule months in advance instead of the week before. Maybe better means running a pre-Field Day antenna build day so your crew knows exactly what they're putting up before the clock starts. Maybe better means recruiting one person whose only job is to handle public outreach and get visitors to the site. Maybe better means starting a simple pairing program so every new ham who comes out has an experienced operator walking with them.

Whatever your "better" looks like, write it down. Assign a name to each action item — not "someone will handle it," but an actual human being who is actually agreeing to own it. Put a rough timeline on it. The clubs that consistently improve from one Field Day to the next aren't necessarily the ones with the biggest budgets or the fanciest gear. They're the ones that actually follow through on the debrief list between July and the following June.

Third: What can we make better for next year?



This is the good stuff. For every problem you named in question two, now you get to ask — what would better have looked like, and what would it have taken to get there?

Maybe better means getting a second generator and a proper transfer switch so you're not white-knuckling it all night on one machine. Maybe better means building your operating rotation schedule months in advance instead of the week before. Maybe better means running a pre-Field Day antenna build day so your crew knows exactly what they're putting up before the clock starts. Maybe better means recruiting one person whose only job is to handle public outreach and get visitors to the site. Maybe better means starting a simple pairing program so every new ham who comes out has an experienced operator walking with them.

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Send Me Your Results



Once you've done your debrief, I want to hear from you. You don't need to send me a formal report — just a quick email with your main takeaways from each of the three questions. A few bullet points is fine. I

genuinely want to know how it went for your club — what you're proud of, what gave you trouble, and what you're already thinking about for next year. This helps me do my job better. When I see common themes popping up across multiple clubs — similar challenges, similar resource gaps, similar wins — that tells me something important about what the section needs. It also helps me represent your clubs accurately at the division level, which matters more than you might think. Send your Field Day Debrief notes to me at kk4ecr@arrl.org. I'll do my best to respond to everyone personally.

One More Thing — Town Hall Meeting, July 10th

I want to make sure everyone sees this, so I'm putting it right here in bold:

We're holding an NFL Section Town Hall on Zoom, Friday, July 10th at 7:00 PM Eastern — and it's open to everyone across the entire ARRL Southeastern Division.

That's not a typo. This isn't just for Northern Florida hams. If you're anywhere in the SE Division, you're invited, and I'd love to have you there.

Here's what we'll be talking about:

- Field Day 2026 — a section/division-wide recap, what we heard, what we learned
- Year of the Club — what this initiative actually means and how your club is plugging into it
- The July ARRL Board of Directors Meeting — We will walk through what's on the agenda and what



it

means for the amateur radio community at large, as well as ideas and comments that we have for the ARR LBOD and Leadership.

Registration is required, so please sign up in advance here:

Register: <https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/oJDRUDzSR1SpjThLUXFPhg>

You'll get a confirmation email with all the joining details after you register.

If you have questions or topics you'd like me to address during the meeting, send them to me ahead of time at kk4ecr@arrl.org. The more I know going in, the more useful the time will be for everyone.

Please share this with your club members, your nets, and any ham you know in the SE Division. The more voices in the room, the better this conversation gets.

Alright — Go Get Some Rest

You earned it. Seriously. Take a few days, let the sunburn fade, wash the Field Day dirt out of your gear, and feel good about what you accomplished this weekend. Then come back refreshed, do that debrief, and let's start building something even better for 2027.

It is genuinely an honor to serve as your Section Manager. I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible on July 10th.

73,
Scott Roberts, KK4ECR ARRL North Florida Section Manager ✉ kk4ecr@arrl.org

From the Section Emergency Coordinator

Arc Thames, W4CPD



Being Ready Means More Than Owning a Radio

Every hurricane season, we talk a lot about radios, batteries, antennas, go-kits, and backup power. All of that matters, but being ready for hurricane season is about more than having equipment sitting on a shelf. The real question is this: if your county ARES group was activated tomorrow, would you know what to do?

That is the part we need to be honest about. In an actual hurricane response, things move quickly. Emergency management agencies may need operators at shelters, EOCs, hospitals, points of distribution, or other locations. Nets may be activated. Winlink traffic may need to be sent. Reports may need to be relayed. Someone may be asking for help, and we may not have much time to figure it out.

That is why this season is a good time for each of us to look beyond the radio and think about our readiness as operators. Do you know who your local ARES leadership is? Do they know how to reach you? Do they know if you are available to deploy, available from home, or not available at all? Do they know what equipment you have and what you are comfortable doing? Those questions matter. During a real event, leadership cannot build a response plan around people they cannot reach or capabilities they do not know about.

We also need to be realistic about our own limits. Not everyone can work a shelter overnight. Not everyone can deploy to an EOC. Not everyone can leave family at home during a storm. That is okay. There is no shame in being honest about what you can and cannot do. But there is a big difference between "I can only operate from home" and "nobody knows if I am available." Home operators can still be extremely valuable. They can monitor repeaters, relay traffic, support Winlink, provide backup net control, collect reports, and help maintain situational awareness. The key is making sure your local team knows where you fit.

This is also the time to practice professionalism. In a disaster, ARES operators are often working around emergency management, public safety, shelter staff, volunteers, and citizens who are under stress. We represent amateur radio when we walk into those rooms. How we act matters.

Be calm. Be helpful. Be flexible. Use plain language. Follow instructions. Write things down. Do not self-deploy. Do not become part of the problem. Our job is not to take over. Our job is to support.

One of the best things we can do right now is get back

into the habit of participating. Check into your local nets. Send a Winlink test message. Attend a meeting or training. Ask your EC what help is needed. Review your county communications plan if one is available. Make sure you understand how your local ARES group expects to operate during a hurricane.

Hurricanes create enough confusion on their own. Our goal should be to reduce confusion, not add to it. When we are organized, trained, reachable, and realistic about our capabilities, we give our served agencies something they can actually depend on.

Monthly Radiogram Challenge

Want to practice using the national traffic system (NTS)? Instructions on using the NTS on our website at arri-nfl.org/nts/ For the month of July, please send me (W4CPD located in Pace, FL) a radiogram via the NTS with your answer to this question "Did you learn anything from participating in Field Day this year?"

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

Susan- KG4VWI
Emmett-WA5EWN
Mark – KX4LEO

Monthly EC Reports

Out of the 33 appointed ARES Emergency Coordinators we have in the section, we only received monthly reports for 12 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 880 hours of service to our communities. Thanks to the following counties for providing their reports: Bay, Citrus, Duval, Escambia, Gadsden, Marion, Seminole, St. Johns, Sumter, Suwannee, Walton

	Number	Person-Hrs
Exercises this month:	4	149.50
Training events this month:	9	75.00
Public service events this month:	2	68.00
Community service events this month:	3	71.00
Emergency events this month:	0	0.00
SKYWARN events this month:	2	4.80
Meetings this month:	15	411.80
Unclassified events this month:	16	139.20

Call signs of DECs reporting:

K4BJ5, K450P, KB4HAH, KC3DWW, KD4EZW, KD4JMA, KF4ZZ, KM4BTW, KO4YGV, KX4LEO, WE4MJ

NFL Officials

Section Manager

Scott Roberts KK4ECR

Assistant Section Managers

Kevin Bess KK4BFN

Helen Straughn WC4FSU

DJ Stewart KI4ZER

Joe Bassett, W1WCN

Section Emergency Coordinator

Arc Thames W4CPD

Section Public Info Coordinator

Jim Bledsoe, KI4KEA

Section Technical Coordinator

Frank Haas KB4T

Section Affiliated Club Coordinator

Section Traffic Manager

Helen Straughn WC4FSU

Section Official Observer Coordinator

Robert Leasko WB8PAF

Section State Government Liaison

Darrell Brock N4GOA

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Webmaster, www.arrl-nfl.org

Kari McClure, NW4R

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.

W.T. Loften High School ARC News

Bob Lightner W4GJ

Our students participated in the first [ARRL Club QSO Party](#) this weekend. Contacts were few and far between! But we posted our score and gave them our logs. The call we used was **K4WTL/10**. The /10 designates the number of years our club has been active.

Our sixth try for getting ARDC grant funding was submitted. Hopefully, the "grants gods" will look upon our application with favor this time around. We are seeking funds to put up our 100-foot Alumatower which was acquired from the Florida State Fire College many years ago. Our old Rohn-6 "experimental tower" has seen better days and is showing its age.

School starts back up August 10th. We will be meeting new freshmen operators and will be teaching them the phonetic alphabet and proper operating skills. They will need to hit the bands running as we will be starting the 237th anniversary of our U.S. Constitution special event using the call: **W4C**. Following that, we will be in charge of the annual [National Fire Prevention Week](#) activities, using the special event call: **N4F**. Our school manages 12 stations N1F-N0F plus two additional stations KF2IRE and a Canadian station (call to be announced in later issues of NFL-QST).

MERT



Marion County Sheriff's Office
Division of Emergency Management



COMMUNICATIONS UPDATE

July 2026

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, all cities in the county and other EM-COMM groups (CERT, HEC, ARES & MBA) with voice, image & data communications locally, statewide and across the United States.

"Call MERT... When all else fails!"

Next Bimonthly Meeting

Saturday, July 15th, 10:00
am at the EOC

All are Welcomed!

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

Coordinator's Corner – Focusing on Results



**Harlan Cook
(KN4VRM) MERT
Coordinator**

The spirit of our intentions is shown in the results of our actions.

Every time we attend a Wednesday "Check In" meeting, join our weekly training Net's and practice sending a Winlink message, our intention is clear: we want to protect ourselves, our family and friends along with those in the shelters around Marion County when emergencies arise.

However, intentions and hopes are just ideas until they are energized by **action**. Only then do they transform into results.

As retirees, many of us face a unique mental hurdle. It can be easy to let thoughts of the unknown, physical limitations, or the fear of making a mistake stop us from trying our best and moving forward.

I know most people (including myself) find it difficult at times to do something they have never done before. This is especially true for something as challenging and unique as being a Shelter Operator. It is an impressive responsibility to handle vital emergency communications when all other commercial forms of communication have completely failed. But the antidote to fear is **action**.

No one expects you to face this challenge unprepared. That is exactly why we meet weekly to learn about new topics and practice radio communications so it becomes second nature to us. Taking these small, routine actions - breaks the cycle of hesitation and builds positive muscle memory. Good intentions alone do not hold up a communications net during a severe weather event; our true spirit lives in our effort to try doing our best!

"The quality of your life will be determined by the quality of your contribution. When you work to improve the lives of others, your life improves automatically." – Kurek Ashley

Welcoming Our New Members into MERT

We have been incredibly fortunate to welcome many new members to MERT this year! Your choice to join our ranks is exactly the kind of action that turns into a larger community result. If you are new, the thought of an emergency deployment can feel overwhelming. At least that was my feeling the first time I activated to the West Port shelter.

Know this... you do not have to do it alone. When the call comes to deploy to an emergency shelter, answer the call. Our goal is to pair every new member with an experienced senior member who has deployed before. Here's the simple steps to take in advance.

- * Get Your ID Badge - To make this happen, all new members are encouraged to apply for the Level 2 ID Badge right away. Securing this credential ensures you are cleared to enter every shelter facility and the Emergency Operations Center.
- * Attend as many Wednesday "Check In" meetings as possible – Each week, the meetings combine a technical class (Understanding Coaxial Cable to SWR Measurements); a procedural review (Shelter Deployments Guide to Troubleshooting Communications Problems), then a current MERT specific topic (New EOC HF Antennas to What is SHARES?). These classes and topics prepare us to be ready to support a shelter when conditions arise.
- * Review the KG4NXO.com website resources. Learning what years and years of experience and quality input has been documented on our website will make future deployments easier and less stressful knowing you have answers to questions when they arise.
- * Complete the CJIS online class and receive your Certificate of Completion. It outlines vitally important security information in being a volunteer agency supporting the Division of Emergency Management.
- * Join a Senior Member - This hands-on partnership is the best way to become truly comfortable and confident as a MERT Shelter Operator. Together, senior experience alongside a new member produces a positive hope for today and for the future.

July Focus Areas:

Here's some ideas moving good intentions into positive actions:

- Regularly join every weekly radio training net to build operational confidence.
- Winlink Proficiency: Send at least one practice Winlink message every week.
- Credential Check: Submit your paperwork for the Level 2 ID Badge.
- Complete the CJIS Certification immediately. It is now required for MERT membership.
- Hurricane Season is here. Move from passive monitoring to active readiness.
- Shelter Readiness: Verify your personal Go-Kit is packed and ready for shelter duty.

The Impact of Our Readiness

Our community depends on the results we deliver when commercial infrastructure fails.

Marion County's unique geography is a wonderful factor on why we all chose to live here. But we can be affected by the ever-growing reality that storms and hurricanes are increasing in severity and the impacts they can cause.

To answer the call requires a robust, all-hands response. Our individual and collective efforts show your commitment in maintaining your stations, helping MERT do the same when needed and proving our collective action will result in keeping ourselves and the residents of Marion County safer. Thank you for your dedication, your technical skills, and your continued service to Marion County.

Remember: The spirit of our intentions is shown in the results of our actions. Your presence matters. Your skills matter. Your voice matters. Please answer the call when it comes.

With sincere appreciation,



Ps: I invite you to read the article "Honoring Those Who Answer the Call".

"I am only one, but I am one. I cannot do everything, but I can do something." – Edward Everett Hale

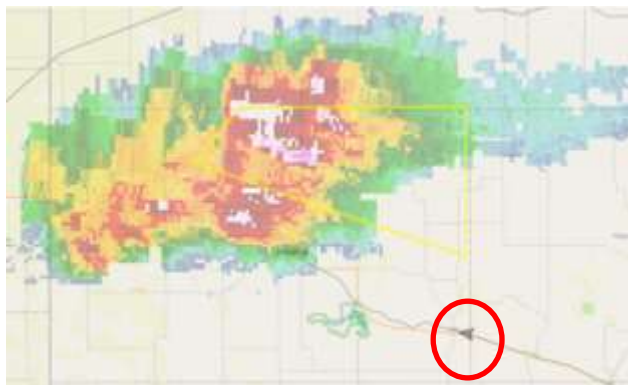
Where is our Deputy Coordinator? (He's on vacation.)

While Ray is out-of-state earning college credits being a storm chaser, I'll share his experiences on one afternoon during his "vacation".

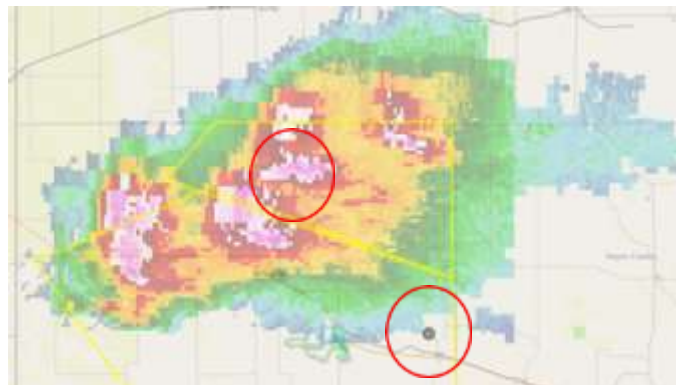
It begins.... at 2:53 PM (all times CDT) on Sunday, June 21st as he and his fellow college students were between Hayes Co. (pop. 853) and Perkins Co. (pop. 2,858) in far western Nebraska chasing a quickly intensifying storm coming out of eastern Colorado (see white and pink areas). The small circle around arrow at the bottom of the screen is the van location he and his team are in as they drive towards the storm.



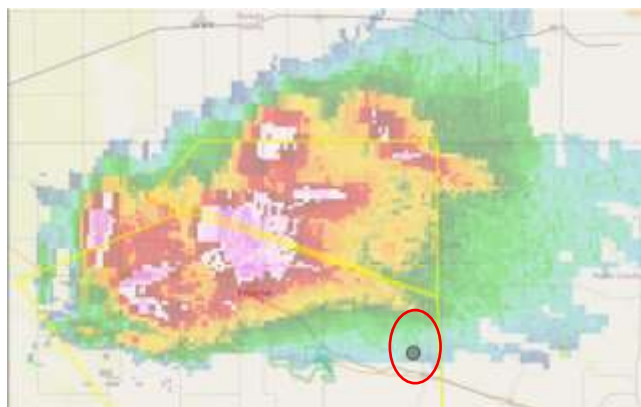
**Ray Woody
(WB6FKJ) Deputy**



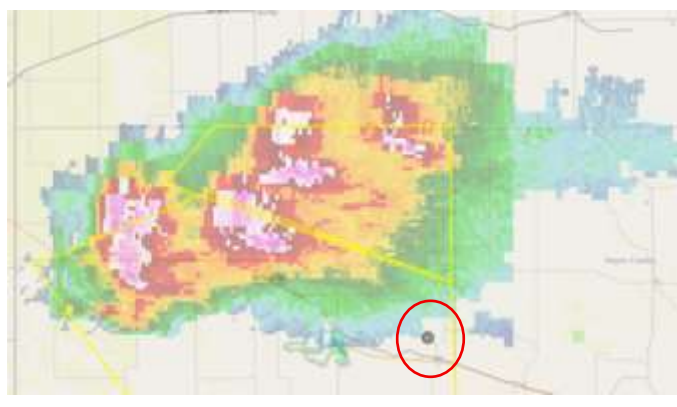
Above, the "chase" van is driving towards the rapidly developing storm cell (see white & pink areas) coming out of NE Colorado. (See arrow denoting moving vehicle.)



Above, his team has stopped to take weather measurements and photos as the major storm approaches at 3:02 PM (See dot at the bottom of the screen.)



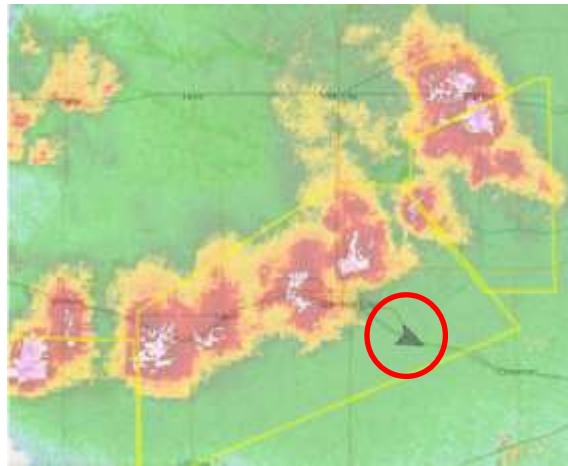
At 3:10 PM, the center of the storm cell is still organizing (see the center starting to merge) while growing in size and increasing in strength (see white/pink areas expanding). The team has not moved yet.



At 3:16 PM, the storm center continues developing a larger "cell" with the center rapidly increasing in strength. They continue taking measurements and photos.

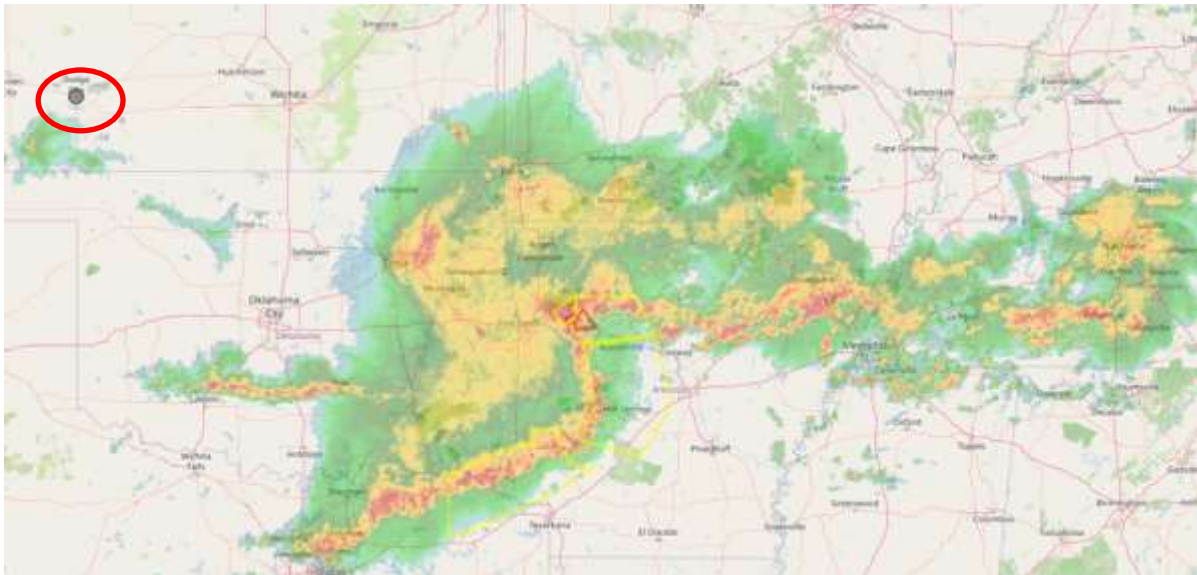


4:28 PM... They are in Kansas now. The original storm is now a “supercell” and passed on towards the east with another strong cell southwest of them. So....where do they go with two options????? Would you continue south or go southeast to monitor the stronger storm?



They went southeast.... And are now chasing the line of storms at 7:26 PM (CDT) merging into a much larger front stretching across several counties in Kansas. Also notice each cell is building a powerful core (displayed by the white and pink areas).

This is the last time I checked on Ray Sunday night. At 6:30 am (EDT) Monday, I captured the following screen shots.



At 5:33 am (CDT), Ray’s team is at a hotel in Dodge City, Kansas. As the night went on, those individual cells appeared to have merged into a huge line of very strong to severe weather rolling SE thru Oklahoma, Arkansas and into NE Texas. This is a very fast-moving storm front. The above screenshot is via the “NEXLAB” website from the College of DuPage. (Note: This college is one of the premier weather/meteorology schools in the U.S.) Also note the dot (circled) where Ray and the team stayed overnight.

“I am only one, but I am one. I cannot do everything, but I can do something.” – Edward Everett Hale



The same storm at 5:35 am via the “Windy app”. It is also easier seeing the significant size and strength of this serious front across four states. Note: The white dots are lightning strikes displaying the significant power and energy in this front.



Above – The beginnings of the “supercell” Ray and his team tracked from eastern Colorado to southern Kansas.

On Monday, June 22nd, I received this 10 am reply to an email I sent Sunday.... “It’s been a lot of driving (1710 miles since we left Chicago on Friday morning). But we have had some success in accurately predicting where the outbreaks would be occurring.

We followed a supercell yesterday in northeastern Colorado. It was the best so far in terms of being able to identify the various features. The professor leading the group is excellent—very knowledgeable and experienced. I’ve learned tons of things I never knew before.”

It sounds like Ray is having a great vacation and I know he will have some incredible stories and photographs to share with us when

Right) Ray shared this photograph of a hailstone they picked up about 30-minutes after the supercell had passed. He shared... “It’s amazing the damage that hail this size can do.”



he returns. I tracked Ray's team at: <https://weather.cod.edu/chasing/tracker/>

Last month, MERT introduced a dedicated recognition area in the radio room honoring past, current, and future members whose leadership and actions have been formally acknowledged by the Marion County Sheriff’s Office. This space will stand as a lasting tribute to their achievements and the impacts they had on our mission. This plaque headlines those members.



“Your talent determines what you can do. Your motivation determines how much you’re willing to do. Your attitude determines how well you do it” — Lou Holtz



Honoring Those Who Answer the Call – Pat Davis

The section of the radio room displaying the plaque “Honoring Those Who Answer the Call,” celebrates the volunteers whose commitment, character, and service continue to shape MERT’s history while guiding its future.

In the June newsletter, Deputy Coordinator Ray Woody received the “Spirit of the Volunteer Award” certificate from the Sheriff Woods.

Pat Davis received the “Certificate of Appreciation” from Sheriff Woods honoring her actions in the life-saving events in Sept. 2022 during Hurricane Ian.

This month, MERT recognizes **Pat Davis, KQ4BRW**, for her life-saving efforts on September 28, 2022. The award was presented to Pat by Sheriff Woods at an awards ceremony and reads...

“In September of this year, South Florida was hit directly by Hurricane Ian. During this activation, the MCSO volunteer M.E.R.T. group (Marion Emergency Radio Team) was actively monitoring amateur radio communications from across the state. A radio call was received from a 65-year-old woman who was trapped on the roof of her home in Ft. Meyers, Florida and she was unable to contact 911 in Lee County. M.E.R.T. operator, Hayden Kaufman, relayed this vital information to M.E.R.T. operator, Pat Davis who was then able to contact Lee County by way of teletype and relay the location of the trapped woman. Hayden then spoke to the trapped woman to let her know that a search and rescue team was on the way. In the end, the woman was rescued in time and brought to safety. Unfortunately, that day there were many tragic stories of lives lost. However, thanks to your diligence and quick action, this person did not become one of those statistics. Thank you for your service

Location of Lifesaving Incident

The address of incident was 22.1 miles NE of Sanibel Island along the Caloosahatchee River.



Pat’s willingness to answer the call, her steady support of MERT training classes, and her quick action were key contributors to the outstanding teamwork and rapid response that made this life-saving event possible.

She now joins fellow MERT members in the “Honoring Those Who Answer the Call” display.

MERT proudly recognizes Pat Davis (KQ4BRW) for her dedication, her service, and her meaningful contributions to our mission. We thank her for all she has done as a valued member of MERT.

(For more information on this event, see the November, 2022 “Communications Update”.

Hurricane Preparation Time!

MERT’s RED BOOK was created over the past few years to catalog the many member experiences during the pre-activation, activation and post-activation events. It’s a guide helping MERT’s Incident Commander be successful supporting the deployed Shelter Operators and radio room personnel. It is the focus of our June training activities.

“The broadest, and maybe the most meaningful definition of volunteering... Doing more than you have to because you want to, in a cause you consider good.” ~Ivan Scheier

Honoring Those Who Answer the Call – Hayden Kauffman (ARES)

This month, MERT also recognizes Hayden Kauffman N2HAY, for his life-saving efforts on September 28, 2022.

Hayden was an ARES EMCOMM volunteer to MERT and served at the Dunnellon EOC during Hurricane Ian. While on duty, Hayden was monitoring multiple communications resources and heard the original call for help from KE4CEI. He immediately sent an ICS-213 into the MERT radio room where Pat Davis was stationed with the vital details. As mentioned above, Pat scribed the information and delivered it to the on-duty Incident Commander in the EOC.

MERT proudly recognizes Marion County ARES Coordinator Hayden Kauffman (N2HAY) for his support to MERT, dedication, service, and his meaningful contributions to our mission. We thank him for all he has done as a ARES volunteer supporting MERT.

(For more information on this event, see the November, 2022 “Communications Update”.

SIMPLEX Testing Begins in late July

Preparing for emergencies is what MERT does. However, one area we have only tested once previously is if ALL REPEATERS are offline. While this may sound highly unlikely, we have read reports from other counties during previous hurricanes (Lee County – 2022) that this is exactly what happened during the major hurricane they experienced. Most interesting, it was caused by all sorts of problems – flooding, electrical shorts, mechanical failures, etc. Yes, stuff breaks and its normally always at the worst time. To be prepared, MERT must create a plan and then practice how we would continue our operations should the unthinkable occur, local repeaters go offline.

As all members know, we have a powerful communications device that can be effective if we prepare in advance by using direct transmissions (with no repeater) over the 2-Meter and sometimes the 70 cm bands. It is called SIMPLEX transmissions. However, it has a more limited radius of operation and therefore requires a different type of thinking and operation. MERT will begin SIMPLEX radio tests in July so all of us can learn more about this operation and then help us create a PLAN on how MERT operators can use it during emergencies to help stay informed... and continue supporting the Division of Emergency Management.

More to come soon.

Division of Emergency Management Volunteer Changes Announced

The Division of Emergency Management announced several changes for all MERT volunteers. They include:

- ⇒ New uniforms with “Volunteer” on them.
- ⇒ Requirements to complete the Criminal Justice Information System (CJIS) on-line class.
- ⇒ Requirements to sign authorizations for the MCSO to complete annual background checks.
- ⇒ Requirements to have a doctor certify they are fit and capable in completing the duties of a Volunteer.

Ray and I sincerely thank every member for their support as we received no notifications of these changes in advance.



Hayden Kauffman received the “Certificate of Appreciation” from Sheriff Woods honoring his actions in the life-saving events in Sept. 2022 during Hurricane Ian.

"Your talent determines what you can do. Your motivation determines how much you're willing to do. Your attitude determines how well you do it" — Lou Holtz



(Top Left) Gary Nicholas KQ4HQD receives his new uniform from Ray Woody (Deputy Coordinator) and Harlan Cook (Coordinator).

(Top Right) Dave Gustufson WB9EEH receives his new uniform.

(Bottom Left) Gavin Karelitz K2ETC receives his new uniform.



Wednesday Check In Meetings - June



(Left) Senior member Bill Sobel (K1WLS) shares his “portable soldering unit – propane gun” he uses whenever he needs to make a coaxial cable connector without having 110 vac. He explained the “trick” is having a unit with a variable trigger to not over-heat the connection



(Left) Division of Emergency Management Director Preston Bowlin shares more information and takes questions on the new MERT membership requirements.



(Left and below) Deputy Coordinator Ray Woody (WB6FKJ) presents the finding of the MERT Technical team tests at two shelters. He thanks Santos Pagan and Ray Sherwood for their excellent assistance.



(Left) Harlan Cook, MERT Coordinator and Ray Woody, MERT Deputy Coordinator have a “work party” at the EOC.



(Left & above) MERT’s technical team (Ray Woody WB6FKJ, Santos Pagan KR4FEP and Roy Sherwood WA9MID) identified several issues at two shelters - Lake Weir High School and Madison Street Elementary on June 9th. Issues included corroded coaxial connectors, water soaked/corroded cable, a broken antenna and indoor coaxial cable used outdoors on the roofs of both schools.

A detailed repair plan is being developed and will be submitted for funding to make all the repairs and replacements.



All amateur radio operators and the general public 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.

"Life is 10% what happens to me... and 90% of how I react to it!" - Charles Swindoll

Alachua County ARES(R) 2026 Field Day

Gordon Gibby KX4Z



3-band Yagi and 3-element 40m Inv Vee Yagi (masts visible) drone photo by Jim Carr KC4MHH

Despite significant obstacles this year, and lower levels of manpower, the North Florida Amateur Radio Club/Alachua County ARES group had a FUN and highly successful Field Day and accomplished several new "firsts" in this all-purpose ARRL Exercise.

Who's this new Leadership guy?? Earl Sloan KI4OXD did the lion's share of our advance planning, including a full Incident Action Plan and also organizing most of the "nutritional support." He then brought his new travel trailer, providing a great station location.

Why aren't we at the EOC?? The Alachua County EOC was *delayed* and *delayed again* moving into a newly-renovated building, and then the Fire Marshal didn't pass the new building (ironic, since it will also be the headquarters of Alachua County Fire Rescue!). So we ended up in Gordon's 5Acre back yard and guest house.

No Elbow Room!! We crammed 2 stations, plus a satellite station, AND a GOTA station in the tiny apartment-sized living room of the guest house. We cut three boards to fit windows and drilled holes to get coax and other lines out. We put two more stations in travel trailers; and **Ron Lewis KN4ZUJ** of Florida POTA Contest-fame, set up under a 10x10 canopy in the summer heat!



showed twice on Sunday morning June 21. TV-20 then sent a reporter/videographer to our Field Day and we made two of their evening newscasts! This was amazing to us, because usually they only cover the excellent Gainesville Amateur Radio Society instead! We have no idea what made the difference this year....

What Is That Crazy Concrete Pot Thing With the TWO Antennas on Top?? Part of what we dangled in front of media was our effort to make a satellite connection at Field Day, testing out a system that can be 3D printed and soldered together by high school students and used to enter into the ARISS competition. *No Alachua County school has ever won a direct connection to the International Space Station*, but our homebrew design is so simple and inexpensive that it might get a school into the running.

Why Is That TV Camera Here?? We were blessed to hit this outta-da-park this year! Early on, we submitted a proposed Alachua County Amateur Radio Week Proclamation June 21-28 and our Emergency Management department got it speedily approved. **Brett Wallace NH2KW**, **Earl Sloan KI4OXD**, **Rosemary Jones KI4QBZ** and Brett's family accepted the Proclamation at the June meeting of the county commission. The resulting photo made for a great Press Release and that opened amazing doors!

Alachua Chronicle printed our press release; then Gainesville MainStreet Daily News followed suit! Amazingly, we then got a note from the huge TV station TV-20 asking for an interview for their weekend live early morning local news story. Gordon drove in and didn't make TOO much of a fool of himself on their taped interview, which

SETUP BLUES (OR: "I'm EXHAUSTED!") Oh my, were we short handed!! Two stalwarts, Leland Gallup AA3YB and David Huckstep W4JIR have "retired" to serve their families more. **Jeff Capehart W4UFL** (our EC) actually broke a bone in his leg (fibula) tripping over a low fence on a motor-home camping trip and had surgery -- no weight-bearing allowed. Missed the entire Field Day. **Susan Halbert KG4VWI** was busy serving the Dept of Agriculture and got quite ill with a very bad cold. We haven't done such a great job of recruiting new people despite teaching both a Tech and General Class -- so we entered this Field Day with a smaller crew than usual -- and a longer setup task list due to being "out in the field" instead of at a pre-prepared Class F EOC station.

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Where did all these NEW ANTENNAS come from?? Despite all these handicaps, I just can't stop my team from trying new radio things! Mike Hasselbeck WB2FKO wanted to build a **3-element 40-meter beam** (65 foot elements!) and came up with a way to build it as a wire-inverted V. **Manish Sahni KZ4KC**, a local gerontologist who is just an amazingly productive worker, joined up on the effort and I put in one day with them as well -- and we got it working! We used THREE masts to make the required supports, 5% changes in lengths, and quarter wave spacing between the inverted-v elements. We even use a far-field monitoring antenna and spectrum analyzer and literally *swapped* the director and reflector and proved at least an **8dB front to back ratio** at ground level. It worked!! During Field Day we had astonishing received SNRs of 20dB on FT8 on 40 m. Mike Hasselbeck was captivated by this antenna and now swears he won't go back to a simple dipole again!

20 M Wire Vertical Beam: For my part, I worked on a building a vertical 20-meter two-element "yagi" using 1x2 8-foot lumber strips as spreaders and hanging it all draped from an oak tree. Using a director got me low impedance and high SWR despite a well-tuned driven element -- so I switched to a reflector and had fantastic SWR's. This antenna proved quite worthy for hours and hours of fun on 20 meters, running CQ. BIG IMPROVEMENT over last year!

We had a grand total of SEVEN antennas put up by one of the smaller crews we've ever had. A painter working on my house helped us tilt the tower into place after we assembled the ancient Mosley triband beam. **Earl Sloan KI4OXD** was exclaiming how well his non-resonant **random-length 52ft vertical** was working after I put a line 50-feet up an oak tree for him to pull it up. He used the 9:1 unun that we built ourselves at a LabNLunch (<https://github.com/docvacuumtubes/9-1-HF-Unun>) He also used our homebrew 1:1 choke Balun made with RG316 coax! Hooray!

VISITORS: Here we were much more hit-and-miss. We scored a wonderful visit by Tom Marden, the new Mayor of the town of Newberry. Mr. Marden was fascinated by our team and our volunteerism and asked a bunch of questions over an hour, about how ICS works during disasters. Thanks to all the courses we've taken and our experiences over the years, we did the best we could to explain it all. We had a few more visitors, including two teachers



Mayor Tom Marden
ARRISS project.

from a local private school along with all their kids. Those teachers are planning to teach my newly-created **Introduction To Technology for High School Students** course <https://www.amazon.com/Introduction-Technology-High-School-Students/dp/B0H5X7FH5T>, and I hope to see them create a ham radio satellite station and compete in the

I CAN'T TAKE ANY MORE OF THIS FUN! We definitely had a blast! Our GOTA station was kept hopping by Dorie and Gary Michehl along with Cooper Campen operating on one of our regular stations with supervision. Scores and scores of FT8/ FT4 contacts emerged -- and along with Earl Sloan they provided astonishing evening and morning meals, including smoked port and cooked-to-order eggs/ bacon and pancakes. Delicious! And about 100 contacts or more, also!

FIRST SATELLITE QSO -- my 70cm transmitter quit right at



the beginning, leaving me only able to use V/U satellites. (Probably a bad ribbon cable connection.) Frazzled and frustrated, I almost called it quits, but got up at 3:30AM Sunday morning to make a RS-44 pass -- and made a complete CW con-

Drone view of our half-homebrew satellite antenna system Photo: Jim Carr KC4MHH

tact with strong signals! Hooray! Our first completed Field Day Satellite QSO!! And to make it even more

fulfilling, our coaching of our friends on the Columbia County team *helped them make a satellite APRS contact on SONATE-2*, so we both got the satellite bonus credit! Hooray!!

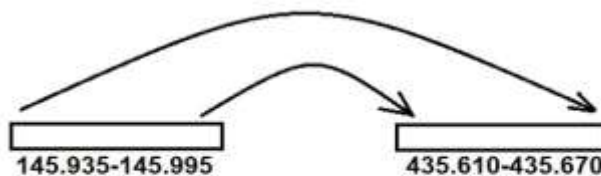
SO MUCH LEARNING!! -- although really busy, we managed to hold an impromptu class on how to choose and understand amateur radio satellite passes. RS-44 takes LSB 2-meter signals and repeats them as USB 70-cm output signals. Passes are often 25 minutes long -- so multiple conversations can be held throughout the 60kHz bandwidth, and there is little need to RUSH RUSH like on an FM voice satellite.

TECHNICIAN, TOO?? We also managed to hold the first session of a real Technician License Course during Field Day, using the <https://hamradioschool.com/> materials -- and Gary and Dorie said their GOTA operating made it really applicable and much more understandable!



Ron Lewis under the cano-

The Low Down --



Amateur Radio Satellite RS-44 takes an entire 60kHz swath of the VHF band and repeats it inverted into the UHF band

Although we had only 14 people on our team this year, and a more difficult task doing 5A instead of 4F, we still had great FUN and engaged both elected leadership productively and locally gateway high school teachers and students. Everyone got to do the operating that they enjoyed most! (I had fantastic fun running loooooonng strings of continuous "run CQ" contacts on 20m CW and I know Mike Hasselbeck surely tore up 40m on his beloved wire beam!) We had to set up differently and with more diverse stations, so we learned new things. Literally for hours we had people simultaneously on all three modes on 20 meters (CW, Phone, Digital) and we think that was a new first for us also! A lot of learning and experience developed, new antennas and techniques were learned and created, and everyone went home tired but happy! That's a great Field Day!

<p>Alachua County ARES(R) with two clubs & their callsigns: North Florida Amateur Radio Club (NFARC) Alachua EOC Radio Club (NF4AC) plus members in other clubs, as well! We'll take help from anyone!</p>	<p>CONTACT docvacuumtubes@gmail.com</p>	<p>Website https://www.nf4rc.club/</p>
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Alachua County Florida

A Proclamation

Declaring June 21st through June 28th, as "Amateur Radio Week" in Alachua County, Florida

- Whereas, *Amateur Radio has historically played a significant role in developing worldwide radio communications and has continued to provide a bridge between peoples, societies, and countries by creating friendships and sharing ideas; and*
- Whereas, *Amateur Radio operators have provided countless hours of community service to local organizations and during emergencies throughout these decades; and*
- Whereas, *Amateur Radio operators of Alachua County and neighboring communities offer free technical training to all interested citizens; and*
- Whereas, *Alachua County recognizes the uncompensated services Amateur Radio operators provide to essential emergency response organizations including the State of Florida and Alachua County; and*
- Whereas, *Alachua County Emergency Management and the Alachua County Fire Rescue Department value the partnerships Amateur Radio operators have provided during hurricane season to support emergency communications on behalf of impacted residents and shelters; and*
- Whereas, *Amateur Radio Week in Florida is an opportunity to honor and recognize the valuable work radio operators provide in dispersing public safety information to the citizens of Alachua County and Florida.*

Now, therefore, through the authority vested in me by the Board of County Commissioners of Alachua County, Florida, I do hereby proclaim June 21st through June 28th, as "Amateur Radio Week" in Alachua County, Florida.

Duly proclaimed this 9th day of June, A.D., 2026

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
OF ALACHUA COUNTY FLORIDA

By: _____
Ken Cornell, Chair

ATTEST:

J.K. "Jess" Irby, Esq., Clerk

3-Element 40-meter Inverted V Wire Beam

Manish Sahni KZ4KC, Mike Hasselbeck WB2FKO, Gordon Gibby KX4Z



It started with throwing about ideas to have a stronger signal on 40 m during Field Day, given the limitation of not having the availability of a large rotatable Yagi. (Prices start at about \$3000 for even 2-element 40meter aluminum yagi!) The conversation turned to wire Yagi's, which do not take up a lot of space while not in use. Mike WB2FKO recalled that it was one of the antennas that he had used in his first field day in 1976 and that it was loud! (Earl Sloan KI4OXD and Shannon Boals W4GLM built a successful one many years back, also!) I performed a Google search and came across a very nice article in practical antennas which described the steps involved in building a two, three, four or seven element vertical wire Yagi.

<https://practicalantennas.com/designs/parasitic/wireyagi/>

It looked like a three element Yagi would provide a 5 to 6 dB gain over a dipole. On Friday, June 19, Mike and I met up at Gordon's QTH at 8 AM (the Gibby's traveling back to Gainesville that day, so unavailable). We cut out the three elements out of 14 gauge insulated electrical house-wire and attached homemade PVC pipe end insulators to the ends of the wires. Then came the most important step of labeling the wires as well as the end insulators to denote which element was the director, which was the reflector and which was the driven element.

It was HOT, and painters showed up to work on the KX4Z house, so we moved to Mike's amazing ham station home -- which allowed us access to wonderful air-conditioning, and I (Manish) had a nice time taking a tour of Mike's stations and his antenna farms of stacked 6 m Yagi's!

I built a quick 1:1 Balun by wrapping 11 turns off RG316 coax around a FT 240-52 toroidal (the only kind I had). This was attached to a SO 239 at one end and screws with wing nuts at the other end. We split the driven element in half, crimped and soldered ring connectors to the end and attached them to the wing nuts. Shout out to Mike for fixing my attempt at soldering.

After this, Mike donned his safety harness and boots and climbed up about 30 feet on one of his towers to attach some paracord. We then attached the 1:1 Balun and the driven elements to the middle of the Paracord using a zip tie and a piece of wire. This was fed by 25 feet of RG 8x coax.

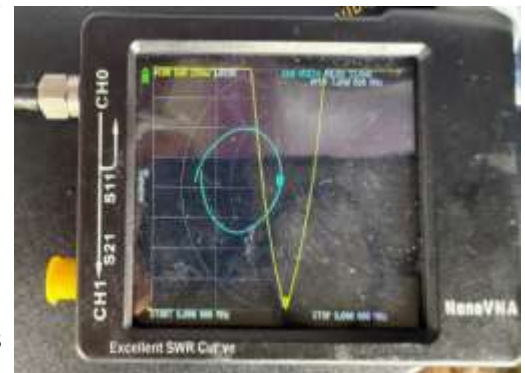


Mike then climbed his second Tower and attached the other end of the Paracord at about 30 feet. The free ends of the dipole were attached to ground stakes using some Paracord, making an inverted V of about 130°.

Mike WB2FKO on one of his NINE tower climbs on Day One

Moment of Truth

We used a VNA to check the SWR. Initially it was 1.3:1 at 6.85 MHz. This was followed by a few rounds of trimming both ends of the driven



element until the SWR came to 1.03:1 at 7.140 MHz.

Then Mike climbed both towers again to lower the Paracord. (Mike thinks he climbed towers about 9 times that day and he was SORE the next day!)

By this time, the typical Florida summer showers had started. We retreated inside, had hydration breaks and utilized the time making 6 m FT8 contracts with Europe, using Mike's excellent stack.



Mike WB2FKO celebrating excellent SWRs. Do you think he has enough antennas??

After getting the weather all clear, we went out, cut the reflector 5% larger than the element and the director 5% smaller than the driven element. We tied these two the Paracord at appropriate distances. Then we again availed Mike's Tower climbing Services to hang up both ends of the Paracord. We secured the end of all three elements to the ground using ground stakes and Paracord. At this time, about seven hours into the endeavor, our three element wire Yagi was finally up.

- We tested the SWR again using the Nano VNA . It came out to an SWR of 1.01:1 at 7.040 MHz.
- After the obligatory celebration pictures, Mike again went up to untie the ends of the Paracord. We then dismantled the Antenna and called it a day.

SECOND DAY

The next day (Saturday) Manish and Gordon put in several more hours setting up the entire system again, but this time on three separate masts as a "dress rehearsal" for Field Day. Driven element on our alumatower that will hold our ancient Mosley beam; director on fiberglass mast attached to our "generator trailer" and reflector on carbon fiber mast using a "roll on flagpole holder" and pickup truck. For the very first time, Gordon tried raising our tilting tower by himself, using a tractor -- and it worked!! Normally it is a 3-man job. With main tower in place, Manish carefully measured out 32 feet for each distance from the driven element and we drove vehicles to get the right spacing.

Hooray, the SWR was still quite acceptable! It was so hot that Gordon had to take a LOT of breaks. Some FT8 measurements on <https://pskreporter.info/> strongly suggested that we had significant forward gain compared to reverse direction. At that point, Manish headed out to an appointment to help another local ham renew their license.

Gordon assembled a battery, inverter, Siglent spectrum analyzer and our small 2-foot "test antenna" that we've previously characterized carefully. Driving to the next neighborhood north of us by about a 1/2 mile, measurements definitely in the "far field" could be measured. Of course, these measurements are at ground level so impossible to fully characterize the antenna and "gain measurements" of Yagi's are notoriously difficult because elevation lobes move up and down with addition of elements....

Actual Measurement of 40m Front To Back Ratio

But we were actually able to grab a solid measurement of a CW signal around 7.1 MHz in the expected "forward" direction -- and Manish carefully dropped both director and reflector and literally switched them, so now the antenna points south. With no changes at all in the monitoring equipment, we now verified a solid front-to-back ratio of 8dB. While that isn't huge, it proves for certain that we have GAIN, because the chopped off energy on the back end has to show up on the front!



All in all, this was an incredibly successful development for our small NFARC/ARES team! And with very easily management SWRs to boot! I would never have dreamed that our team could construct a 40 meter beam antenna!

Amateur Radio in Okaloosa County

D J Stewart KI4ZER

Assistant Section Manager, NFL, ARRL

President, W4ZBB, W4AAZ

Amateur Radio in Okaloosa County is a thriving community that connects local electronics enthusiasts and serves as a vital lifeline during severe weather and natural disasters. Getting involved offers you a rewarding hobby, global communication capabilities, and the ability to help coordinate emergency relief when cell towers and internet networks fail. To sustain these ideas and practices, it is imperative to recruit and bring in new faces to the rewarding world of Amateur Radio. Efforts to bring in new people expand community awareness and foster resiliency.

Local Clubs and Organizations

You can easily connect with local operators, get licensed, and participate in community events through these established groups:

North Okaloosa Amateur Radio Club (NOARC): Based in the northern part of the county, they offer licensing classes, support local Emergency Operations Center (EOC) operations, and host weekly VHF training nets.

Playground Amateur Radio Club (PARC): Located in Fort Walton Beach, PARC operates a clubhouse at 17 First St SE. They host technical "Tech Nights" on the first Thursday of the month and monthly meetings on the third Thursday.

Okaloosa County ARES: The Amateur Radio Emergency Service is the backbone of local public service, working directly with governmental agencies during crises. At the end of the year, these and other area organizations culminate with a Semi-Formal Holiday Dinner, present awards, and take time to recognize each other's efforts in development and continuation of the Amateur Radio Service!

Why You Should Get Involved

- **Hurricane & Disaster Preparedness:** Northwest Florida is highly susceptible to severe storms. When cell networks and power grids go down, ham radio operates on independent power sources to relay vital resource requests and safety information.
- **Community Service:** Local hams provide essential behind-the-scenes communications for community

events, such as marathons and parades, and act as trained volunteers during local emergencies.

- **Statewide & Global Reach:** Using networks like Florida-wide [SARNET](#) (which doesn't rely on the internet or phone lines) and digital/analog radios, you can easily communicate across the state or directly around the world.
- **Fun and Learning:** Modern ham radio no longer requires learning Morse code, and portable handheld radios can cost as little as \$20. It is an excellent way to learn about electronics, engineering, and meet friendly local peers.

Ham radio (Amateur Radio) is an engaging hobby because it operates entirely independently of the internet or cell towers. It combines global socializing, science, and exploration, letting you talk across town, to the International Space Station, or bounce signals off the moon using your own custom-built equipment.

The hobby thrives on limitless variety, keeping things endlessly fun through several key pillars:

Global Connection & Community

- **The Original Social Media:** Chat casually with people from all walks of life, spanning over 190 countries without relying on internet servers.
- **Contesting:** Turn communication into a fun, high-energy challenge by trying to contact as many people or places as possible within a strict timeframe.
- **Awards & Certificates:** "Hunt" for rare locations (like islands or lighthouses) and collect QSL cards (digital or physical verification of your contacts) to earn prestigious operating awards.

Hands-On Science & Experimentation

- **Engineering:** Build your own radios, amplifiers, and custom antennas from scratch.
- **Digital Modes:** Connect your radio to a computer to send emails over the air (no internet required) or use fast-moving digital text and image transmission.
- **Satellite & Space Comms:** Listen to, or even converse with, astronauts aboard the ISS or utilize orbiting amateur radio satellites.

Outdoor Adventure & Exploration

- **Portable Operations:** Take your gear to parks, mountain peaks, or beaches in programs like [Parks on the Air](#) (POTA) or [Summits on the Air](#) (SOTA).

Real-World Utility

- **Emergency Communications:** Serve your community by providing reliable communication during natural disasters or power grid outages when traditional infrastructure fails.
- **Severe Weather Tracking:** Become trained as a storm spotter, communicating ground-truth weather data directly to local [National Weather Service](#) offices.

Okaloosa County amateur radio organizations are actively welcoming new members and fostering the next generation of operators. Amateur radio organizations have strong roots in the community, wonderful fellowship, and participate in local, civic and other non-profit events. The membership is diverse with its membership in age ranges from teens to retirees, and multiple area professionals in high priority positions and local industry leaders.

Joining the amateur (ham) radio service is an excellent opportunity that offers global communication, emergency preparedness, and technical skill-building. Getting started requires studying for a 35-question entry-level Technician exam, passing it with a volunteer examiner (VE), and paying a \$35 FCC application fee.

Step 1: Study for the Technician License

The entry-level Technician license covers basic radio regulations, operating practices, and electronics. Morse code is no longer a requirement. You can prepare using free study tools or structured online courses:

- Use [HamStudy.org](#) to take practice exams and review question pools.
- Access [Ham Radio Prep](#) for structured, step-by-step learning modules.

Step 2: Get Your FCC Registration Number (FRN)

Before taking your exam, you must register with the Federal Communications Commission.

- Visit the [FCC CORES System](#) to create a username and obtain your FRN. You will use this number for all amateur radio licensing.

Step 3: Find a Testing Session

Exams are administered locally by Volunteer Examiner Coordinators (VECs). You can take the test in person or via video link from home.

- Search for in-person or remote exam sessions near Eglin AFB using the [ARRL Exam Search](#).
- Look for upcoming online and remote testing dates through [HamStudy.org Sessions](#).

Step 4: Pay the FCC Fee

After passing your exam, the Volunteer Examiners will submit your paperwork. The FCC will email you instructions to log into the CORES system and pay a \$35 new license fee. Once paid, your official license and call sign will be granted shortly after.

Step 5: Join a Local Club

Once licensed, local clubs are the best place to get on the air, learn from experienced operators, and find equipment.

- Find nearby amateur radio clubs by entering your zip code in the [ARRL Club Finder](#).

If you are already a licensed operator of any license class, you can become an officer in an organization. Be sure to read the By-laws, constitutions or Articles of Incorporation! Serving as an officer in an amateur radio club is essential for sustaining the hobby and safeguarding the spectrum. Club leaders build community, organize vital emergency communication networks, and mentor new operators, ensuring the legacy of ham radio survives for future generations.

Specific benefits and reasons to step into a leadership role include:

- **Community and Culture:** Officers are the ambassadors who set the tone for the club, making it a welcoming place for camaraderie, growth, and collaboration.
- **Emergency Preparedness:** Leadership coordinates communication support during disasters and severe weather events, partnering directly with ARES, RACES, and local emergency management agencies.
- **Mentorship:** Officers facilitate the passing down of knowledge, helping new "Elmers" (mentors) find their footing and improving overall operating standards.
- **Advocacy and Coordination:** Local clubs serve as the grassroots face of the broader amateur radio community, working with organizations like the [American Radio Relay League \(ARRL\)](#) to advocate for amateur radio on Capitol Hill and at the FCC.
- **Public Service:** Leaders organize the logistics for volunteering at large-scale community events (like marathons and charity bike rides), as well as large annual events like [ARRL Field Day](#).

GARS Gets New People On The Air!

Barbara Mathews KO4TWZ

What a fantastic Gainesville Amateur Radio Society (GARS) field day: "Best Ever"! Operating from the Waldo, FL EOC Radio Room, we were led by SFD coordinators Mike Martell, KK4KRZ and Tom Warren, KC8DHX and a host of GARS members. We had 40 visitors that signed in, including Battalion Chief Kevin Rulapaugh of Alachua County Fire Rescue (a licensed Ham!), and the new City Manager of Waldo, Amanda Brown, KG5JZS, who has been an amateur radio operator "for years", but said "What I saw was a pretty incredible display of radio activity. I got to see a young person get coached up by Vicki at the GOTA station and make amazing contacts. A fantastic operation!"

Under the guidance of our GARS members, new technicians and visitors made their first HF radio contacts, and the generous attitudes of their contacts were awesome. The highlight of operation was when 10-year-old Abraham made 10 contacts on 40-meter phone under the guidance of new amateur Vickie Miller, WOVIX. At one point when Abraham was working a pile up, the operator said, "only the boy come back". On completion of another exchange, the operator said "Great, kid! GET ON THE AIRWAVES!". Abraham spent time with Lorilyn Roberts, KO4LBS, working with CW. Abraham and his dad, David, plan to take the technician test on August 1st. See GARS.club for testing details.

We had adults who were only recently licensed, getting on the air for the first time as well: good job Scott! Scott's young grandson came later, and with coaching worked the GOTA station like a pro. Seeing generations connecting and sharing excitement through Amateur Radio was the greatest success of GARS' SFD 2026. If you do not see the STEM connection, its because you aren't looking!

Our hands-on Summer Field Day project this year was making emergency roll-up VHF/UHF antennas from 300 ohm twin lead. Eight antennas were made where individuals learned to measure and strip braided wire and coax, solder connections and use an analyzer to test their antennas. We set up a small pulley system to raise the newly constructed antennas for easier testing. Adjustments were made and some antennas could be used on three bands. 2-meter, 70-centimeter, and 1.2 meters. All antennas had SO-230 female connectors which could be easily connected to PL 259 ended coax feed line.

Jim Carr, KC4MHH, having already supported the GARS

antenna efforts with his drone expertise, supervised the antenna testing and provided advice on test equipment. When not testing antennas, Jim was at the white board explaining antenna theory, modulation, and many other radio concepts to eager visitors as well as new and experienced amateurs.

The GARS members were out in full force to improve and raise new antennas. The Waldo EOC off-center dipole was improved by raising one end by extending the existing support with a longer pole. The antenna team also deployed two additional dipoles at angles to existing antennas to minimize interference. The final antenna used a 95-foot steel light pole to hang a vertical antenna with radials which could work 80 meters. We had six antennas deployed with our Hex beam and filters able to handle three radios on different bands.

Since Waldo EOC is on the second floor with no elevator, we placed the Get On The Air (GOTA) station on the first floor connected to a newly deployed 20-meter dipole (the tested "separation" from the upstairs radio room allowed for both stations to operate on 20-m. This first floor access allowed visitors who could not climb stairs to still experience amateur radio. In fact, one of the GARS members fell the day before the event and could not climb stairs but was still able to attend and assist at the GOTA station. The GOTA station worked well with its separate logging software. We also connected a Voice Over Internet phone between the first floor GOTA station and the control station on the second floor so any instructions could be easily communicated.

In the EOC radio room we had four stations in operation with Phone, and CW, (besides phone FT8 was used at the GOTA station). We made contacts on 2-, 10-, 15-, 20-, 40-, and 80-meters. The large screen in the front of the room displayed our logging contacts as well as a panel showing stations, modes, and antennas connections. During the event when changes were made to any station, our Band Master Larry Rovak, WB2SVB, at station 1 (our control station) managed the changes and updated the large screen display.

In summary, members worked hard, we practiced and learned and are more ready for the next time of need. It reminds us that you never know who needs Amateur Radio and don't yet know it. Share with people about all the different kinds of radio practice, and how it might help them in times of trouble as well. Thank you to all from the community who joined us: GARS stand ready to get you on the air!

CWops: My Ham Journey

Lorilyn Roberts KO4LBS - CWops # 3936 - LICW #2345

I'm probably the most unlikely person on the planet to become a ham radio operator. I don't have an electrical or engineering background, nor am I even inclined that way.

So, how did I get into ham radio? I'm a prepper and a communicator. Besides writing books, I'm a former court reporter, and I've spent the last 25 years providing closed captioning for television. I also play guitar and piano.

During COVID, my brother-in-law, who is also a prepper, sent me a link to a Baofeng on Amazon and said I needed to get one. So, I did. It arrived in the mail, I opened it, and asked, "What do I do with this thing?" And then, when I read the instructions, it said I needed a license. "Where do I get one of those?" I was clueless.

That was the beginning of my journey into ham radio.

Within six months, I had my Extra license. When I aced the test, one of the VEs said, "Your name was familiar to me. When you surveyed the room for us to make sure you had no 'cheat sheets' and said all those books on the bookshelf were yours, I checked my Kindle. Guess what? I have some of your books on my Kindle."

Talk about a day I will never forget!

Soon, I joined the local ARES group and discovered, to my surprise, that no one was doing CW. No one even knew Morse Code except one operator, and he was more focused on digital and other ham radio needs.

Morse Code sounded like fun, and so I searched online for resources and came across LICW and LCWO and then spent the next two months learning all the letters and numbers. Last fall, I took an online course with CWops. Joe Spencer, KK5NA, was the instructor, and it was just what I needed. Then I discovered Bill Lynch, K8WWS. Every week we have a ragchew and transmit Bible verses in CW we've given each other to improve our skills. That helped me refine my sending and receiving, and after a couple of months, he asked if he could nominate me to CWops.

I am thankful for all the encouragement I have received from LICW and CWops, and I want to thank Kevin Sulonen, N7KV, who was in my CWops class, Scott Wooten,

KW4NJA, and Joe Spencer, KK5NA, for their sponsorships.

My hope is to get more young people and women into ham radio, especially CW. I taught CW at a local school to some middle schoolers for two years and had a blast. My latest book for young adults, *Eighth Dimension – Frequency*, has a lot of ham radio/CW in the plot. I am currently working on book two, *Counterfeit*, in the trilogy.

I have two grown daughters and am still adjusting to being an empty nester. I am also a nine-year breast cancer survivor, praise the Lord, and provide closed captioning for television on CBS Sports and Fox News. Everyone else seems to have gone with AI captioning, but don't tell those cost-cutting stations that I said AI captions are inferior.

As a prepper, I think CW is superior to other forms of communication in an emergency. Because I live in hurricane country, Florida, I am thankful to be part of a community of like-minded individuals who strive to help each other and serve. CW has given me the ability to contribute in a way that was needed and appreciated at the local level here in Gainesville.

I am also thankful for the opportunity to be a CWops member with hams around the world who share my passion for CW. There is nothing like hearing those dits and dahs over the airwaves and wondering, "Where is that message coming from?" I will stop and listen, and oftentimes even look up the call sign. And once again, I'll be amazed at how that CW signal could reach the tiny wire dangling from a tree in my yard. You never know who you will meet, and that makes each day on the air a new adventure in CW.

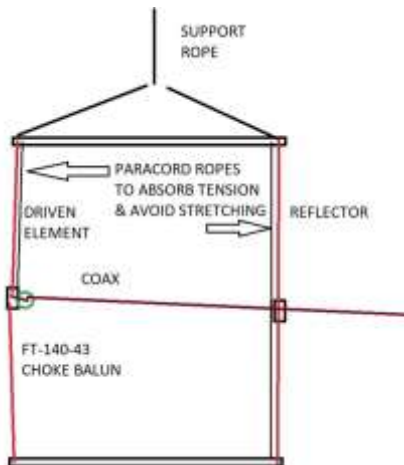


Lorilyn Roberts
Award-Winning Author and Broadcast Captioner

Field Expedient 2-Element 20 Meter Vertical Yagi for Field Day

Gordon Gibby KX4Z

The Problem



For a few years now I've used a 40-meter off-center fed dipole (OCFD) in ARRL and Winter Field Day, sometimes as a sloping dipole and sometimes as a crooked inverted V. One year it did great, others it has been good. On 20 meters, its 2nd harmonic, in the elevation

plane its big lobe isn't at the horizon -- Google AI says it is all the way up to 50° with a secondary weaker lobe at $15-20^\circ$. Not really optimum for working long distances!

The Plan Evolves

So this year I decided to try a half-wavelength vertical dipole on 20 meters, which should give me a much stronger lobe at lower angles. Note that a full half-wavelength dipole on 20 meters does not use ground radials, but requires a support > 60 feet high.

Why not add a parasitic element and make a 2-element vertical Yagi? My idea was to use 1x2" lightweight non-pressure-treated lumber, drill holes for the wire connections, and for utter simplicity, just tie the wires to the wood, using the dry wood as "insulator."

Construction in Constrained Environment

I worked at building this in Black Mountain, NC where our family retreat home has limited ham equipment. I bought ordinary lamp cord #18AWG for wire, not thinking about how much that might STRETCH. The insulation means the physical antenna will resonate with a shorter than expected length. Experimentation allowed me to find the resonant length of wire: from knot-loop end to knot-loop end, it was about 31 feet to resonate at 14.1

MHz. The SWRs were excellent, around 1.2:1. The actual wire was about 12" or more longer to allow for knots (3 half-hitches) at both center insulator and end spreader. I literally just tied the insulated wire through a hole in the wood! AI assured me that the small loops and knots wouldn't have much effect. (This is NOT a finely designed antenna....)

For a center insulator I used a small piece of available scrap imitation wood, made of some plastic. I drilled a $5/8"$ dia. hole to accommodate a SO-239 and using a FT-140-43 toroid with about 10 turns of coaxial cable, made a "1:1 choke Balun" between the SO-239 and the wires. A zip-tie held the toroid Balun to the center insulator.

For my first try at a yagi, I constructed an identical director cut to 5% shorter dimension, at the other end of the 8-foot $1"x2"$. (This is about 0.114 wavelength separation.) To avoid stretching I parallel both the director, and the top portion of the driven element (which would have to support the coaxial cable) with paracord set just slightly shorter so it took most of the tension.

Unsatisfactory Experimental Result

I knew the director would lower the impedance, but I was surprised by how much: the SWR appeared to rise to 2.5 or greater. The SWR meter was my only available instrument at the family retreat so I couldn't measure much else, but it suggested a much lower impedance....not good for a simple antenna.

Try, Try Again!

After again consulting "AI" I decided to switch to a reflector instead of director. AI instructed me that the impedance would rise, and the gain fall only slightly, with better front-to-back ratio. Since the director was 5% short, I added 5% to each side, so that the total length was now 5% greater than the previously-tuned driven element, and now back in Newberry FL I reassembled the system and hung it as vertical as I could on an oak tree. For at least an ATTEMPT at symmetrical placement of the feedline, I ran it horizontally over to the center point of the reflector, and then away from the antenna in the reduced field on the backside of the antenna.

SUCCESS!!

HOORAY! My MFJ-259B antenna analyzer now indicated that I had a really nice SWR, below 1.5 throughout the 20 meter band! I don't have an easy way to flip it around to try and measure front-to-back ratio, because it gets lays against, and gets enmeshed in the branches of the oak tree, but it is likely to have both a low elevation angle, reasonably low ground losses, and a bit of gain to boot! "Aiming" is by picking which side of the oak tree it lays against. And it can be suspended by a single line to a y-yoke suspending the upper 1x2" spreader. A cheap and

fairly simple 2-element vertical dipole that can literally be "rolled up" and set aside in the garage for future use.

My suggestion for other builders would be to consider using insulated FlexWeave (#14AWG or #12) or AWG14 THNN house wire. The latter won't roll up as nicely, but those two shouldn't stretch as much and likely won't need the paracord parallel ropes. First build the driven element, tune for resonance, and then make the reflector 5% longer.

Inverter Filtering: Clip-On Toroid Beads For Large Battery Wires

Gordon Gibby KX4Z



My family's travel trailer and Field Day efforts have certainly been great drivers for me to learn more about filtering out RFI radio hash from switching power supplies! In the June issue of NFL QST Section Newsletter I provided two articles on filtering AC power lines from inverter generators or inverters, and the wonderful outcome of filtering both input and output leads from a travel trailer 12V "converter" switching power supply.

We also have a little consumer inverter to provide modest sinewave AC when operating the trailer without shore power. Our group tested several consumer inverters and concluded the BESTEK 1kW sinewave inverter was one of the lowest-RFI inverters. <https://www.amazon.com/dp/B07XYR1BS3> We have also found the MIF23 commercial AC-line filter is a great choice for further filtering the AC output of any such inverters. While pricey when new, this capable 23-amp filter can usually be found used on eBay for \$80-\$90. In the June section newsletter (<https://arrl-nfl.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/06/01-QST-NFL-June-2026.pdf> page 17I I provided information for a 3D print of an enclosure for this inverter that included a built-in receptacle outlet. (Files: <https://github.com/docvacuumtubes/MIF23EMIFilterBox>)

Filtering Those Big Battery Wires

The remaining unfiltered lines were the heavy-duty battery wires, which look like silicone-insulated AWG4. For a 1-kw inverter, they might handle currents up to 80A DC! Recently I found a clip-on ferrite with a huge 15mm opening that easily clips around both positive and negative wires, to provide common mode filtering. I've added four of these clip-on ferrites to my travel trailer inverter wiring. A pack of five is less than \$10. See: <https://www.amazon.com/dp/B0F66QSSC3>

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.

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.

