

The Dipole

Radiating the News of the Marple Newtown Amateur Radio Club

February 2009

Next Club Meeting: Thurs. February 5, 2009, 7 p.m. at The Gauntlett Center

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REACHING FOR THE STARS

The speaker for the Thursday, February 5 meeting of the Marple Newtown Amateur Radio Club will share how easy it is to contact the International Space Station (ISS). He will prove that working the ISS does not require a massive investment and a collection of equipment. Harry Stahlendorf, KC2OJN, is an enthusiastic icon of how Amateur Radio can be fun.

The Girard College graduate was able to be periodically exposed to Ham Radio thanks to visits to his uncle's Shack. It was those visits to Frank Razler (W3DNQ-SK) that was a big influence in Harry's march to Amateur Radio.

In addition to the topic of the upcoming meeting, our New Jersey visitor is also active in ARES/RACES. As he has stated, "giving back" was a product of his days as a volunteer firefighter when he lived in Delaware County.

His activities have not gone unnoticed at home. In talking with his wife, it immediately became obvious of her pride in his accomplishment. This shared enthusiasm was demonstrated by both her acknowledgement of Harry's activities and her awareness of the type of Ham Radio equipment used for these successes.

For more information about the upcoming meeting for general information about Amateur Radio, contact President Walter Faust, 610-622-2200.

MARPLE NEWTOWN AMATEUR RADIO CLUB
c/o The Gauntlett Center
20 South Media Line Road at West Chester Pike
Newtown Square, Delaware County, PA 19073

For information about our club,
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The Dipole

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Meetings, Nets, and Packet BBS

Monthly Club Meetings: First non-holiday Thursday,
7:00 p.m. at the Gauntlett Center in Newtown Square,
Delaware County. Talk-in: 147.195 repeater
Daily Weather and Information Net: Every morning at 8:30
a.m. on 147.195 repeater
Club Web Page (including online version of The Dipole):
<http://mnarc.org>
Delaware County ARES Net: Every Wednesday at 19:30 local

Pun Intended

The following was submitted to the eDipole by Gary Bodnar, K3GZ, and it is a fitting example of the enjoyable and challenging humor that he so freely shares. The original appears to have been from the UK. This bit of truth was unearth by a few of the spellings. They were indeed from across the pond.



Harry Stahlendorf, KC2OJN, an enthusiastic icon that demonstrated how Amateur Radio can be fun is the upcoming speaker at the Thursday, February 5 meeting of the MNARClub.

1. The roundest knight at King Arthur's round table was Sir Cumference. He acquired his size from too much pi.
2. I thought I saw an eye doctor on an Alaskan island, but it turned out to be an optical Aleutian.
3. She was only a whisky maker, but he loved her still.
4. A rubber band pistol was confiscated from algebra class because it was a weapon of math disruption.
5. The butcher backed into the meat grinder and got a little behind in his work.
6. No matter how much you push the envelope, it'll still be stationery.

7. A dog gave birth to puppies near the road and was cited for littering.
8. A grenade thrown into a kitchen in France would result in Linoleum Blown apart.
9. Two silk worms had a race. They ended up in a tie.
10. Time flies like an arrow. Fruit flies like a banana.
11. A hole has been found in the nudist camp wall. The police are looking into it.
12. Atheism is a non-prophet organization.
13. Two hats were hanging on a hat rack in the hallway. One hat said to the other, "You stay here, I'll go on a head."
14. I wondered why the baseball kept getting bigger. Then it hit me.
15. A sign on the lawn at a drug rehab center said: "Keep off the Grass."
16. A small boy swallowed some coins and was taken to a hospital. When his grandmother telephoned to ask how he was, a nurse said, "No change yet."
17. A chicken crossing the road is poultry in motion.
18. It's not that the man did not know how to juggle; he just didn't have the balls to do it.
19. The short fortune-teller who escaped from prison was a small medium at large.
20. The soldier who survived mustard gas and pepper spray is now a seasoned veteran.
21. A backward poet writes inverse.
22. In democracy it's your vote that counts. In feudalism it's your count that votes.

23. When cannibals ate a missionary, they got a taste of religion.

24. Don't join dangerous cults: Practice safe sects.

Remember when a person tells more than 24 puns, they are taken to the PUNitentiary. Also, two-thirds of a pun is still PU.

CHU Changes

The first in a string of informational e-mail messages that have been received by the editorial office at the eDipole came from Maryland-based W3VSD. Al Ciampaglia sent the collection of Canada's contributions to worldwide time standards.

As more and more knowledgeable Amateur Radio operators learn, the United States does not have an exclusive lock on shortwave time standards. While WWV and its multiple frequency operations does dominate the shortwave radio service in the United States, our Canadian neighbors have also been supplying this valuable service for years via their CHU time standard services.

Recent changes in world shortwave operations have necessitated changes in Canada. In April 2007, the International Telecommunications Union re-allocated the 7300-7350 KHz band from a fixed service to a broadcasting service. This change validated that the fear that interference on the 7335 KHz frequency has come from many information broadcasters around the world.

Prior to this reallocation concept, CHU listeners in Canada and elsewhere in the world considered the 7335 KHz frequency exclusively for time signals. It was an increasing amount of vocalness about this interference that has created a change in the seven-megahertz frequency for the Canadian time standard service.

One of these comments stressed, "We have heard from amateur radio operators, watchmakers, astronomers, and navigators who use the tones and voice signals. As well, comments were received from those who use the carrier as a calibration source at a distance for their equipment."

This need for a change followed 70 years of Canadian time standard services on the now-abandoned seven-megahertz frequency. The new

frequency is 7.850 MHz. This change took place at 00:00 UTC on January 1, 2009.

Located approximately 14 miles southwest of Canada's capital in Ottawa.

This frequency change has occurred during the time that Canada is also investing to make other changes in our neighbor's time standard operation. The transmitters at CHU have demonstrated their age. The quest in the ongoing changes is to provide clear, dependable shortwave services

On of the geographic areas with the massive expanse of Canada that has suffered in the past are the western areas. Canadian observers have previously cited that even United States similar time signals from WWV have less than totally adequate coverage.

The current frequencies for CHU's time standards are the following: 3.330 MHz, 7.850 MHz, and 14.670 MHz.

SWL Fest Announced



NASWA: The North American Shortwave Association Winter SWL Festival

If any readers of the eDipole have considered attending the annual North American Short-Wave Association (NASWA) Winter Fest, this year's gathering will be a good year to attend. This well-attended gathering is held each March and it is not far from the membership area of the Marple Newtown Amateur Radio Club's membership footprint.

Located in Kulpsville (suburban Lansdale), Montgomery County Pennsylvania, this gathering is an easy trip north to exit 31 on I-476, the northeast extension of the Pennsylvania Turnpike. This yearly meeting will once more be held in the meeting rooms of The Inn at Towamencin, an affiliate of the Best Western chain of inns.

Any attendees looking fore GPS assistance, the location is 1750 Sumneytown Pike, Kulpsville PA 19443. If coordinates are a help, they are the following: N 40° 14.736', W 75° 20.342'

If additional motel information is desired, they may reached by telephone via 215 368 3800 or fax at 215 368 7824,

Why the winter? This is a time of the year when many people find themselves somewhat handicapped by the cold dreary weather. Despite the old saying that the best time to erect an antenna is when the weather is at its worst, everyone needs a "lift" in the winter. The most appropriate radio "lift" will once more prove to be this annual gathering.

When will this event take place? The 2009, 22nd Winter SWL Fest will take place on Friday, March 13 and Saturday, March 14.

How do I register? http://swlfest.com/Fest_2009_Letter.pdf Also, it is wise and rewarding to register early. There is a two-tier price structure with reduced rates for all registrations received by February 28, 2009.

There are additional, flexible plans that are available this year. There will be one-day and student registration plans for this 22nd Winter SWL Fest.

Food plans are available in the registration format or attendees may elect to eat at either the hotel's restruant or at other nearby eateries. There is one special benefit of selecting the meal plans included in the registration form – the camaraderie of being with friends is a value added of this gathering.

What will be the areas of interest? It is the largest gathering of listeners to all segment of the radio spectrum. Topics discussed included longwave, mediumwave (broadcast band), shortwave with its Amateur Radio population and foreign broadcasts via utilities and pirates, VHF/UHF/FM, scanner listening, and television and satellies.

What is the format of this event? In addition to displays and other events, there will be a continuation of a collection of furums that are always well attended.

What else should I know? There will be prizes awarded to attendees and there will also be a silent auction and a swap meet. To take full advantage of these two special interest areas, plan to bring items with you to this exciting, two-day event.

By registering early, these registrants will receive one free entry for a registration made prior to February 23, 2009.

Please note that at least half of the proceeds from the Silent Auction will be donated to charity.

Each year there is a collection of area Amateur Radio operators who attend this interesting gathering. We are lucky to have this special gathering located in our backyard. This year's Fest appears to be a great way to "lighten up the dark of winter."

An Area Endeavor for Fun

Several years ago, another regional Amateur Radio club created a challenge that become a fun-filled contest. The Holmesburg Amateur Radio Club is once more presenting a similar, area activity, The Delaware Valley FM Sprint Contest.

The invitation for this fast-paced, simple contest tells of unique collection of contacts during the manageable time period of 7 to 11 p.m. on Saturday, February 28, 2009. Set for FM operations, this event can both help rekindle activity and provide an achievable challenge

The Holmesburg club announcement stated, "The object of the contest is to contact as many different zip codes as possible. The rules can be found at the end of this eDipole feature as well as at the following URL: <http://www.harcnet.org/contest.htm>

One of the benefits of this simple, yet effective event is to provide an awareness of an operator's simplex coverage. While the VHF and UHF world of Amateur Radio operations have become so focused upon the ease of repeater operations, how great is our knowledge of pre-repeater operations?

What if the familiar repeater were to go off the air? This simple Sprint Contest will become one way of determining how effective each of simplex operations really are.

While the contest is centered in the greater Philadelphia area, all stations are invited to participate and submit logs.

The Holmesburg Amateur Radio Club amplified its objective by stating, " This contest is designed as an enjoyable event using radios that most amateurs have. It is a low-key contest, so do not feel rushed, there is plenty of time for a short chat. You can move a participant to another band, rovers can arrange meets, ask questions, meet someone new."

The northeastern Philadelphia associated club has gone one step further. To keep things interesting and provide plenty of activity, they have announced

that there will be some rovers running in the Philadelphia area during the full contest period.

The Holmesburg announcement added, "We would like club stations to participate, as contacting a club station is worth a bonus. If we know before the contest that a club will be on the air it would be helpful, but advance notice is not required."

As yet another incentive, the announcement for the end-of-February contested added, "As with any contest, you don't have to submit a log, but you never know, you may have won your class. Don't let the number of contacts the rovers make scare you away; they are a different class. It is really a pleasant way to spend a winter evening on the radio."

Holmesburg Amateur Radio Club Contest Organizer Rich Shivers, AB3EO, has invited any area Amateur Radio operators having questions to contact him at ab3eo@arrl.net

Rules

Frequencies

- Limited to the FM simplex frequencies on the following bands.
- 2 Meter, 220 band, 440 band
- No contacts are permitted on the calling frequencies.

Classes

- Base
- Rover
- Portable - Limited to 10W, with transceiver mounted antenna

Exchange

Call sign, your sequential contact number, ZIP code

Note: You should not use a separate set of sequential numbers for each band. Start at the beginning of the contest and keep going in order even if you change bands.

Sample Contact Exchanges

K3FI this is WM3PEN - Please copy Number 3, zip 19136

K3FI this is WM3PEN Rover - Please copy Number 3, zip now 19136

K3FI this is WM3PEN Portable - Please copy Number 3, zip now 19136

Scoring

- 1 point per contact
- 1 point bonus for each club station contact
- Multiplier is the number of unique ZIP's contacted
- For Rovers/Portables, multiplier is the number of unique ZIP's contacted plus the number of ZIP's activated.
- Final score = multiplier times contact points.

Awards will be issued to individual top scores in all classes.

Club station awards will also be issued in the base class.

Log

- Heading: Your name, address, call sign, & contest class
- Listing of contacts to include:
- Your contact number; their call sign, zip, contact number; band, an indication if you contacted a club station.
- For rovers and portables, your zip at time of contact.
- Logs may be submitted in any format that you choose. Spreadsheets are nice, hand written lists are just as acceptable.

Entry Deadline

- All logs, either paper or electronic should be received by April 1, 2009.
- Logs may be sent to the Holmesburg Amateur Radio Club, 3341 Sheffield Ave, Philadelphia, PA 19136, emailed to WM3PEN@arrl.net or brought to the March meeting.

Special Rules

- Stations can only be worked once per band. Rovers and portables can be worked again when they have moved to a different ZIP.
- Rovers and portables cannot straddle ZIP code lines, only one ZIP may be given during each contact. Rover and portable stations must remain in a ZIP a minimum of 15 minutes.
- Teams are permitted, but only one transmitter is allowed to operate at any one time.
- No contacts on calling frequencies.
- 146.52, 223.5, 446.00
- Only mode allowed is FM phone simplex.
- No repeater contacts, satellite, or EME, please stay on FM simplex frequencies.
- No crossband, no split frequencies contacts.
- Pre-arranging contacts by use of repeaters, telephones, or otherwise is not allowed, nor in the spirit of the contest. Requesting a move to another band during a contact is allowed.

Some Additional Considerations

Safety Issues

Rover and portable operations need some discretion. Sitting in a parked car talking on the radio invites suspicion. Walking around with a HT even more so. We suggest these participants be team efforts. Carrying your license would not be a bad idea.

Rovers, unless you have a partner in the vehicle, please don't work the contest unless you are parked. Trying to log stations while you are driving is a bad idea.

While it is not required, if club stations let us know in advance so we could publish their calls and make scoring easier.

Our Help Is Requested

In December, the American Radio Relay League announced the Amateur Radio clubs were being asked to voluntarily provide information about the conversion from Analog to Digital Television. Additional information that has been released by the

Federal Communications Commission state they were not mandating any prescribe formal for a volunteer activity of this nature.

One of the topics at the February 5, 2009 meetings will a discussion about any involvement by the members of the Marple Newtown Amateur Radio Club.

It should be noted that if the February 17, 2009 transition date does not slip, there would be little time for an implementation of a program of this nature. If, however, this date is relaxed the topic could be investigated.

Please come with any suggestions for this great opportunity for public service of a very unique nature.

Parallels

A well-constructed advertisement in a recent in-flight airline magazine was both locally informative and it sparked a parallel with Amateur Radio.

The full-page advertisement was so well prepared, it looked more like a feature story than a promotional piece about regionally headquartered Goddard Schools than a full page-selling piece. The advertisement was included in the January issue of United Airlines' Hemispheres and it began with the 'news' that franchising leader in early childhood development had placed its 300th facility.

In addition to "telling and selling" the Goddard image and philosophy this well constructed piece also provided an additional bit of historical, business information. This educational and childcare firm was founded by a relative of the current upper-echelon management. Anthony A. Martino, viewed by many as a franchising legend, also founded two other familiar, household names, Aamco Transmission, Inc. and Maaco Auto Painting & Body Works.

What does this interesting financial review have to do with Amateur Radio? Just as Mr. Martino saw specific needs and service and technical needs, we as Amateur Radio operators have been recognized for similar activities.

When spark gap transmissions helped begin the desire to talk over distances greater than a shouting distance, a hobby was born. Rather than be complacent with this newly founded ability, the

curious and adventuresome members of this then new group of communicators worked to recruit others and to also find new ways to share information and ideas. This was the birth of CW and eventually voice communications. In time, the technical achievement of Single Side Band was one more leap away from the original spark gap form of communications that was not more sophisticated than the interfering sound of the kitchen mixer interfering with an AM radio signal.

Today, as has been shown in another feature within this issue of the eDipole, we are once more showing growth. Why are we not sensing a growth in on-air activities? Are we looking for something different to include in our operating experiences?

An answer to this second question is also found in this eDipole issue. A fellow Amateur Radio organization has once more created a simple and fun way to help resuscitate interest and activities. This simple end of February 2009 activity can have participation in every form and aspect of our hobby.

Become a doer, not just a listener.

The Most Wanted List

Mike Pilotti, KF3CD, supplied an interesting list that is being shared with readers of the eDipole. . This list comes from The DX Magazine 2008 This list provides the 100 most wanted, worldwide countries. This list is the result of a survey conducted in September and October 2008.

Mike has acquired a very special format of working DX. Using a low power, backpack contained low power rig and accompanying antenna, Mike is working an impressive amount of DX. This accomplishment is cited by his comment, "I worked #70 Pedestrian Mobile with only 10 watts!"

Another well-founded question tells a lot about the difficulty in making these contacts, "Shouldn't they call #8 'Unheard Island?'" [See notes below]

100 MOST NEEDED COUNTRIES WORLD WIDE

The number on the left is their ranking on the most wanted list for 2008 and the number on the right was their ranking last year, thus NA on the right means they weren't on the list last year.

#	PREFIX	COUNTRY	#				
1	P5	NORTH KOREA	1	54	FO-M	MARQUESAS	42
2	7O	YEMEN	2	55	S2	BANGLADESH	44
3	KP1	NAVASSA	3	56	T2	TUVALU	54
4	FR-G	GLORIOSO	4	57	3Y-P	PETER I	71
5	ZS8	MARION ISLAND	6	58	FJ ST	BARTHELEMY	NA
6	KP5	DESECHEO	7	59	4W	TIMOR LESTE	48
7	3Y-B	BOUVET	5	60	EP	IRAN	58
8	VK-H	HEARD ISLAND	10	61	VP6	PITCAIRN	47
9	FT5W	CROZET	9	62	ZK2	NIUE	65
10	FT5Z	AMSTERDAM	11	63	VK9-L	LORD HOWE	80
11	VP8-O	SOUTH ORKNEY	13	64	4U-UN	UN NEW YORK	75
12	VP8-S	SOUTH SANDWICH	15	65	TL	CENTRAL AFRICA REP	62
13	SV-A	MT ATHOS	14	66	VK9-X	CHRISTMAS ISLAND	66
14	ZL9	AUCKLAND & CAMPBELL	18	67	A5	BHUTAN	82
15	VK-M	MACQUARIE	20	68	CE-Z	JUAN FERNANDEZ ISL.	76
16	HK-M	MALPELO	17	69	YV	AVES ISLAND	84
17	PYS	ST PETER & ST PAUL	23	70	XF4	REVILLA GIGEDO	85
18	FR-T	TROMELIN 1	6	71	3D2R	ROTUMA	61
19	BS7	SCARBOROUGH	8	72	CY	SABLE ISLAND	70
20	KH5	PALMYRA	29	73	E5-N	NORTH COOK	87
21	KH5K	KINGMAN REEF	22	74	T5	SOMALIA	91
22	3D2C	CONWAY REEF	24	75	YA	AFGHANISTAN	73
23	FR-J/E	JUAN DE NOVA	26	76	3C	EQUATORIAL GUINEA	43
24	KH4	MIDWAY	27	77	TN	CONGO	52
25	JD1-M	MINAMI TORISHIMA	28	78	FO-C	CLIPPERTON	21
0.26	VK9-M	MELLISH REEF	35	79	T32	EASTERN KIRIBATI	68
27	T31	CENTRAL KIRIBATI	30	80	VK9-C	COCOS KEELING	89
28	VK9-W	WILLIS ISLAND	12	81	FW	WALLIS & FUTUNA	90
29	KH9	WAKE	31	82	KH8-S	SWAINS ISLAND	74
30	VP8-G	SOUTH GEORGIA	34	83	H4	SOLOMON ISL.	81
31	E3	ERITREA	32	84	1A	SOV.MIL. ORDER-MALTA	NA
32	BV9P	PRATAS	37	85	CY9	ST PAUL ISLAND	NA
33	FK-C	CHESTERFIELD	36	86	S	WESTERN SAHARA	93
34	VU4	ANDAMAN	38	87	EZ	TURKMENISTAN	96
35	KH3	JOHNSTON	33	88	3W/XV	VIETNAM	92
36	CE-X	SAN FELIX	51	89	YJ	VANUATU	NA
37	KH1	BAKER & HOWLAND	39	90	JD1-O	OGASAWARA	78
38	KH7K	KURE	49	91	XX9	MACAU	95
39	3C	ANNOBON	40	92	9N	NEPAL	98
40	FT5X	KERGUELEN	50	93	TT	CHAD	NA
41	ZL8	KERMADEC ISLAND	41	94	YK	SYRIA	77
42	ZD9	TRISTAN DE CUNHA	57	95	R1MV	MALYJ VYSOTSKIJ	NA
43	H4	TEMOTU	46	96	TJ	CAMEROON	NA
44	1S	SPRATLY	53	97	VP8	SS SOUTH SHETLAND	NA
45	T33	BANABA	69	98	A3	TONGA	NA
46	VU7	LAKSHADWEEP	64	99	9U	BURUNDI	88
47	ZK3	TOKELAU	60	100	AP	PAKISTAN	NA
48	E4	PALESTINE	19				
49	PYT	TRINDADE	67				
50	XZ	MYANMAR	56				
51	C2	NAURU	55				
52	FO-A	AUSTRAL	63				
53	T3	WESTERN KIRIBATI	59				

GENERAL NOTE

NA is for countries that were just added to the DXCC list ie: Not Applicable. The number on the left is their ranking on the most wanted list for 2008

and the number on the right was their ranking last year, thus NA on the right means they weren't on the list last year. Note, St. Barts was just recently added as a new DXCC country. It's interesting to see how some of these rankings change after there are successful big DXpeditions to some of these rare countries.

NOTE HEARD ISLAND

As for Heard Island, it is perhaps the most remote, bleak, barren, desolate and inhospitable of all of these places, thousands of miles from the nearest civilization and very difficult and expensive to get to. Man rarely goes there but there have been a few brave and dedicated DXer's that have gone to great lengths to activate this rare one on the ham bands...and I'm happy to say I have worked and confirmed Heard Island...but because it is so rarely heard, I think that UNHEARD Island would be a more appropriate name!

More information, please view the following URLs...

<http://www.cordell.org/HI/>

<http://www.heardisland.aq/>

http://www.btinternet.com/~sa_sa/heard_island/heard.html

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heard_Island_and_McDonald_Islands

It May Slip

It has been rumored, then hinted that one of the early activities of President Barack Obama would be the rescheduling of the mandatory Digital Television (DTV) transition. The hints have stated dates in both May and June.

The current changeover date of February 17, 2009 will be after the electronic release of the eDipole; any change in the transition date may come prior to this release.

The first semi-official news stated that President-elect Barack Obama would be urging Congress to postpone the February 17 Digital Television switch

date. The foundation for this potential hold upon is the reality that too many people are not ready for the arrival of the new digital television format.

President Obama is not alone in this concern. The new president has been joined by a small group of U-S Senators and Representatives. Included in this list is Representative Ed Markey of Massachusetts. He is Chair of the House Subcommittee on Telecommunications and the Internet. Each of the dissenting legislators her or his own reason to hold off the full implementation of this new technology until various perceived or real objections can be overcome.

Not all of the objections have come from Washington. An example of a non-beltway voice is that of Detroit Mayor Ken Cockrel Jr. The Motor City's mayor advised the FCC of his observations. He stated that despite a massive outreach effort to get converter boxes in the hands of viewers still using a television antenna to receive a signal, too many viewers would be left with no television service when the changeover occurs. In his statement, Mayor Cockrel cited that seniors, the poor and first-generation immigrants especially would be among the group without television if the February 17,2009 date is maintained.

Objections have come from other than government officials. The politically powerful Consumers Union also stated they want the transition put on hold. In their correspondence with key government officials, the Consumers Union has suggested the government's inability to issue new coupons, along with their concerns about the number of call centers and the amount of assistance to viewers combine to provided their request for a re-examination of the switchover date.

The only certain fact is the simplistic and vague comment that the fate of the February 17, 2009 may or may not be decided at the time of the release of the February edition of the eDipole.

The DTV Primer

A request to reprint a well-prepared series of education comments by Dr. Dennis Silage, K3DS, was sent to Temple Times writer Preston M. Moretz. The 1982 Temple graduate is the Science/Technology Writer for the Temple University Office of News Communications.

The following is his welcomed answer...

Jim

Thanks for your e-mail. Yes, you have permissions to reprint. I have attached a word document of the Q&A with Dr. Silage. Let me know if you need anything additional.

Preston: Are you ready for digital TV? A Temple engineering professor answers questions about the DTV conversion.

By: Preston M. Moretz
pmoretz@temple.edu

If everything goes as planned, on Feb. 17 the long-awaited switch from analog to digital broadcasting will take place and millions of analog television sets across the nation will go black. Temple University electrical and computer engineering Professor Dennis Silage, an expert in both analog and digital communications, has answered some questions about this digital TV transition and what it will mean for consumers. Silage will also host an on-campus demonstration of how to prepare for this conversion on Friday, January 30th, in Room 309 of the College of Engineering, from 12:40-1:30 p.m.

Q – Why are we switching from analog?

DS – Analog is a 60-plus-year-old technology that has basically lasted the test of time, but doesn't really allow more advanced services, such as additional channels and information using the existing the broadcast spectrum. It's not as versatile as a digital TV transmission, provided you can get a good signal into your receiver.

Q – Most of the TVs that are out there today are analog?

DS – Until 1998, most television sets were analog only — and many of them are still being used today. After 1992 manufacturers began to offer 'cable-ready' television sets, which are actually merely analog TVs that work with analog cable. Over the past few years, the industry has developed over-the-air, digital television transmissions. You

don't need a digital converter box for this, but you would have had to purchase a digitally ready television set within the last few years. If your TV is older than 10 years, it is probably an analog set.

Q –What do I need for my analog television set to receive digital transmissions?

DS - You would need a digital converter box. The Federal Government was offering a coupon program that allowed you to get a reduced cost converter box, but it seems they have now run out of coupons. You can buy a digital converter box at any electronic appliance store like Radio Shack. They generally cost anywhere between \$40-60. It will depend on the capabilities of the box, but you should definitely be able to purchase one for under \$75.

Q – If I install a digital converter box to my television set, what will I get?

DS – Provided that the digital converter box has a reasonably good antenna, you would be able to receive the over-the-air digital signals that the broadcasters are transmitting; basically, your local television stations. You have to hook the converter box up to an antenna and even a simple a 'rabbit ear' antenna may work for you. We're going back to the future, if you remember when you used to have rabbit ear antennas on your TV and you had to play around with them to get the best picture. Now, because of the digital conversion, your local television stations also have subsidiary channels that would be very interesting to see. They may have as many as three subsidiary channels. The programming right now in some cases is a bit restrictive; for example, you might get to see continuous weather reporting on one of the channels, but in the future as broadcasters get organized, you'll see alternative programming on these channels.

Q – So a local television station can split their signal into several channels by broadcasting in digital?

DS – Yes, there is a lot of flexibility with the digital signals because you can actually reconfigure them

depending upon whether you want standard definition or a little better resolution in the picture.

Q – Will my television picture look any different when I install a digital converter box to my analog TV?

DS – Well, with the digital picture you will notice a difference in clarity and some performance differences. The picture will certainly look better, how much depends on the quality of the set. Even if you have an older Sony Trinitron, it is going to look great. But if you have an old Muntz TV from the 1950s, it may not look so good. A good analogy would be if you watched a DVD on your analog TV, the picture is much crisper than watching a VHS tape. Well, that is about how it would be with a digital picture versus an analog picture.

Q – How do I know if my television set is an over-the-air, digitally capable set?

DS - If your television is digitally capable, you will find the code “ATSC” in the description; it should also be in the user’s manual. All that really means is that the TV, without a converter box, will receive over-the-air, digital signals directly. But that has nothing to do with digital cable, which is a totally different system.

Q – I presently get cable at my house, so do I need to get a digital converter box?

DS – This is where it becomes a little cloudy for the consumer. For example, I currently have analog cable. Right now, at my home, we are watching analog cable using multiple existing television sets, some of which are 10 or more years old. I distribute the analog cable throughout my home and I need no cable boxes. The question for consumers is, how much longer will it be like it is now? Many consumers have had analog cable for decades. It is not clear how rapidly the analog cable itself will disappear, but there is some indication that by 2012 all cable will be digital also.

Q – So what is the difference between analog cable and digital cable?

DS – Analog cable allows you to use your existing cable-ready television sets. The same televisions sets they would connect up to an outdoor or ‘rabbit ear’ antenna can usually be used on analog cable directly, you don’t need anything additional. So that is certainly an advantage for the consumer. Between now and 2012, the cable companies will convert their digital signal to an analog signal so that it can be viewed on analog sets over the cable.

However, it is not clear how much content the cable companies will provide. Up until 2012, they are only mandated to provide over-the-air service. For example, I’m watching analog cable right now in my home and I get History Channel, Discovery, Home & Garden Channel; in other words, basic analog cable. But it is not clear how long that will remain available. What the cable company would want you to do is at least convert to basic digital cable. But that is going to require a set top box for each television set, which they may rent to you in addition to the cable service fees. This could allow the cable company to control how many sets are hooked up to the digital cable, whereas on my analog cable which I have in my home, I have eight TVs hooked up through one cable because I have a distribution system that I’ve installed.

Q – I have read recently that the digital TV conversion might be delayed beyond Feb. 17?

DS – The digital TV conversion was originally scheduled to take effect in 2005, so it has been delayed several times already. My sense is that Congress may be able to delay it again, although there will be repercussions in the broadcast industry because there has been a lot of capital investment and broadcasters really want to decommission their old analog equipment.

Club Meeting Programs

The Marple Newtown Amateur Radio Club has the enviable record of having a long list of attention grabbing, monthly programs. There are programs for many of the remaining months for this year’s programs. BUT, there can always be a longer list.

If anyone has a program suggestion contact either President Walter Faust, N3 FXR, via 610-622-2200 or LJamesBiddle@verizon.net

Programs do not have to be super long. One foundation rule is the simple understanding that all topics must have general appeal. There is nothing wrong with programs that are fun. An example of this category was this year's hands-on, tabletop meeting. Everyone had an opportunity to practice new skills and even have an opportunity to "be on the [Internet] radio."

Are there any suggestions for club projects that might include kit building, antenna building or some other soldering projects that will educate and inform our Amateur Radio members?

Some of the programs that are under consideration are the following; comments are solicited and encouraged:

- Computer logging programs
- Operating digital modes
- Logbook of The World
- Wireless networking
- Software Defined Radio (SDR)
- Computer file management
- Contest software
- Radio to computer interfacing
- Sound card modes and interfacing
- Programming a VHF/UHF handheld transceiver
- WA Redmond Top Key Contest Club N7KE

Analog for Emergency Notices

Both the television viewers and the broadcasters are holding their breaths. In a way both the broadcasters and the two camps of television viewers are awaiting for the Congress to determine if the February 17, 2009 change date will "happen" or will there be some push back to a future date.

One of the comments being shared by a collection of broadcast people appears to have some validity. That comment stresses that by pushing back the change-over date, it is doubtful if there will be a sudden rush to either purchase a new digital receiver or exercise the option of purchasing a set-top converter box.

It is a strong American characteristic to procrastinate. Unlike the UK, where anyone wanting to watch colour [UK spelling for UK efforts] TV had to purchase a new set to view UHF channels, the US has previously been a bit less forceful. An example of this thinking was seen with the slow advent of "detent turners" which gave UHF a more acceptable form of use.

To help meet the emergency aspects of television, the FCC issued on December 23, 2008 and requires the FCC to permit continued analog TV service for 30 days after the Feb.17 digital TV (DTV) transition date to provide public-safety and DTV transition information for viewers without the necessary equipment to receive digital broadcasts by the transition deadline.

This action is designed to aid consumers who are not able to receive digital signals after the DTV transition to

provide them with access to emergency information and help them understand the steps they need to take to restore their television service.

The FCC order lists 826 stations eligible to broadcast emergency and transition information in analog after the statutory digital transition Feb. 17. Stations' participation is voluntary, but the order encourages stations to participate by adopting streamlined procedures and maximum flexibility for participating broadcasters.

Like in so much of this ongoing discussion, only time will tell how well this may work in meeting the emergency needs of television viewers. One question is how will the public be informed of "what and where" to listen.

Determination

No definition can adequately describe determination as well as the quest of Newtown Square Weather and Information scanner listener Bob Fort, Jr. Bob has been a visitor to group "eating meetings" and the quest for his Amateur Radio license has ended.

Bob began his 'quiet participation in the daily, morning dialogs on the Marple Newtown Amateur Radio Club's 147.195 MH-Z repeater during the Bill Richards' era. The voice of W3FTZ SK became a familiar sound in Bob's helmet headset.

Why the helmet? In addition to being a consulting engineer for PennDot's 6-0 District, Philadelphia area, the Collegeville, Pennsylvania resident is also a stock car racer. This avocation has been a 40-year hobby for "Mr. Perseverance."

That characteristic and his determination have been rewarded. It is hoped that each member of the Marple Newtown Amateur Radio Club will soon have the opportunity to welcome KB3SFY to the fraternity. .

The members of the Marple Newtown Amateur Radio Club, as well as all of the listeners and participants in the Marple Newtown Weather and Information Net extend their congratulations to our newest, licensed participant.

