

August 31, 2020  
ICARC NEWSLETTER



**Officers for 2020:**

President - Doug Fitzsimmons K3LAB  
Vice President - Harry Dushac K3FSE  
Treasurer - Terry Carnahan KB3JOD  
Secretary - Chris Edwards N3VFK

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1. Dave Dzelsky N3DZ
2. Craig Bigler AB3XA
3. Jerry Kiehl WB3DUD
4. Cass Fitzgerald, N3FLO
5. Larry Freeman N3LT

**LOCAL HAPPENINGS:**

Next meeting: September 1, 2020, 7:30 pm at Dave Steiner's home.

FOR SALE: Icom 756ProIII with Icom speaker, Icom desk mic and LDG AT1000Pro antenna tuner. \$1,250. If interested, please email: [k3lab@arrl.net](mailto:k3lab@arrl.net).

Contributed Article by Gary Miller (KC3NHE)

THE PROCESS OF ONLINE UPGRADING BY GARY C MILLER – KC3NHE

Recently we were all affected by the COVID-19 crisis. This inconvenience has led to the way we do things in everyday life including how we test and proctor exams. This is the story of how I became an Amateur Extra without ever leaving the house.

In April 2019 I became a newly licensed operator at the General level. Many of you may recall the story of how I failed the Technician but walked out a licensed General, which was a first for our club. In the fall of 2019, I decided that I needed to upgrade to the Amateur Extra, or Extra class. Unfortunately, I was the only one signed up to test at the October session and thus it was cancelled. Although I was bummed out, I wasn't defeated, and I continued to study. I again signed up, this time for the April 2020 session, and was ready to go. And then COVID-19 hit and changed life as we know it. Within a matter of days everything that we had ever experienced and practiced in our day to day lives was no more and with that went the April testing session. This time around I was feeling defeated as the date of July 1, which was the date the extra question pool would change, was just over 10 weeks away and it looked as though my efforts would be all for nil. Reports were coming in that we were in the new normal and that face to face social activities in Pennsylvania would most likely remain cancelled through the summer. I was devastated.

I had placed my plans on hold and stopped studying, there really was no reason to continue to at this point. This went on until the first week of May when I learned through social media that the VEC's of W5YI and Laurel were starting to experiment with online testing. Now as you may or may not know these two VEC's have utilized electronic submission of test scores, the Form 605, which is the application to the FCC for licensing, and the Certificate of Successful Completion of Examination or CSCE for some time, which has allowed newly licensed hams to get on the air sooner, sometimes in the same day. Immediately I began to research this and found they were indeed offering online exams but in a very limited and infantile state, usually one time slot per week and no more than 3-5 applicants at a time. I didn't let that stop me however, and I picked my study material up and started working again.

By the time I was ready to test, which was about two weeks later, testing had expanded to daily sessions with some VE Teams offering multiple sessions per day. At this point nearly everything across the country had been shut down and virtual meetings were quickly becoming commonplace. This is where the start of my online upgrade process began. The next part is how I did it.

Once I learned of the process of online testing, I not only had to study material but also had to learn how to test. The process actually wasn't that complicated. In reality only a few things were needed to take the exam. The first was a stable internet connection, and this is the most important. The next was a program called Zoom, a virtual meeting platform which I already had on both my phone and tablet. We started using it on Easter Sunday when we weren't able to be together as a family. A tablet or laptop with microphone and camera were also needed, along with a good signed copy of my current FCC license and my state ID. A PayPal account was also required, more on that in a bit. After I had everything set and tested my connections several times over, I found a signup roster through W5YI. The rules were simple, sign up and be ready to test when they send the email announcing openings. The VE team I aligned with was testing twice a day with 4 slots available at each session. They were however offering one additional slot at each session for those looking to upgrade to Extra from General to accommodate as many as possible before the July 1 cutoff of the current question pool. The only downfall of this was each day it was all first come first served, this actually wasn't an issue however as there were dropouts everyday for all sessions. I only waited two days to get an open slot.

Once I was able to commit to the exam session, I was sent instructions on how to proceed. The first was a link to the VE's PayPal email. I had to pay a fee of \$14 before I could test, this was done ahead of time to eliminate the delay of payment being received upon successful completion later. I was also sent a link to a Zoom waiting room and was given a time to log in. I logged in at my scheduled time which was 1 PM local time, I say this because my VE's were based out of Texas and an hour behind. I waited about 45 minutes as the applicant ahead of me decided to take both the Technician and General exams. Once they completed I was then pulled from the waiting queue and into the exam session. The VE's first started off by having me show them my workspace in its entirety, for this I used my phone. They then examined my FCC and driver's licenses to ensure I was in fact me and was qualified to take the Extra exam.

Once they were satisfied, we then disconnected from the phone and the VE's took remote control of my tablet. Using hamstudy.org, which is how I found the testing session and took online practice exams, they loaded an Extra exam onto my screen and then returned control to me, while maintaining visual contact of both my screen and me. I finished the exam in about 30 minutes and received my score instantly, a 43/50, my best score yet! My tablet then shut down on me and restarted out of nowhere, I thought, "Oh man I'm screwed!" I immediately connected with the VE's on my phone and they assured me that they captured the score and I was successful in passing the exam. They then gave me some instructions on the follow up, which included the signing of the CSCE and the Form 605 and told me to watch my email. I received both at the same time and signed them electronically and sent them back. This was about 3 PM local time, which was just shy of an hour after completion. The VE's told me it would take about an hour to receive them. After I sent them back I began checking the FCC database for updates as I knew this one was going in electronically. At 4:30 PM it was in there, I was an Amateur Extra

operator! I went from General to Extra in just over two hours and was official, it was so short I never even got the chance to identify as a /AE on the air.

I hope you found this experience to be entertaining, helpful, and inspiring. If you know of anyone who is looking to get licensed or upgrade or are considering it yourself, try this route. It was painless and rather easy. Thanks for taking the time to read about my experience, 73 de KC3NHE!

Useful Information provided by Chris Edwards (N3VFK) via email:

Hello,

This is a helpful list for those of you that send out paper QSL cards overseas. I for instance had something returned from Cuba. **The U.S. Postal Service does not accept shipments to the following countries because of either lack of transportation or suspension of mail service in that country mainly due to the virus. Updated as of 7/14/2020. If you send to the below countries it will be extremely delayed or sent back.**73, Chris

- |                                      |                 |                          |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Angola                            | 32. Ghana       | 62. Panama               |
| 2. Argentina                         | 33. Grenada     | 63. Papua New Guinea     |
| 3. Azerbaijan                        | 34. Guinea      | 64. Paraguay             |
| 4. Bahrain                           | Bissau          | 65. Peru                 |
| 5. Benin                             | 35. Guyana      | 66. Republic of Congo    |
| 6. Bermuda                           | 36. Haiti       | 67. Rwanda               |
| 7. Bolivia                           | 37. Honduras    | 68. Samoa                |
| 8. Botswana                          | 38. Iraq        | 69. Seychelles           |
| 9. Brunei                            | 39. Ivory Coast | 70. Sierra Leone         |
| 10. Burkina Faso                     | 40. Jordan      | 71. Sint Maarten         |
| 11. Burundi                          | 41. Kenya       | 72. Solomon Islands      |
| 12. Cambodia                         | 42. Kiribati    | 73. South Africa         |
| 13. Cameroon                         | 43. Kosovo      | 74. South Sudan          |
| 14. Cape Verde                       | 44. Kyrgyzstan  | 75. Sri Lanka            |
| 15. Cayman Islands                   | 45. Laos        | 76. Sudan                |
| 16. Chad                             | 46. Lebanon     | 77. Suriname             |
| 17. Chile                            | 47. Lesotho     | 78. Swaziland (Eswatini) |
| 18. Colombia                         | 48. Liberia     | 79. Tajikistan           |
| 19. Cook Islands                     | 49. Libya       | 80. Tanzania             |
| 20. Costa Rica                       | 50. Madagascar  | 81. Timor-Leste          |
| 21. Cuba                             | 51. Malawi      | 82. Tonga                |
| 22. Curacao                          | 52. Maldives    | 83. Turkmenistan         |
| 23. Democratic Republic of the Congo | 53. Mauritania  | 84. Turks & Caicos       |
| 24. Dominica                         | 54. Mauritius   | 85. Uganda               |
| 25. Dominican Republic               | 55. Mongolia    | 86. Uruguay              |
| 26. Ecuador                          | 56. Mozambique  | 87. Uzbekistan           |
| 27. Ethiopia                         | 57. Myanmar     | 88. Vanuatu              |
| 28. Faroe Island                     | 58. Namibia     | 89. Venezuela            |
| 29. Fiji                             | 59. Nepal       | 90. Yemen                |
| 30. French Polynesia                 | 60. Nigeria     | 91. Zambia               |
| 31. Gambia                           | 61. Pakistan    | 92. Zimbabwe             |

## **THINGS YOU CAN DO TO STAY SAFE**

**Follow the guidelines put forth by the Federal and State government health officials.**

**STAY ISOLATED AT HOME AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE**  
**WASH HANDS FREQUENTLY AND DISINFECT FREQUENTLY USED SURFACES**  
**KEEP HANDS AWAY FROM EYES AND FACE, IF POSSIBLE**  
**COVER YOUR COUGHS AND SNEEZES**  
**IF YOU MUST BE OUT, KEEP YOUR DISTANCE FROM OTHERS (AT LEAST 6 FT)**  
**IF YOU MUST BE SHOPPING, AVOID CROWDED AISLES AND SMALL CROWDED STORES , ALSO WEAR GLOVES AND A MASK IF POSSIBLE**

## **SOME SYMPTOMS OF COVID 19 INFECTION**

FROM THE CENTER FOR DISEASE CONTROL (CDC)

Generally, people may be infected with the virus for 1 to 14 days before developing symptoms. The most common symptoms are fever, tiredness, and dry cough. Most people (about 80%) recover from the disease without needing special treatment.

More rarely, the disease can be serious and even fatal. Older people, and people with other medical conditions (such as asthma, diabetes, or heart disease), may be more vulnerable to becoming severely ill.

People may experience:

cough, fever, tiredness, difficulty breathing (severe cases).

Using available data, the median time from onset to clinical recovery for mild cases is approximately 2 weeks and is 3-6 weeks for patients with severe or critical disease.

In the event that you feel that you or a family member may be infected, seek medical assistance in your local area.

## **RADIO AMATEURS OF CANADA ANNOUNCES A NEW SECTION**

The number of Sections needed for a clean sweep in the ARRL November Sweepstakes (SS) will rise to 84 in 2020, with the addition of a new Prince Edward Island (PE) Section. Radio Amateurs of Canada (RAC) has announced that the new Section will become effective on April 1. Prince Edward Island has been in the Maritimes (MAR) Section. RAC said its Prince Edward Island members have been working for some time to create a separate Section for RAC ARES activities there. The provinces of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick will remain in the Maritimes Section. In addition to Field Day and Sweepstakes, the new Section in Canada will affect the ARRL 160-Meter Contest but not the ARRL 10-Meter Contest, which uses individual states/provinces for US and Canadian multipliers. The change will mean that logging software developers will have to update their software to include the PE Section as a valid exchange element for any affected operating events. RAC also announced an adjustment in two of its Ontario Sections. Effective April 1, radio amateurs in the City of Hamilton and in the Regional Municipality of Niagara will shift to the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) Section from the Ontario South (ONS) Section. - *ARRL Letter, January 9, 2020*

## **CHINA TELECOMS REGULATOR PROPOSING TO DELETE SOME CURRENT AMATEUR ALLOCATIONS (No Updates on this as of today, June 30, 2020).**

China's telecommunications regulator has proposed amending the Measures for the Administration of Amateur Radio Stations, and some amateur bands are in danger of being eliminated. Lide Zhang, BI8CKU, told ARRL that the proposal would prohibit amateur operation on the 2200-meter band as well as on 146 - 148 MHz, 1260 - 1300 MHz, 3400 - 3500 MHz, 5650- 5725 MHz, and all bands above 10

GHz. Radio communications engineer and Chinese Amateur Satellite Group, February 2020.

(CAMSAT) CEO Alan Kung, BAIDU, told ARRL that government efforts to eliminate some amateur bands are nothing new, but proposals that have been aired for a while now are on the regulatory agency's schedule. Kung said he does not anticipate that all of the bands proposed will be taken away, but he conceded that the climate will "undoubtedly" become increasingly more dangerous for China's amateur radio community. "The attempt to crowd out the amateur radio bands has a long history throughout the world," he said, "but it may never have become so urgent for the amateur radio community as it is today. We all understand that radio spectrum resources have become a bottleneck for further development." He said today's radio communication industry "is working hard to share spectrum resources." Kung characterized spectrum as "the soil on which amateur radio depends."

- *ARRL Letter*, January 9, 2020

**QRZ.com Beefs Up its Security:** QRZ is offering its online users enhanced security options. It is now offering registered users the ability to use a "two- factor authentication" (2FA) hoping to make it more difficult for password phishers and fraudulent posters. They are also going to require anyone marketing gear through the Swapmeet forum to enroll in its Verified User program.

**Petition Seeks a New Amateur Band at 40 Mhz :** Michelle Bradley, KU3N, a Maryland amateur has filed a petition for rule making with the FCC, seeking a secondary amateur frequency allocation at 8 meters in the 40-41 Mhz range. Michelle feels that the new spectrum would spark the next generation of 'Makers' in the fields of science, technology, education, and math ..etc... She notes that since there is currently no mass-produced equipment for this band that "makers" will have to make their own gear. **The petition number is RM-11843**

## OTHER INFORMATION

If anyone would like to include information or write an article for the Newsletter please let Larry Freeman know by email at:

[wd4hoz@gmail.com](mailto:wd4hoz@gmail.com) .The only caveats are: The editor reserves the right to alter the format for publication purposes. The content may also be modified contingent upon accuracy and appropriateness of the contained material. The latter would, of course, be subject to the approval of the original author.

## **Indiana County Amateur Radio Club**

### **Minutes of the Monthly Meeting 07/07/2020 (Held at Dave Steiners QTH)**

**Call to Order:** The meeting was called to order at 7:30pm by Club President Doug Fitzsimmons with the Pledge of Allegiance

**Reports:** Terry Carnahan read the financial report. The financial report was accepted and approved.

**Old Business:** Doug asked for a Field Day Report. Seven club members gave positive reviews of their experience. Doug reminded everyone to submit our club name when we submit our logs so the club can receive credit as a whole.

**New Business:** The organizers of the Ghost Town Trail Challenge held August 22<sup>nd</sup> asked if the club would be interested in helping out along the trail. No one could commit at this time. Will possibly be discussed further at the August meeting.

Gary Miller the new ARES Emergency Coordinator for Indiana County talked about the vetting process to become an E.C. & suggested all club members willing to take part in ARES operations should get necessary clearances.

Doug said he discussed with the Eat-n-Park Manager (Our usual meeting place) the virus protocol for future meetings. Chris Edwards brought up holding the August meeting again at Dave Steiners since the virus situation is still fluid. Dave said that would be fine. Doug said the September meeting would possibly be held at Eat-n-Park depending on the situation at that time if not Dave said it was okay to keep holding them at his QTH.

Dave Dzelsky said he set up a Yaesu Fusion World Node using WIRES-X. (Wide-coverage Internet Repeater Enhancement System) for Amateur use. It is on 144.690 simplex digital.

**End of Business/Adjournment:** 7:58pm Doug made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by Cass Fitzgerald & it was approved.

#### **Attendance: 12**

Doug Fitzsimmons K3LAB (Pres.)

Michael Schmaus (Future Ham)

Terry Carnahan KB3JOD (Tres.)

Chris Edwards N3VFK (Sec.)

Dave Steiner W3CDH

Paul Morris K3VAR

Gary Miller KC3NHE

Dave Dzelsky N3DZ

Ian Bigler KC3DTE

Walter Schroth KC3FVU

Cass Fitzgerald N3FLO

Larry Freeman N3LT