



# RADIO-ACTIVE!

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## Put Ham Radio on your list of New Year's Resolutions

Originally written by [David, KK4CQD](#) 1/3/2022 wcares.org and updated by JoMarie, KM6URE

Happy New Year,

I'm thankful for each one of you that has been involved with Amateur Radio this year across the Santa Cruz County and as we slide out of 2023 and into 2024, it's natural to think about plans for the coming year. And I'd like to ask a favor of you — please put Ham Radio on your list of New Year's Resolutions.

### Here are some ideas to consider:

If you are not yet a licensed Ham Radio Operator, get your license this year. If you have not yet passed your General or Extra test, do it this year. Having trouble studying or passing? Have a look at some tips on this Web Site that I think will be helpful. <http://www.hamonlinetests.com/>

**Try something.** I've heard some say that there are 30 different kinds of Ham Radio, and there's something there for everyone. FM repeaters and HF SSB just scratch the surface. You already have a computer. New digital and sound card modes seem to appear weekly. Not long ago, no one had heard of FT-8. It's now, by many accounts, the most popular HF Digital mode. Have you tried 6 Meters yet? The Magic Band can yield some surprising contacts. How low can you go? There's some interesting action on our newest bands at 630 and 2200 Meters. At the other end of the spectrum, we have Ham Bands well into the GHz region. Microwaves are useful for more than making popcorn! Or maybe try some SSB or CW on 2 Meters or 70 Centi-

meters? Every Ham has full privileges on all of the bands above 30 MHz. Antennas for VHF and UHF are small and easy to construct from hardware store parts. It doesn't have to be pretty — an ugly antenna will radiate just as well. Use your imagination and let's try something different!

**Do something.** Set an achievable Ham Radio goal for the year — and then work at it! Earn DXCC or WAS, maybe on a single band? Better your contest score by 10%? Get your CW speed up to 20 WPM? Reorganize and rewire the shack? Order a copy of the ARRL Handbook or Antenna Book, and start increasing your technical knowledge? Convert your paper logs to electronic format and start using Logbook of the World? I've often heard this saying "Whether you think you can or you think you can't, you're probably right." Just do it!!

**Build something.** Simple projects can also be a great way to teach new hams the basics of soldering and kit-building. String up that antenna you've been thinking about forever and see how it plays. Download a free antenna modeling program and learn how to use it to design and build your own Homebrew antenna . Order a kit and assemble it. Melt some solder and have fun! Once you start you'll be hooked.

**Learn something.** Microcontrollers like the Arduino, Raspberry Pi, and PICaxe are quite inexpensive. With a few LEDs and pushbuttons you can learn simple programming to get started. There are plenty of useful Ham Radio projects that you can find online. And if you have an idea for your own gadget, you'll have a lot of fun learning how to roll your own computer code.

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## New Technician class?

Do you have family, neighbors or friends interested in getting their ham radio license and want a class? We are taking sign-ups from people interested to assist in planning. Please share this link to those interested: <https://rebrand.ly/ham class>

## Report your volunteer hours!

Congratulations to JoMarie, KM6URE, November's drawing winner. The pocket knife was selected to add to her go-bag. The reported volunteer hours for November was 779 hours.

Please remember to enter your hours on the form on <https://xczcomm.com/index.php/hours-reporting/>

Reporting the time you spend on ARES and ham radio activities reminds county public safety managers that we're around and ready to serve in time of need. Also, when you report your hours, your call sign is entered in a monthly drawing. When you win, you get to select one of these valuable prizes!

## Save the date: 2/4/2024!



Sunday, February 4, 2024 will be the 3rd running of the S.A.F.E. exercise. S.A.F.E. stands for Scavenge Around Field Exercise and allows radio operators to navigate around the county looking for specific location points and reporting into Net control. This is a great exercise for newer or experienced operators to try out their radio in various locations of the county. This event will also allow operators to use some additional tools if desired—winlink and APRs. Thank you for the organizing committee of Vince, KM6YHE; Jim,

KN6NCG; Allison, KM6RMN; and Bill, AJ6CQ. They are currently rescouting all the previous locations and spying new ones.

## Reminder - The ARES Holiday Party is this Wednesday, December 20th



Instead of our regular monthly membership meeting in December, you're invited to a no-host social gathering Wednesday evening, Dec. 20, at the Cowboy Bar and Grill in Felton (5447 Hwy9, Felton). Join us at 6:00 PM for supper and conversation. No RSVP required.

## Resources

- Website: <https://xczcomm.com/>
- Reporting volunteer hours: <https://xczcomm.com/index.php/hours-reporting/>
- Upcoming events: <https://xczcomm.com/index.php/calendar-of-events/>
- Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/ARES-of-Santa-Cruz-County-Ca-296232310799866>
- Facebook group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/431308973875528>
- PIO Articles: <https://arrlsantaclaravalley.org/news/> or <https://xczcomm.com/index.php/news/>
- XCZ Comm You Tube: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UChZH8TU5gh4SqHTPXSwolPA>
- Submitting deployment documents: send in PDF form to [EOC.ARES@santacruzca.gov](mailto:EOC.ARES@santacruzca.gov)
- Submitting personal information such as DSW application, personal data update, education certificates: email [K6PDL@ARRL.net](mailto:K6PDL@ARRL.net), [KM6SV@SLVARES.org](mailto:KM6SV@SLVARES.org), and [EOC.ARES@santacruzca.gov](mailto:EOC.ARES@santacruzca.gov)

## Org. Positions

- DEC  
John / N6QX, jfgerhardt@gmail.com
- Assistant DEC  
Gary / K6PDL, K6PDL@arrl.net
- Assistant DEC and Deputy EC  
Karen / KM6SV, KM6SV@slvares.org
- Operations and Events  
Dan / N6RJX, N6RJX@slvares.org
- Webmaster  
Nate / KM6THA, KM6THA@gmail.com
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- Safety Officer  
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- EC Loma Prieta  
vacant
- EC Coastal and SLV  
vacant
- AEC-Antenna Specialist  
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- AEC-CERT Liaison  
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## FOUND ON THE WEB—RadioQTH

Allison, KM6RMN, Public Information Officer

*Editor note: Sadly last month you only received part of this article. Reprinting, in its entirety for your reading pleasure*



When I was upgrading to a General License I thought about seeking a vanity call sign. But the rules were complex. And once I came up with a cool alphanumeric combo, the call sign lookup sites only told whether it was taken or not found. Did “not found” mean that it was up for grabs? As the license test date loomed, I let it go.

Recently I stumbled on RadioQTH. This site is packed with database tools built around crafting the perfect vanity call sign. Its primary purpose: to provide all the information needed to list the best candidates for your application, lessening the likelihood of rejection. It’s a humble site. On landing, all you see is an old-style half-page dominated by a cheesy looking radio, a paragraph of text, a spartan tab bar, and a blurry logo.

If you are there for the visuals, move along; nothing to see here. But don’t let its appearance fool you. The beauty of the site is the information behind those links.

Here’s an overview of the headings on the left: **Home** takes you to the landing page of course: that big old gray radio. It’s a shortcut gadget. Click on one of the buttons to get a head start in the “Available Call Signs” or “Filed FCC Applications” search pages. More on those pages later.

**Call Lookup** displays the call sign database often found on other sites, listing basic stats like active status, effective dates, type of license, etc. You can search by name or by call sign. There are a couple of hidden shortcuts to other tools hidden in the description paragraph, so read it and explore!

**Vanity Calls** lists the vanity call signs recently granted, and expired ones now available. Note that when you click on one of them, it provides in-depth information about the last licensee, including home address and Google Earth view of their house. The obvious privacy issues concern me—I found my own house pictured

there. But it’s considered a matter of public record, so not much can be done about it. **Available Calls** allows you to do a filtered search for call signs that are available now, soon to be available (with a day count!) and recently applied for. You can drill down to format, district number, preferred prefixes & suffixes; and you can sort your findings by call sign or date of availability. I tried a search for all available 2x2 call signs starting with A and ending with GO. It listed 3 call signs. Each one could be clicked on to check out its previous owner and effective dates.

**CW call weight:** If you are a CW contester who wants that extra edge in sending speed, you can find the “quickest” call sign in a group of candidates. You type in your list, and it ranks them along with their weights, or sending speed.

**Applications** will take you to the *Filed FCC Applications* database, which has several tabs for different flavors of pending applications on record. At least, I think it does. I couldn’t get this tool to yield information for me, but the last tab, *Invalid Calls*, is an excellent compilation about alphanumeric combos the FCC finds unacceptable, and why.

**Other left-side links** cover subjects that may be tangentially related, but not strictly linked to obtaining a vanity call sign. There’s a QSL card generator, full license exam materials, a help/links catch-all page, and a radio club locator on the sidebar list, and 4 shortcuts on the tab bar with even more tools and reference pages. All the links here are useful, but the available and acceptable call signs databases are what make this website stand out. If you are serious about crafting a lovely new call sign to fit your status and ham world lifestyle, use this site to save a ton of time. The information is current. New data is added daily, and all the data is wiped and re-downloaded from FCC databases weekly to keep it clean. What a service! <https://www.radioqth.net/>  
Do you know a cool website, podcast, YouTube series, or online tool? Email me at [KM6RMN@SLVARES.org](mailto:KM6RMN@SLVARES.org). I’ll check it out and pass it on in the future.

## Santa Cruz County ARES Purpose

- The Amateur Radio Emergency Service (ARES) consists of licensed amateurs who have voluntarily registered their qualifications and equipment with their local ARES leadership for communications duty in the public service when disaster strikes
- We are not fire fighters or police or sheriff's officers. We are volunteers who care about our communities by using our emergency communication skills.
- Before volunteering in an emergency we first take care of ourselves, our family, and our home.
- We value every member's contributions, irrespective of license class, years of experience, or the price tag of equipment.

## Ham Radio's Motto

"When all else fails – ham radio works". That is because, when all the normal communication systems stop working, Ham Radio is still in operation, helping people, conveying messages, and sometimes, even saving lives.

## Put Ham Radio on your list of New Year's Resolutions—continued

**Teach something.** You know how to do things others don't, but would like to learn. Are you already familiar with programming microcontrollers? How about a club project to teach the basics to other members? Or a demonstration on using Anderson Powerpoles? Or properly installing coax connectors?

**Become a "HAMbassador".** Get just one person (or two, or three) interested in Amateur Radio. Offer to demonstrate Ham Radio at the Senior Citizens' center, Boy or Girl Scout meetings, the Rotary Club, or any similar organization. Groups like that are always looking for an interesting speaker or activity. On-line meetings mean you can do it right from home, no need to travel! A simple but impressive and effective demonstration is to bring an HT and ask for a "Roll Call". Notify us in advance... all they need to do is reply with "This is (name, callsign) in (town)." Remember that we're Hams because we enjoy talking to other people. The more Hams, the more contacts we can make..

**Get involved!** Join your local Radio Club. If you need help finding a club, look for a local club or go to ARRL.com If you already belong, attend the meetings. Just about every club (not just Radio Clubs) has the same problem — 10% of the people do 90% of the work. You don't need to volunteer for everything... select an area that interests you, and help with that. Even better, suggest an activity and then take the lead in organizing it. Something as simple as "I'm going to set up a portable station at the park on Saturday morning, everyone is welcome to come by" can be a great time. Check out the POTA (Parks On The Air) Web site for even more fun. If you add "Free coffee and donuts" to your announcement, you'll draw a real crowd.

**Stay positive,** ignore the negative. Don't listen to those who insist that "Ham Radio is dying". Or better yet, go here <http://www.arrl.org/fcc-license-counts> where they'll find that the number of licensees is at an all-time high. Participation in contests remains strong, even at the bottom of the sunspot cycle. Manufacturers continue to introduce new models that we could barely dream of just a few years ago. Hamfests that are well-organized and well-run are thriving again. Ham Radio has been evolving for over a century now, and it continues to do so. The Magic of Radio never goes away.

Most of all, resolve to have more fun with Ham Radio in 2024!

Once again, my sincere best wishes to you and your family for a happy, healthy, and safe Holiday Season and New Year.

**Final.. Final..**

Well, that's it for this 2023, I'm going QRT... Stay safe my friends! I want to see all of you soon at a 2024 meeting or hamfest!

**Promote Amateur Radio everywhere you go and have FUN and get on the air-waves!!**

