The Minuteman

Volume 29 Issue 3 January 2000

President's Corner
Clark Conti, N1NVK

The topic of the year is disasters and how much should be done to prepare. USA-TODAY reports that billions were spent on prevention of disaster, and no disaster came to prevent. As you can see, 01-01-00 has come & gone with minimal problems & glitches. In fact it is safe to say that civilization will continue without the predicted collapse for some time to come. Does this mean that it was all a waste? No. It is never wrong to plan for the fact that things sometimes go wrong. This is one of the things at which the amateur radio community excels.

You may have noticed that the MMRA charter includes the phrase "serving the community in time of emergency". During the last net of 1999 I was asked what MMRA was doing for the changing of the calendar. I replied that it was business as usual, that is that the repeaters were always available for any emergency. I got the impression that the person asking wondered what I meant. Most of the MMRA repeaters are configured with backup power, and phone patch as well as the capability of being used as a wide area linked network for any emergency. The agencies like FEMA, MEMA, ARES, RACES, and whoever else is out there to help have the option to use the repeaters as needed for emergency operations. Fortunately, there was no major crisis this time, but that does not mean it cannot happen. *IT HAS* happened to me a couple of times when winter storms have left me snowbound for a few days. I try to be ready for about four days of power loss, as that is the longest I have been out in the last ten years. I do not think it realistic to plan for longer problems, as I would expect to evacuate if the emergency lasts any longer than that.

Like many Hams (and former boy scouts) I like to be prepared for whatever real world emergencies as can be expected. For example, I live out in the woods, far from the major metropolitan area. This means that when the power lines are going down all over the area, the power company fixes the wires serving the most customers first - *which means me last !* I have had four wheel drive vehicles for some time, not for fashion, but because my road is also the last one to get plowed after the snow, and *it is* a dirt road.

Because my water well uses an electric pump, I always keep extra water on hand. I also store a couple of days worth of canned goods. I have lots of camping stuff left over from my Boy Scout days like a camp stove, lantern and the like. My radio equipment runs off a marine battery which is maintained on a float charger, so I can communicate with the outside world, and I have a deck of cards to play solitaire with if my computer goes down. I do not own a generator. I might consider one if old man winter ever threatens havoc again. The reason I haven't purchased one yet is that my expected use is

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What Does It All Mean?
An Editorial...de N1BHI

They finally did it....the FCC has made the biggest change in amateur licensing since the 1950's. We've gone from 6 license classes to 3...that is, only 3 classes of licenses will be issued in the future. If you are now a novice, you can stay a novice forever. The same is true if you hold an advanced class license. Tech and Tech-plus are now Technicians, with or without code.

Operating privileges stay the same. Advanced class licensees still have their subbands, but it is not clear what will happen when there are no more Advanced hams around, once they all upgrade to Extra. Will the General class inherit Advanced privileges or will Extra class operators have the Advanced Subbands, as they do now, and General class stay the same? I suspect that Generals will stay as they are, and Extras will enjoy the use of the Advanced and Extra subbands. It kind of makes sense; that will make more significant the incentive to upgrade to Extra. As of now, the Extra subbands are very small, and do not really offer all that much additional to an Advanced licensee.

There was some pressure to re-allocate the Novice subbands, but the FCC decided against doing so. The commission held that since the Novice class is being grandfathered, their subbands and modes should be preserved.

The ARRL proposed that operating privileges be modified

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January MEMBERSHIP MEETING

Wednesday, Jan 19, 2000 - 1930 Hrs
Campion Center, Weston MA

Program:
ARES, RACES and Skywarn
Bill Ricker, N1VUX
Raffle
Other Stuff

What Does It All Mean?

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for the three classes of licenses, but the FCC decided that restructuring should not include band-plan changes – "*...we should accord the amateur service community an opportunity to complete such discussions and possibly reach a consensus regarding implementation of new technologies before we undertake a comprehensive restructuring of the amateur service operating privileges and frequencies.*" This seems pretty reasonable; the FCC wants us to take the time to figure out just what the best kind of band plan really is.

Now that the code requirement is 5...count 'em...5 words per minute, there is little excuse not to upgrade. Anyone who wants to work HF can now get a General class license pretty easily. A lot of Technicians without code are more than capable of passing the written tests. The key roadblock was 13 WPM. Now, anyone should be able to get to 5, and breeze through the written test. If playing on HF is something you want to do, then the effort to get there has been significantly reduced. I have already heard a number of repeater users talking about upgrading because the 5 WPM requirement is not very intimidating.

Since the vast majority of new licensees in the last couple of years have been No Code Techs, there could be a significant number of new people on HF, so flea market availability of used HF gear could get better as old Hfers drag out their dusty gear for resale...certainly Icom, Kenwood and Yaesu must be licking their chops at the prospect of a boom in HF equipment sales.

If you held a Technician license or a *Certificate of Successful Completion of Examination* (CSCE) before March 21, 1987, then you can apply for an upgrade to General. Back before that date the General and Technician class exams were the same. All you have to do is make out the form 605 and submit it through a VE...and you go to General Class.

There seems to be quite a split among General, Advanced and Extra class licensees; a lot of hams in that group are predicting that the HF bands will become crowded with "lids" - the amateur radio equivalent of a lousy driver. Of course, they forget the years back in the early 80's when a whole bunch of peo-

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MMRA VE Sessions

3rd Saturday of Each Month
Marlboro Public Library, 9AM
Contact: Bill Wade, K1IJ
617 699.3670 Evenings 6 to 10 PM,
Weekends 8 AM to 10 PM.

Accredited - ARRL VE Program

http://people.ne.mediaone.net/wades/exam.htm

How I Spent New Year's Eve

Andy Morrison, N1BHI

I'll bet a lot of you have interesting stories to tell about what you did to be ready for Y2K...a lot of people at various types of businesses had to work, hanging out at the office in case something went south because of the date rollover.

I got lucky...I was able to play radio all night.

When we started to think about the worst case scenarios, one of the obvious things was the potential for loss of telephone communications. Since one of the things I do is to manage the company radio network, I had to think about what we would do if the telephone lines that connect all our radio sites to the dispatch office were to fail. In that event our dispatchers would be unable to talk to field units, out there to respond to emergencies like gas leaks. Someone said, "...but we have Nextel's...we won't need the radios."

Nice thought...but Nextel links its sites by telephone lines going through Central Office facilities. If they go belly-up, so does Nextel.

So we had to figure out a way to make certain that we could talk to the people in the field over the New Year's weekend if the feces wound up among the fan blades.

We had the added problem of working out how we would get the word that we were needed...If telephone service goes down, how will people who emergency service let us know about it? Lot's of cities and towns got hams involved, so that if someone needed emergency services, a ham would be close by, and could relay that need into a command center. There were two paths a message could have followed from that point. It could have come via MEMA – most cities and towns have links to the Mass. Emergency Management Agency. We had a MEMA radio at one of our sites. It also could have come via one of our units, stationed at a firehouse. We placed a service van at key fire stations throughout our territory.

That goes back and begs the question of how we were going to talk to field units if our base stations were not linked because of phone line failures. I decided that we should place people at key radio sites, ready to act as relay points. Each base station has local control capability, so those people and radios would form a network of stations that could hear anyone in our territory.

So we went after volunteers, people willing to sit in a radio shelter all night, or in a truck parked next to one that was not fit for human habitation on a cold winter night. That worked out; we were lucky that there were enough people willing to give up their New Year's Eve...but I was now faced with a different problem.

How do you get a bunch of people who have never participated in a directed radio net capable of handling relays, emergency and other traffic using proper technique and communications protocol? At that point I was wishing for 40 or so experienced Amateurs…

But all I had was a group that had a significant number of people who *had never held a microphone.* I would have to train them on how to do it. I had 48 of them to educate, and confirm

President's Corner

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two days per year, and I would put in more time than that for normal maintenance.

Most Hams participate in some form of emergency preparedness, weather it is fox hunting, working in field day exercises, being a SKYWARN observer, joining RACES, ARES, or other organizations. I honestly believe that ANY ham is ready to step up when a real emergency arises.

If all of us do some small amount of crisis preparation, then *there is no crisis*. After all if we are as ready as we were for "Y2K-Day" than every event will be a non-event.

How I Spent New Year's Eve...continued

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that they learned. So I built a series of training sessions that included role-playing exercises. Believe me when I tell you that it was amusing. Teaching a bunch of people who are used to normal conversation techniques, who have never experienced half-duplex communication, how to participate in a directed net was a real challenge. I kept on wishing for hams…

Some of them actually got scared when they realized the importance of the communicating they would be doing in an emergency, and wanted to back out. I was able to convince them that if they followed the key elements of the protocol, that the net control station would guide them through it.

Of course, doing all this sealed my fate for New Year's Eve... I had to be net control. Worse, I had to train 4 more net control operators; we were planning four twelve hour shifts. I selected those people from the small group who had used radio in conjunction with company business in the past. They took to it well.

What do you tell a group of inexperienced people are the key elements of the radio protocol? Simple:

- Always ask net control for permission to speak
- Leave 3 seconds before you key your mic, so that others can break in if necessary. This is for Ed...I told them to say, under their breath, "Cut your toenails."
- Do exactly what net control tells you to.

There were other things I told them, but those were the most important. The role-playing got a lot of laughs, but was effective.

So, at 2100 New Year's Eve, 18 people showed up at sites in Gloucester, Peabody, Leominster, Holbrook, Abington and Marlboro. I was at the Leominster site – Rocky Hill, 1070 feet, with a 190 foot tower. I wanna get a UHF repeater up there….

From Leominster I knew that I would be able to hear a knat

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What Does It All Mean...continued

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ple came into their ranks by using the "Bash Books." Hams used these books, which published the exact questions and answers that could appear on any of the tests, to memorize their way to a higher class license. They did not necessarily understand any of the answers they remembered...and only a few of them turned out to be lids.

The rest of the world is pretty happy about the change. Most think that it might do a little re-vitalizing of the hobby... especially in the HF world. A lot of people find it fascinating to work people well over the horizon, and an infusion of repeater ragchewers might make for quite a few more interesting contacts on HF.

One thing is certain...lowering the code speed requirement will encourage both upgrades and new entries. Those of us who are code proficient can take satisfaction in the achievement, but none of us should begrudge access to HF by those who come in under the restructuring plan.

In other areas, the FCC decided to eliminate RACES station licenses. This has no significant effect on most of us, except those who, as members of RACES, have the special call-signs. There was one telling factor in the decision: "*We also observed that no new RACES station licenses have been granted since July 14, 1980.*" That, along with the fact that maintaining those licenses is duplicative effort for the licensing authority, makes eliminating those licenses pretty logical.

In the Notice of Proposed Rule Making, the FCC asked for comments on improving enforcement related to Amateur Radio. The ARRL opposed making any changes at this time, and the FCC basically agreed with that position. The roles of Official Observers and Amateur Auxiliary members will remain the same.

Another rule change that was made concerns VE's... Advanced class licensees may now administer exams for General class credit. Only Extras could do this before. This will make it possible for a lot more hams to participate in the VE program at that level.

That's the long and short of it...it took the FCC 68 paragraphs to reach this summary:

"69. Consequently, in view of the foregoing, we are amending our rules to: (a) reduce the number of amateur radio operator license classes from six to three, (b) reduce the number of written examination elements from five to three and the number of telegraphy examination elements from three to one, (c) authorize Advanced Class amateur radio operators to prepare and administer examinations for the General Class amateur radio operator license, and (d) eliminate RACES station licenses. The amended rules which are appended hereto will simplify and streamline the regulations that govern the Amateur Radio Service."

If you go to the ARRL website, there are links and FAQs that will tell you more; but the bottom line is that this is a positive move...we needed something to help the hobby grow again. This is not going to be the whole answer, but it will definitely help.

Repeater Report

Not much has happened since the last newsletter...we've had a few problems, but nothing major.

223.94 has a glitch in it's power amp. The amplifier is some kind of military device that the original repeater builder used – we think it is an early stage amplifier from a phased array radio designed by Raytheon It runs on 28 volts, and produces about 70 watts with 10 or so watts of drive.

It's active device is not anything we have seen before – it looks like a bipolar power transistor, but we suspect it might be a hybrid packaged to look like one. It has a little itty-bitty tab for what would be its collector...and it gets hot. The problem is that the output trace on the PC board long ago disappeared because it separated from that tab, and 10 or more fixes destroyed it. It appears that expansion and contraction cause by alternate heating and cooling breaks the connection again and again. We've tried making a connection that can move...a little foil bridge worked for a long time...we did not do that a few weeks ago, and it broke again. This time the repeater is intermittent; expansion and contraction makes and breaks the connection. So, Bryan and Andy will go to Hopkinton again, and make another attempt at a fix. We yearn for the days of financial stability to return...then we could just go buy a good 220 amp and be done with it.

If anyone has an old 100 watt 220 mobile amp lying around, we could sure put it to use – a couple of fans and running it at 50% duty cycle would make it play fine as a repeater PA.

The PL output tone on '82 has been intermittent for a couple of months – Bryan has taken another shot at a fix; he pulled the PL card and re-worked it. Hopefully that will hold.

It's really too bad that so few people are renewing their memberships. If the trend does not reverse, then it's going to become more and more difficult to keep the network running. Those of us who do the work are beginning to get frustrated at not having the financial wherewithal to do it right. And, if no one else cares, why should we care.

Does Anyone Read This Rag?

I'm really curious...If you actually open up the newsletter and read, please let me know. Email me at mmra@mmra.org and let me know, or call me on the network. I'm on every morning between 8 and 9. You might even add a comment about what you think of the newsletter... it would be nice to know!

Andy, N1BHI – Editor and Publisher

How I Spent New Year's Eve...continued

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break wind in Hartford or Boston. So that was where net control had to be.

We were working on 3 frequencies – two VHF and one low-band. I set myself up at Leominster so that I could hear everything, and intercede if necessary. Each frequency had its own net control operator. Each location had a radio operator and note-taker, to record stuff so that the control op could concentrate on communicating.

At 2100 I opened the net...It sounded just like a bunch of hams checking in! No call signs...just tactical calls, using the name of the site. The first role-call went perfectly; everyone was there and ready. We ran a few exercises just to get everyone in the mood, and then settled down to wait for midnight.

Each half hour I did role-calls just to keep things awake, and at midnight, the role call ushered in the Y2K non-event. Of course we did know that nothing was likely to happen, as in earlier time zones, New Years came in as slick as you could ask.

After midnight, with nothing to be concerned with, I began doing the roll-calls once an hour, just to keep everyone awake and ready should some kind of delayed reaction make our services necessary.

We shut down at 0900...I almost wished that we had been needed for say...15 minutes, anyway. We had spent so much time preparing...we were all dressed up with no place to go.

We all knew that it was unlikely that we would be needed. But if it had gotten dicey, we knew that we were ready, and capable of handling the communications necessary to respond to any emergency. If nothing else, it did end up being a lot of fun...at least for me, 'cuz I got to play radio. By the way, I think we'll be getting three or four new hams – a few of the people must have bought my Amateur radio propaganda...I told them we do this kind of stuff all the time.

Give the MMRA World Wide Web Home Page a try..... let us know what you think.... any ideas are welcome. There is a lot of new stuff there, so check it out!

WWW Address:
http://www.mmra.org/~mmra
Webmaster: Andy Morrison, N1BHI

MMRA Information - Repeaters, Officers and Board Members

Marlboro	146.61	N1BHI/R	FTL	P	PL – 146.2 out, none in
Marlboro	449.925	N1HBR/	FTL	P	PL - 88.5 in and out
Quincy	146.67	K1ML/R	PTL	P	PL - 146.2 out, none in.
Quincy	224.40	N1KUG/	FTL	L	PL - 103.5 in, none out
Weston	146.82	KA1AL/R	PTL	P	PL - 146.2 out, none in
Weston	224.70	N1HBR/	FTL	L	
Hopkinton	223.94	N1BHI/R	FTL	L	PL – 103.5 in, out
Stoneham	146.715	N1NVL/R	PTL	P	PL - 146.2 out, none in.
Stoneham	446.725	N1NVK/	PTL	L	PL - 88.5 in, none out
Marlboro	449.575	N1NVL/R	FTL	L	PL - 88.5 in, none out
Marlboro	53.81	W1BRI/R	PTL	L	PL - 71.9 in, none out

MMRA Officers:

President:	Clark Conti, N1NVK
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Newsletter Editor:	Andy Morrison, N1BHI
Technical Directors	Chris Conti, N1NVL

- **Email: mmra@mmra.org**
- **Web Page:**

www.ultranet.com/~mmra

Minuteman Articles — Solicitation

If you have ever built anything, fixed something, or have an experience that you want to share, then you should submit an article to the MMRA Minuteman. Contact Andy Morrison, N1BHI, if you want to talk about it. We can scan artwork and schematics to make an article more interesting and useful. Give it a try!

Important MMRA Club Information:

Membership Meetings: 3rd Wed of Sept, Nov, Jan, Mar, May at Campion Center, Weston at 7:30 PM
Meeting Dates for 1999-2000 Season: September 15, November 17, January 19, March 15, & May 10.
Board Meetings: 3rd Wed of Oct, Dec, Feb, Apr. Meetings are open and members are welcome. If a visiting member wants to be on the agenda, please contact Clark Conti beforehand.

Newsletters are mailed one week before each meeting; article submissions are due one month before each meeting.

The MMRA is dedicated to Amateur Radio and the public service. The MMRA is a registered non-profit Massachusetts corporation. Membership is open to all amateurs. Annual dues are $25.00 individual, $35.00 family.

W1GSL Fleamarket list – Entries for January through mid-April – Courtesy of Steve, W1GSL
US Mail W1GSL POB 397082 MIT Br Cambridge MA 02139

2000		Contact Source
16 Jan	Yonkers	NY Metro70 Otto WB2SLQ 914 969 1053 A
22 Jan	Nashua NH	NE Antique RC $5@8 $1@9 @ Res Ctr Church 617 923 2665 F
5 Feb	E Hartford CT	VintageR Museum @Church $12/T@7 $1@8 John 860 675 9916 F
19 Feb	Marlborough MA	AlgnquinARC @MidSc $15@8 $3@10 Ann KA1PON 508 481 4988 F
20 Feb	Westford MA	@Regency Radio XXXI Antique Tammy A.R.C. 978 371 0512
26 Feb	Milton VT	NVT WinterHamfest @8 @HS Rt7 Mitch W1SJ 802 879 6589
27 Feb	Levittown NY	LIMARC @LevitT Hall $6@9 $25/T Eddie KC2AYC 631 791 7630 F
5 March	Lindenhurst NY	GSBARC+SCRC Lenore N2KYP 516 785 0826 A
11 Mar	Londonderry NH	IRS @ Lions Hall $10@6 $3@8 Harold N1UZT 603 883 3308 +
12 Mar	Westfield MA	MtTomARA @127 Holyoke Rd $4@9 Cindy K1ISS 413 568 1175 +
18 March	Saugus MA	QRA @1st CongCh Auction @10AM Ralph N1ZEB F
19 Mar	Uxbridge MA	CMPSA 8:30 @SerdiptyHall Rt16@146 Mike N1PSE 508 278 3477
25 Mar	Lewiston ME	AARC ME St Conv. @Ramada s@6 b@8 Ivan N1OXA 207 784 0350 W+
25-26 Mar	Timonium MD	GBARC @FG Sharron N3QQC 800 HAM FEST F
2 Ap	Southington CT	SARA @HS $15/T@6:30 TG$10 $5@9 Chet KA1ILH 860 628 9346
8 April	Twin Mt NH	NARC + LARK Richard WB1ASL 603 788 4428 A+
15 April	Montreal PQ	MARC @LaSalle Legion http://www.marc.qc.ca/fest.html W
16 April		Flea at MIT Nick 617 253 3776 F Third Sunday -- April thru October

Items of Interest

From the ARRL Letter

QUESTIONS, COMMENTS, CONFUSION FOLLOW IN FCC's WAKE

Questions, comments, and some confusion have been the order of the day since the FCC finally dropped the other shoe on Amateur Radio restructuring on December 30. The FCC's momentous action--reducing the number of license classes to three and establishing 5 WPM as the sole Morse code examination element--has, at least for now, polarized the Amateur Radio community. It also promises to change the complexion of Amateur Radio as it enters the new millennium.

More than half of those responding to an informal poll on the ARRL Web site indicate they plan to upgrade during 2000. Demand for study materials in the past week suggests many amateurs will be hitting the books in the coming weeks.

After April 15, 2000, the FCC will only issue Technician, General, and Amateur Extra class licenses. Novice and Advanced licensees will retain current operating privileges and may renew indefinitely. The FCC's new licensing scheme simplifies and shortens the upgrade path from the ground floor through Amateur Extra. Applicants will only have to pass one Morse code test, and there are fewer written examinations and total questions.

"This is the best news I have heard since bread and butter!" exclaimed Jimmy Stewart, WD9FHY, who said he's been trying unsuccessfully for years to boost his code proficiency. On the other side were some who asserted that the revised requirements would contribute to a further decline of Amateur Radio and open the doors to "riff-raff."

The ARRL Board of Directors is expected to review the FCC *Report and Order* and discuss its implications when it meets January 21-22 in Memphis.

In a significant step, the FCC has left it in the hands of the National Conference of VECs Question Pool Committee to determine the specific mix and makeup of written examination questions. Current Amateur Radio study materials remain valid at least until the new rules become effective in April.

The nation's Volunteer Examiner Coordinators, including the ARRL-VEC, now are under the gun to meet the plan's April 15 implementation date. "The Question Pool Committee has been meeting by telephone and e-mail to get the updating process under way," said ARRL-VEC Manager Bart Jahnke, W9JJ. "It's anticipated that the QPC will put out a news release soon that indicates when the updated question pools will be available to the public." Jahnke said the revised question pools will be out "well in advance" of April 15.

No one loses any privileges under the FCC's new plan, and, with one limited exception, no licensee is in a position to automatically gain any privileges when April 15 rolls around. The FCC's action establishes the Technician license--with or without Morse code credit--as the entry-level ticket to Amateur Radio. Technician applicants passing the 5 WPM Morse code exam will gain current Tech Plus HF privileges. The current "no-code" Tech license will continue to be available. Technician applicants opting to not take the code test will gain current Technician VHF/UHF privileges. After April 15, 2000, the FCC will lump Technician and Technician Plus licensees into a single "Technician" database. Despite the name change, current Tech Plus licensees won't lose any privileges.

Similarly, current General and Amateur Extra class holders will continue to enjoy their current privileges. The FCC took no action to reallocate any amateur bands.

The new licensing regime has four examination elements: Element 1, the 5 WPM Morse code test; Element 2, a 35-question Technician test; Element 3, a 35-question General test, and Element 4, a 50-question Amateur Extra test. The new Amateur Extra test is expected to combine the important elements of the current Advanced and Amateur Extra examinations. Only minor changes are anticipated in the new General class examination. The new Technician exam likely will include some questions on HF operating from the current Novice test.

The new licensing plan created a lone and limited upgrade for those who held a Technician license or a *Certificate of Successful Completion of Examination* (CSCE) before March 21, 1987. Those individuals may claim credit for a new General class license. This is because there was a single Technician-General written test under the old system; only the code tests differed. The upgrade is not automatic, however. Affected individuals will have to apply through a Volunteer Examiner test session, complete Form 605, attach documentary proof of having completed the requirements for a Technician license prior to March 21, 1987, and pay an application fee, if any, to the VEC.

Judging from the questions coming into ARRL HQ, many hams want to know whether to upgrade now or wait for the new system. If you're either a Tech Plus or an Advanced licensee, there might be an advantage to taking an exam now. The FCC has told the League that current Tech Plus licensees holding a valid CSCE for Element 3B may apply for a General class upgrade when the new rules become effective. Likewise, current Advanced licensees holding a valid CSCE for Element 4B may apply for an Amateur Extra class upgrade under the new system. To be valid on April 15, 2000, any such CSCE will have to be dated on or after April 17, 1999. A CSCE is only good for 365 days. CSCE holders must attend a Volunteer Examiner session, complete Form 605,

Items of Interest...Continued

From the ARRL Letter

attach a valid CSCE, and pay any required application fee ($6.65 for the ARRL-VEC).

The reduced Morse code requirement hit a nerve with some hams who felt it "devalued" their upper-class licenses. Others, however, felt it minimized an unnecessary obstacle. The FCC said it believes a demonstration of Morse proficiency does not necessarily indicate an individual's "ability to contribute to the advancement of the radio art," as the FCC put it. The Commission also said it was not convinced that Morse proficiency had any particular value to emergency preparedness.

The reduction in the Morse code requirement was not entirely unexpected. Several other countries already have lowered their Morse code examination requirements, and some observers believe the Morse requirement will disappear altogether once it's eliminated in the international *Radio Regulations*. The FCC said it opted for the "least burdensome requirement" as its sole Morse standard. While the 13 and 20 WPM code tests soon will be history, the FCC said that "provisions must remain in place for accommodating individuals with severe disabilities."

The Morse code issue is expected to be on the agenda of a future World Radiocommunication Conference. The FCC said it would not automatically "sunset" the Morse code requirement even if Morse code is eliminated from the international radio regulations.

Frequently Asked Questions on restructuring are available at http://www.arrl.org/news/restructuring/faq.html/. A copy of the entire *Report and Order* (FCC 99-412) is available at http://www.arrl.org/announce/regulatory/wt98-143ro.pdf or at http://www.fcc.gov/Daily_Releases/Daily_Business/1999/db991230/fcc99412.txt.

ENHANCED AMATEUR ENFORCEMENT ENTERS A NEW YEAR

As the new year gets under way, FCC Special Counsel for Amateur Radio Enforcement Riley Hollingsworth hinted he might have to break bad on hard-core offenders this year. He explained that poor or lax FCC enforcement in the past led him to be more forgiving of rulebreakers during his first full calendar year in the enforcement chair. Now, those who persist in operating outside of the stated basis and purpose of Amateur Radio "are beginning to try our patience," he said. "I can't say we're going to be as compassionate this year."

Hollingsworth said he expected to continue his focus on incursions into the 10-meter band by unlicensed operators, especially as propagation gets better, and on equipment certification issues. "We're very concerned about the illegal equipment we see for sale at hamfests," he explained.

Overall, however, malicious interference remains "the basic problem," as he put it. "We're going to use the High-Frequency Direction Finding Center at Laurel [Maryland] more this year" to track down rulebreakers, he said. In addition, Hollingsworth now has enhanced monitoring tools at his Gettysburg office, allowing him access to the HFDF Center's 14 antenna fields plus VHF-UHF "pods" that can be moved around as necessary. "We have dial-in capabilities to all of our antenna fields and to the pods, so we can cover HF, UHF, and VHF anywhere in the country, right here from the Gettysburg office," he explained.

"It's a force multiplier, so to speak," Hollingsworth said of the new capabilities.

Hollingsworth also says he's upbeat about the future of ham radio and the FCC's Amateur Radio restructuring plan announced December 30. "I'm really optimistic about it," he said this week. "I think that it's a good idea to simplify things a little bit as far as the number of license classes," he added, referring to the new three-tiered system.

Hollingsworth said he believes Amateur Radio needs more young blood to keep it going in the future, and he thinks the new licensing system that becomes effective April 15 might help in that regard. He declined, however, to comment further on the specific policies and rules the FCC's Wireless Telecommunications Bureau laid down in its *Report and Order*, saying it would not be appropriate.

KENTUCKY HAMS SCRAMBLE FOR TORNADO DUTY

Hams in the Owensboro, Kentucky, area activated the afternoon of January 3 when an F3-level tornado visited town. ARRL Official Relay Station and former Kentucky Section Manager Steve Morgan, W4NHO, says the storm--with winds of approximately 180 MPH--struck Owensboro from the southwest, making a wide swath and hopping its way through the southwest portion of the city. Owensboro is home to past ARRL President George Wilson III, W4OYI. The tornado touched down about three miles from Wilson's house, and he was involved in assisting in the response.

"Owensboro is a mess!" reports Bill Hilyerd, K4LRX, in Henderson in a message to Kentucky SEC Ron Dodson, KA4MAP. "We boys in Western Kentucky are quite busy."

Morgan reports that Amateur Radio operators opened an ARES net on the Owensboro Amateur Radio Club's 2-meter repeater and provided storm tracking information for the next hour or so. Operators were dispatched to the local emergency management office, the Red Cross office, the Kentucky Third District EMS office, the local hospital, and a shelter at a local sports center.

Items of Interest.....

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In addition to assisting with EMA/EOC communications, hams also have been involved in post-storm damage assessment. Dodson says additional hams still are needed during daylight hours to assist damage assessment teams. (Area hams may contact Steve Morgan, W4NHO, 270-926-4451 or Bob Spears, AA4RL, 270-926-1693.)

Morgan reports that telephone service--including cellular--was disrupted because of heavy use within the community. "Amateur radio provided valuable links when other services were disrupted," Morgan said.

Amateurs also got in touch with TV stations in Evansville, Indiana, as well as the Evansville Red Cross chapter through hams in that city. Morgan says early notification of the storm's approach via local TV stations and the emergency sirens prevented loss of life during the storm. Although 15 people were injured, only one injury was considered serious, he said.

Morgan says that by week's end, some 8000 residents of the Owensboro area were still without power. Property damage was estimated to be in the millions of dollars. At least 130 homes were destroyed, and 500 to 600 homes suffered major damage. "The community has really pulled together, and repairs are rapidly progressing," he said. "It's impossible to give a blow-by-blow description of all the hams who played a valuable part during this storm."

While the OARC 147.21 MHz repeater managed to stay on the air, Dodson cited reports indicating the repeater was operating at reduced power after apparently suffering some lightning damage. The machine was run off battery power for a while, but Jack Wilson, K4SAC, in Owensboro told Dodson the repeater now is back on commercial power. "We have had a net in session officially or unofficially since Monday afternoon," he said. Two other 2-meter machines were said to have been lost in the tornado.

Overall, more than 40 Owensboro amateurs participated in the tornado response effort, Morgan said.--*Steve Morgan, W4NHO; Ron Dodson, KA4MAP*

MISSISSIPPI TELEPHONE RFI CASE TABLED

A Mississippi ham arrested for interfering with his neighbors' telephones is breathing a bit more easily today. ARRL member Bennie Stewart, KJ6TY, of Meridian, was arrested and charged September 10 after a neighbor filed a complaint with the Lauderdale County Justice Court. At the request of Lauderdale County Attorney Robert Compton, the court has ordered the case to be placed in its "inactive files."

Stewart's attorney, Felicia Perkins of Jackson, says the action essentially ends the case against her client. "For all practical purposes, it's in a box somewhere, and it's going to sit there unless Congress changes the laws," she said.

If he'd been convicted, the 61-year-old Stewart--who's confined to a wheelchair and says he has limited physical abilities--faced a fine of up to $500, six months in jail, or both.

Perkins had requested, on Stewart's behalf, that the Justice Court throw out the complaint on the grounds that only the FCC had jurisdiction. The court had been considering the motion since last fall. The December 28, 1999, *Order* sending the criminal action to the inactive files maintained that the Justice Court "does have jurisdiction over the subject criminal matters, but that the state court's jurisdiction has been preempted by federal law". Perkins said the order means the Justice Court cannot exercise any jurisdiction it may have had. "There are no other proceedings against my client," she said.

A ham for 12 years, Stewart had appeared in court October 26 to respond to the complaint, brought under a Mississippi law that makes it illegal to "intentionally obstruct, injure, break or destroy, or in any manner interrupt any telegraph or telephone line or communication thereon between any two points."

Perkins said the Mississippi Justice Court provides a legal forum for resolving disputes, something like small claims court. Justice Court judges do not have to be attorneys, she explained. An appeal to a higher court could have been "very, very expensive" for Stewart, she said. "Sometimes it's best to put things to an end--especially when the law is so clear--at the Justice Court level."

The case attracted the attention of the Amateur Radio community and has been the subject of Internet news group discussions. Stewart said that before his arrest in the telephone interference case he never was in any kind of legal trouble. A retired photographer, Stewart says he's suffered from muscular dystrophy since he was a teenager. The Mississippi native had moved to California after his retirement, but moved back to Mississippi in 1993.