

Reviving "DX" Operators
Idaho Falls Bishops' Storehouse
On-Air Training
2015-09-23

Introduction

I've entitled tonight's training, "Reviving DX Operators". In ham terms, DX generally refers to distant. But tonight, we're not talking about making contacts with Europe; we're talking about reactivating hams that have not been on the radio for a long time. In other words, operators that have distanced themselves from amateur radio.

Examples

Let me give you a couple of instances I've encountered just in the last 10 days to illustrate my point.

- Last Monday, I spoke to a young man in Georgia. He had just installed Echolink on his phone and found the BYU-Idaho node. I heard him throw out his call sign and decided to respond. In the course of our conversation, I learned that he was licensed 8 years ago with his scout troop, but that this QSO was his first time talking on the radio.
- I spoke to a gentleman last week, too, that checked into our nets for the first time this month. It was the first time he had talked on the radio in nearly 30 years.
- At the preparedness expo on Saturday, I talked to another ham that had not been on the radio for over 10 years.

At this point, some of you maybe be thinking, "Boy, that sounds like me. I wonder if he's talking about me." If you are on the air tonight, I am not talking about you. The purpose of this training is to give you some ideas for getting operators re-involved who have fallen away from amateur radio.

Excuses

There are a number of reasons for being licensed and not being involved. In no particular order:

Fear (of the not know enough, embarrassment, making a mistake...)

Don't know how to use my equipment

Don't have equipment

No one to talk to

Don't know when the nets are

Sometimes, life is just busy and amateur radio has to take a back seat for a while.

An operator told me on Saturday that he is bored with the radio, because all he ever does is say the same nine words week after week: (I'll use my call sign to protect his identity) — "This is N7TMS, on emergency power and no traffic".

What other fears or excuses might be hampering their activity? Please come now with your call sign?

Solutions

So here are a few suggestions, first to find other operators and then to keep the spark alive.

Seek out other operators (missionary work)

- In an attempt to identify other hams in my area, I once compared every name in my stake with the FCC database
- Once you've found them, or maybe you already know of some, invite them to be involved; invite them to come with you to a monthly training meeting, or participate in a net or an exercise.

Be a force for positive good

- Your activity and support of local events sets an example to others.
- I would also encourage you to talk about activities in your church meetings (PH, RS, Ward & Stake Councils)

You can plan your own activities

- Schedule a mini-field day for the operators in your ward or stake
- Organize a "get to know my radio" event in your stake
- Some stakes in our area have started their own stake net

Upgrade your license

- Upgrade from Technician to General; Open that door of privileges a little wider; gain access to the HF bands; dive into the digital world; communicate with hams in Japan. Broaden your horizons and skill set
- I recently watched a TED talk on the internet where Josh Kaufman claims that it takes only 20 hours to acquire a new skill (not master; just acquire). There is an exam session in Rexburg on October 24 and another in Idaho Falls on October 31. You've got 32 days until the 24th. Assuming Mr. Kaufman's research is accurate, you only need 35-40 minutes per day to be prepared to take the exam. If you're the busier sort like me or a little less ambitious, we'll be holding a General Class course in Rexburg beginning on October 31. That exam session will be on November 21. That gives you more like 60 days. Now we're only talking about 15-20 minutes a day, plus there's a class in there to assist you.

One of the lessons learned that has come out of each of the exercises is "we need more operators". Saturday, we had a number of hams stop by the ERC booth asking about local frequencies and nets. We were unprepared for that type of question and scrambled each time to jot down a couple of dates, times, and frequencies on the back of a business card. What I'm finding is that, in many cases, the operators (or potential willing operators) are there. They just don't know where to go or what to do to get started.

Are there other suggestions for activating or staying active in amateur radio? Please come now with your call sign.

Challenge

As we close tonight, I'd like to issue a challenge. Within the next three months, do something to stretch yourself. Step out of your comfort zone, even for a brief period of time. Upgrade your license; contact your regional coordinator and offer to help with something; if you've not attended a monthly training meeting recently, then attend one. Work with your Stake ECS, stake president, and/or your stake preparedness specialist and organize a stake net—even if it is just a one-time event.

73 to the net. This is N7TMS. Back to Net Control.