

# **CONTESTING**

**Training for Public Service**

**– The Radio Fitness Center**

**NØAX – Fall 2017**

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# OVERVIEW

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- ✘ Who is this presentation for?
- ✘ What is the purpose of the presentation?
- ✘ Why is this topic useful?
- ✘ What do I want you to think about?
- ✘ What will you take away from this?

# WHY DO CONTESTS?

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- ✘ Why work out?



# WHY DO CONTESTS?

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- ✘ Why work out? Exercise is **GOOD** for you!

# WHY DO CONTESTS?

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- ✘ Contests are ham radio exercise - for your club and public service team
  - + Originally for traffic handling practice
  - + Promote station development
  - + Improve operating skill – sending *and* receiving
  - + Increase “radio know-how”
  - + Builds operator confidence
- ✘ **FUN** - encourage activity, participation, interest

# CONTESTS AND NEW HAMS

- ✘ Half (or some ridiculously high fraction) of new hams ***NEVER MAKE ONE CONTACT!!!***  
***WHY???***

- + They need training
- + They need encouragement
- + They need information
- + They need friends
- + They need activities

- ✘ ***RECRUIT, TRAIN, RETAIN***



# BASIC RADIO FITNESS

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- × Speaking, sending, logging
- × Copying, tuning, recognizing
- × Aiming, choosing, timing
- × Building, installing, repairing
- × Filtering, selecting, controlling
- × Stamina!

# SKILLED = EFFECTIVE

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- ✘ An emergency is **NOT** the time to be learning basic operating skills
- ✘ Contesting improves effectiveness
  - + Operator *and* station
  - + Be ready when needed
  - + Practice overcoming challenges
  - + A skilled operator is a robust, reliable operator
- ✘ Contesting does **NOT** replace procedural and organizational training



# CAVEATS ABOUT CONTESTS

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- ✘ Procedures and practices are different
- ✘ The pace is a lot faster
- ✘ It's easy to get confused
- ✘ Beginning operators need coaching
- ✘ Select contests appropriate to the operator skill level and interests
- ✘ Success can come gradually - start slow and work your way up

# MAKE CONTESTS WORK FOR YOU

- ✘ Minimize extraneous chatter to make net operations more efficient
- ✘ Speak clearly and train the ear – fewer repeats means faster messaging
- ✘ Work on accurate copy and logging – learn to do both at once
- ✘ Practice teamwork within and between stations

# GIVE YOUR STATION A WORKOUT

- ✘ Does everything actually...you know...**WORK?**
- ✘ Can you find all the accessories?
- ✘ Take the mobile on a shakedown cruise
- ✘ Learn how all of those controls operate
- ✘ Practice changing frequency and mode
- ✘ Try different configurations of the equipment and antennas...because **YOU NEVER KNOW!**



# EXAMPLE OF EOC ACTIVATION

As of 2008 we have been celebrating World Amateur Radio Day every April 18th. In 2013 my friend Edgar García knows the EMA director from the City of Cataño and we approached him to operate the event from inside the facilities and then two months later have Field Day to make our first Class F activation.

He approved it and we did the special WARD event. This led to two consecutive Field Days, a balloon presentation, and even Technician classes.

Angel Santana, WP3GW

# EXERCISE YOUR “PLAN B”

- ✘ You **DO** have a Plan B, right? 😊
- ✘ Select contest type to practice Plan B
  - + Repeater's down? Operate in simplex contests
  - + QRN a problem? Operate single-band 75 meters
  - + Power's out? Use batteries and run QRP
  - + Damage assessment? Enter as a VHF+ rover
  - + Net frequency busy? Move!
- ✘ Take advantage of ham radio's flexibility!

# OPPORTUNITIES ABOUND

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- ✘ Local FM simplex contests and activity days
- ✘ State and regional QSO parties
- ✘ Rookie Roundup, School Club Roundup
- ✘ NPOTA, SOTA, IOTA
- ✘ ***FIELD DAY!***
- ✘ VHF+ rover/mobile categories
- ✘ Google is your friend - “contest calendar”



# EXAMPLE VHF SIMPLEX CONTESTS

- ✘ Ohio Section Simplex Day
  - + [arrl-ohio.org/SEC/simplex-day.html](http://arrl-ohio.org/SEC/simplex-day.html)
- ✘ Maine 2 Meter Simplex Challenge
  - + [www.ws1sm.com/2-Meter-Challenge-History.html](http://www.ws1sm.com/2-Meter-Challenge-History.html)
- ✘ Milwaukee Simplex Contest
  - + [www.w9rh.org/club-events/simplex-contest/](http://www.w9rh.org/club-events/simplex-contest/)
- ✘ St Louis 2 Meter Simplex Zip Code Sprint
  - + [www.slsrc.org/2m-simplex-sprint/](http://www.slsrc.org/2m-simplex-sprint/)

# EXAMPLE OF CONTEST TRAINING

The Bloomington (MN) Communications Group (RACES; WCØAAA) took the communications van out for the ARRL September VHF contest. Two mentors supervised and guided the operation, while others were encouraged to participate separately. All operators were asked to monitor 146.550 MHz FM simplex, and three 30-minute focus times concentrated activity.

Two guides were provided via email: a 2-page, FM-only quick-start guide including sample contact scripts, and a more comprehensive introduction to simplex operation, VHF contesting, and weak-signal operation. We alerted the local VHF contest club and shared materials with them.

Many of the members participated on the air. The participants gained experience with simplex operations, logging, and a better understanding of the capabilities and limitations of their station. Our biggest DX was in EN41, around 430 km! We're looking forward to the end of January, where the January VHF contest and Winter Field Day create a full range of training opportunities! Our group is continuing to pursue the contesting-as-training strategy, and feel like it is helping give members experience while being fun and cultivating curiosity.

# BE CREATIVE

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- ✘ Club challenges and operating awards
- ✘ Partner experienced ops with new hams
- ✘ Operate in short bursts for focused training
- ✘ Host multi-operator “contest colleges”
- ✘ Mini-Field Days any time (even winter!)
- ✘ Create hybrid events with other activities
- ✘ Great way to get non-hams excited about radio



# ÜBUNG MACHT DEN MEISTER

*(Practice makes the master)*

- ✘ “Wax on, wax off”
- ✘ No quicker way to learn and polish the fundamentals of radio know-how
  - + Challenging
  - + Rewarding
  - + Fun!
- ✘ Practice until you can’t make mistakes

# TAKE CHARGE AND PROMOTE

- ✘ New ideas need leaders
- ✘ EC, Asst EC
  - + Task your team to engage and report
- ✘ SM, Asst SM, SEC, DEC
  - + Create and encourage radio fitness programs
- ✘ Director and Vice Director
  - + Recognize, encourage, report, promote
- ✘ Everybody – share your examples and results

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- ✘ What are you going to take away from this?



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**THANK YOU!!**

**QUESTIONS?**