

# Getting Into Ham Radio



## *An introduction to Ham Radio and the Wheaton Community Radio Amateurs*

There's a new interest in Ham Radio and many people young and old, men and women, boys and girls are moving into this exciting hobby. Take a moment to picture yourself as an Amateur Radio (Ham) operator. Sit back in your chair, plug in your earphones. Soon you'll be picking up the mic and making "CQ...CQ...CQ". Talking on the radio is an outside the Ham community ever have. Think friend, talking personally over thousands of around the world with no phone or internet cards (called QSLs) from exotic places. But with listening and talking, you may want to much more than that.



and tune into the world. calls yourself: experience few people of it, Just you and a new miles. Talking to people charges... and collecting before you get carried away know that Ham Radio is

## **Public Service**

Many Amateurs are organized into an efficient force which helps communities in time of emergencies. For example, our club, The Wheaton Community Radio Amateurs (WCRA), works with government agencies and service groups to provide Plainfield tornado over 20 Support Unit) can be seen on fire, social services and also provide radio support at competitions. Perhaps you communications on an people who have been driven messages from hospital to



communications in disasters such as the years ago. Our club CSU (Communication location providing radio contact with police, individuals desperately in need of help. We public events such as parades and fitness could be sitting at the radio console, riding emergency trailer or covering a shelter for from their homes. You could be passing hospital by packet radio (a digital format).

## **Satellite Radio**

Amateur Radio extends to communicating by satellites orbiting the earth and bouncing signals off the moon. Hams regularly talk to spacecraft crew on board NASA flights. You can do it if you know how, and it's easier than you may think. New amateur radio satellites are continually being designed and deployed for our use.

## **Monthly Meetings**

On the air you might run into such great people as U.S. senators, kings, or movie actors, but the best place to meet interesting people is right here at the monthly meeting of the Wheaton Community Radio Amateurs. After club business is transacted and you have a soda, there is a program on some interesting aspect of Ham Radio such as how to build your own antenna, what's new in equipment, how to make those long-sought-after contacts, how amateur television works, and demonstrations of new equipment, severe weather training and interesting guest speakers. You'll like our meetings.

## **Nets and Repeaters**

WCRA owns and operates four repeater stations on VHF and UHF which retransmit signals to cover wide ranges with improved quality. Through the repeater, you could be talking from your car just west of Gary, Indiana to a Ham friend near DeKalb.

## Training and Testing

To enjoy amateur radio you will need to qualify for a license issued by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). There is no requirement to learn morse code and the question pool is available for study. There are three classes of licenses:

- Technician, which requires a written exam
- General, which requires a more advanced written exam
- Extra, which requires a more difficult written test

Each license class allows you more privileges and more band space to operate on. WCRA has a team of people who will help you, and others like you, with the training you need to pass the written test. Through our "Elmer" Program, those with needs or unusual challenges are mentored by our members.

## Club Activities

WCRA has all kinds of great things going on:

- Field Day, held in late June, is when we all get together to set up radio stations for 24 hours of on-the-air operation. We set up generators, towers, antennas, radios and tents. Then we make contacts around the clock.
- The Annual Picnic brings together the families of our members for fun and fellowship with a Ham slant.
- The annual Scouting Jamboree On the Air (JOTA) brings the excitement of radio to the youth.
- Our club Christmas party is a long standing tradition
- Hamfest, held at the Kane County Fairgrounds, draws upwards of 2,000 people to see new equipment, attend seminars and make flea market purchases. Members do the work, but it is a great time.



If you think you might want to get into Ham Radio, the Wheaton Community Radio Amateurs is the perfect club for you. Perhaps we can arrange for you to visit the radio "shack" of one of our members.

Many of our members belong to the American Radio Relay League (ARRL) in Newington, CT. They provide a myriad of services to the public, including many technical publications. There are over 700,000 licensed Hams in the United States. The lobbying effort by the ARRL helps us protect our invaluable band of frequencies from commercial interests.

Whether a licensed Ham or not, you are invited to attend the monthly club meeting and learn more about Ham Radio. Meetings are held usually the first Friday of every month.

Simply contact us by  
 e-mail: [wkra@w9ccu.org](mailto:wkra@w9ccu.org)  
 web: [www.W9CCU.org](http://www.W9CCU.org)  
 letter: WCRA, Box QSL  
 Wheaton, IL 60187  
 phone: 630-604-0157



If you are already a Ham, contact us on one of the repeaters:

145.31/144.71 MHz (107.2 or 103.5 Hz)  
 145.39/144.79 MHz (103.5 Hz)  
 224.14/222.54 MHz  
 444.475/449.475 MHz (114.8 Hz)

