



AMATEUR RADIO CHAPTER



So you want to be a ham?

Being able to use ham radio for emergency or recreational purposes has many advantages, but first you'll need an FCC license. The FRVA Amateur Radio Chapter will be offering what you need to get one.

In times of natural or man-made disaster, or when far from phones and cell towers, amateur radio is often the only means of emergency communication. There are countless examples:

- In December 2022, a hiker went out for a casual hike. Everything was going fine until it started to get dark, his cell phone battery died, and he realized there was no way to get to a road except bushwhacking down a mountain in the dark. Fortunately, using a small, hand-held amateur radio transceiver, he was able to contact another ham, who called the hiker's wife, who then called the local police department. He was found and taken back to safety.
- In April 2024, a family traveling in Death Valley National Park got their car stuck in the mud. No cell phone coverage was available, but fortunately the father was a ham radio operator with a mobile transceiver in the car. He began calling for help and, incredibly, another ham radio operator in Ohio heard his call. That operator then relayed the message to the National Park Service, and the family was rescued by rangers within a few hours.
- When Hurricane Helene hit western North Carolina, tens of thousands of residents were left without power or cell phone coverage. Local hams, using ham radio's ability to send text and email messages without a local internet connection, were able to relay requests for supplies and medication and relay messages to let friends and family know that loved ones were OK.

From: K4EAK@winlink.org <K4EAK@winlink.org>
Sent: Saturday, September 28, 2024 12:25 pm
To: we4rv@fmcaarc.com <swe4rv@fmcaarc.com>
Subject: We're OK

Just to let you know, we were spared the worst of the hurricane. A few trees down in the campground. No power but we're OK on batteries. No cell phone service now. Will call when cell service is back up. Don't worry ... we're fine. Please let the family know.

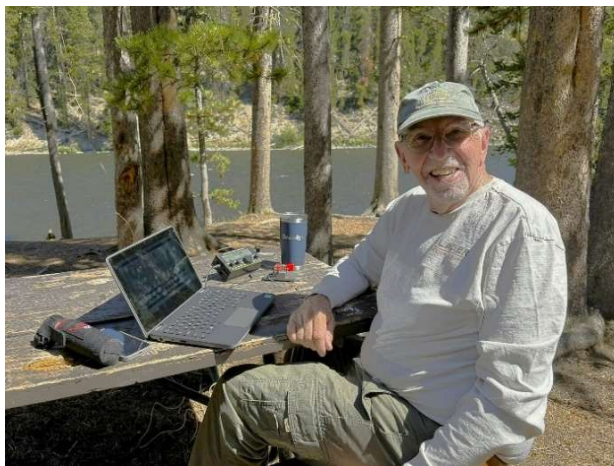
Dad

There are thousands of such stories. While being able to use ham radio equipment in such cases requires some learning, anyone who goes through the basic licensing process can spring into action when required.

But it's not just in emergencies that ham radio comes into play. Ham radio is also a ton of fun with countless ways to enjoy the options that radio communications can offer. Using relatively inexpensive equipment, hams can communicate locally and worldwide using voice transmissions, a variety of digital text-like formats, satellites, and local repeaters.

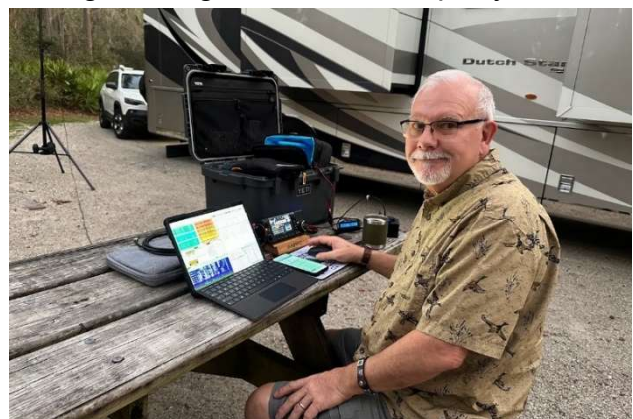


One of the most popular forms of ham radio activities nowadays is "Parks on the Air" (or "POTA"). Using portable equipment, battery power, and makeshift antennas, one can set up, just for the fun of it, at countless parks and recreational areas throughout the country. Although Parks on the Air holds great appeal to the younger, outdoorsy set, it's suitable for even older types. Even more, because POTA is focused on state and federal parks, it is a natural complement to RV travel. Since you're likely to be in or near parks anyway, why not double the fun and join the "Parks on the Air" bandwagon?



Besides all that, the ham radio community is a famously fun-loving group. The Amateur Radio Chapter of FRVA is one of the most vibrant, active, and growing chapters of FRVA, with nearly 200 members, holding rallies and other gatherings several times per year throughout the United States.

In short, if you want to be prepared for emergency communications, or you enjoy finding new ways to explore the outdoors, or you enjoy technology and would like to keep up with new developments, or even if you're just looking for a new hobby to keep your mental juices flowing, ham radio is for you.



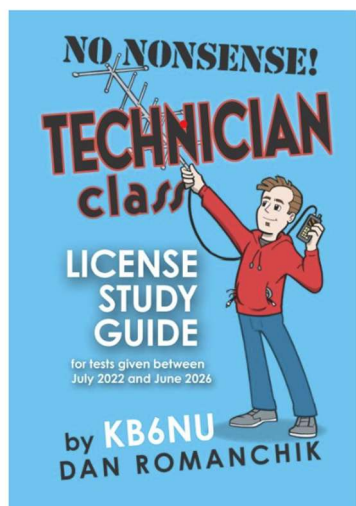
There's just one catch. To enjoy ham radio, you'll need a license from the Federal Communications Commission. But that's where the FRVA Amateur Radio Chapter comes into the picture. At the upcoming FRVA Convention in Perry, Georgia, March 2026, the Amateur Radio Chapter will be offering everything it takes to get started: a one-day training program, taking a simple FCC multiple-choice test, and completing all the paperwork and submissions necessary to get the license.

Here's how it will work.

There are three levels of ham radio licenses in the United States. Each of the levels comes with ever-increasing privileges to use designated frequencies and requires increasing levels of knowledge about amateur radio operations. However, the degree of knowledge required for the entry-level license, called a "Technician license," is minimal. One simply has to understand the basics of how a radio works and what rules and regulations govern radio operations.



That's what the Amateur Radio Chapter will offer. The plan is for those interested in getting a ham radio license to arrive on Sunday, March 15, 2026. Students will be placed on the FRVA list of approved early arrivers and, if desired, are welcome to join the Amateur Radio Chapter attendees who are also arriving on Sunday.



Prior to arriving, students should have obtained and reviewed the Technician license study manual and taken a couple practice tests. The manual, prepared by Dan Romanchik, has been used by thousands of students with great success. It can be downloaded for free here: <https://www.kb6nu.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/2022-no-nonsense-tech-study-guide-v2-20230204.pdf>. Even better, though, would be to purchase the printed version from amazon:

<https://www.amazon.com/Nonsense-Technician-Class-License-Study/dp/B0B7GNTV7G/>. Although there are other study guides available, the *No Nonsense* guide is the one the Amateur Radio Chapter will use and is highly recommended. If

one is interested, however, in a more in-depth explanation of the various radio topics covered in the Technician exam, there are additional resources listed on the ARC website.

Although it may look a little intimidating, there is little to fear about the exam. Most of the questions are straightforward and the answers are obvious. Some questions might look a little foreboding, like such as questions that pertain to radio equipment, or that require remembering a few details of regulations, or that pertain to radio physics. Not to worry, though. The exam prep session will cover every single one of the questions, provide the correct answer, explain why the answer is correct, and provide little tips and hints to remember the correct answer. Even those who hated high school algebra and can't tell the difference between a resistor and a blood blister will do just fine.

On Monday, March 16, the Amateur Radio Chapter will conduct a full-day review session for the materials that might be tested on the FCC examination. The course will follow the No Nonsense guide, pretty much page-by-page, in order. Lunch will be provided and is included in the registration fee. After the class concludes, several ARC members will hang around, for as long as students would like, to answer any additional questions and walk students through any practice tests that they want to take.

Most people, if they read the materials a few times, take a few practice tests, and attend the one-day prep session, will be able to pass the Technician exam with no problems. However, if after reading through the materials, it all seems like those high school science classes you hated, don't despair. There are two ways to assure success. The first, obviously, is simply review the No Nonsense guide repeatedly and keep taking practice tests until you've memorized the answers. Don't worry if you're just memorizing something without really knowing what it means; the meaning will become obvious once you've spent some time talking to other hams on the air. The second option is to supplement the No Nonsense guide with any of several different online courses, many of which are free. For a list of these resources, visit the "Additional Resources" section of the ARC website: <https://fmcaarc.com>. Either way, rest assured you'll do fine.

Early Tuesday morning, hams from the Middle Georgia Radio Club will come by to administer the FCC exam. The exams will be scored immediately. Most test-takers pass the exam with no problem, but sometimes the randomly generated question set just happens, as luck would have it, to hit the very topics that the student is weakest on. No worries: Any student who doesn't pass can immediately take the test again (with a different question set) and is much more likely to get a passing score.

FRVA members who already have a Technician or General license, are welcome to pre-register, space available, to take a test on Tuesday morning to upgrade to a higher license class.

After finishing the exam, the results for those who have passed will be transmitted to FCC. Successful applicants will receive an email from FCC requesting payment of a \$35 license fee. Upon payment of the fee, a call sign will be issued and, ta-da!, the successful applicant is now a licensed amateur radio operator, an official "ham"!

Amateur radio is an activity that, besides its virtue during times of emergency, is one that meshes perfectly with the RV lifestyle. Members of the Amateur Radio Chapter are always available to answer questions and assist those who want to begin the ham radio journey. Feel free to contact any of the ARC members or visit the ARC website: <https://fmcaarc.com>.

As hams say, "73" (which is the abbreviation for "best regards"). We hope to "see" you on the air someday.