



The SPARC

Amateur Radio - Communicating Worldwide for A Century

Newsletter of the Boston Amateur Radio Club

Serving Hams in the Greater Boston Area

August 2023 - VOLUME 35, NUMBER 8

www.barc.org - w1bos@arrl.net



From the Editor – Joe Chapman, NV1W



It seems that every couple of days a notice arrives on the SKYWARN list of yet another round of miserable weather, and as I was typing this a **tsunami warning** arrived from the Red Cross, which fortunately turned out to be a test. With the peak of the hurricane season about a month away I'm sure there are more weather alerts in our future. While SKYWARN training sessions are finished for the year, you can still connect with the program at <https://wx1box.org/> and monitor the 145.230 MHz Boston repeater during periods of inclement weather. The National Weather Service depends on SKYWARN and other programs for timely observations on the ground, and amateur radio is a major part of the program.

Hurricanes notwithstanding, my own favorite time in New England is the early fall, and I'm hoping to do some POTA activations on the Cape in September, including the Marconi site in Wellfleet (part of K-0672) and the Harwich bicycle rotary (part of K-8395).

In this Issue of The SPARC

- The Big E!
- Technician license classes
- Learning CW with POTA
- Upcoming events



No BARC General Meetings during the summer

No BARC General Meetings are held in July and August. Have a good summer, and we will see you on Thursday, September 21, 2023, at 7:30 pm.

Repeaters: 145.230 (-) CTCSS 88.5 in/100.0 out

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BARC's Online Discussion Group – Joe Harris, N1QD

BARC has an online forum at Groups.io. The group serves as a sounding board for members to post their suggestions and comments, and is intended to foster discussion. The group can also be used to share photographs from club events! Come visit us at: <https://groups.io/g/BostonARC>. You can join, if you're not already there, by sending an email to BostonARC+subscribe@groups.io.

Project Big E 2023 is Looking For Your Support – Larry Krainson, W1AST

[Last year I went to the Big E, courtesy of a ride from Steve Provost and Mike Austin, and spent a few pleasant hours working the amateur radio booth. It is a fun event, and it will definitely expand your ideas of what foods can be deep-fried. I enjoyed helping introduce a lot of people to amateur radio as well as taking a stroll around the fairgrounds. —NV1W]

The Big E is a 17 day New England fair that takes place September 15th–October 1st this year. *The start is just 4 weeks away!*

It attracts attendees from all over New England and northern NJ and eastern NY. The fair takes place in West Springfield, MA.

Last year the Big E had over 1.6 million attendees from all over the northeast!

Last year in 2022, we did a booth at the Big E and we are doing one again this year. 12 clubs and over 100 individuals volunteered last year. *We need your help again this year!*

We have been provided with a booth for free that is normally worth \$6000. The booth is in the Better Living Center which is the largest building in the fair and attracts the most visitors.

The goal of the Ham Radio Booth is to introduce ham radio to the public and show it is still relevant in today's world. By getting people interested in our hobby, we hope they will sign up for classes and upon earning their license, then go looking for local clubs to join. Thereby growing ham radio clubs in New England!

We learned a lot after last year in the booth and are changing the way we do things in the booth this year. One of those things is the need for only 3 people in the booth this year per six hour session vs 4 to 6 people last year.

We are looking for clubs to reserve a 6-hour session or a full 12 hour day. The booth must be staffed from 10 am through 10 pm. We ask that volunteers for session one be at the booth from 9:30 am through 4 pm and session 2 from 3:30 pm through 10 pm.

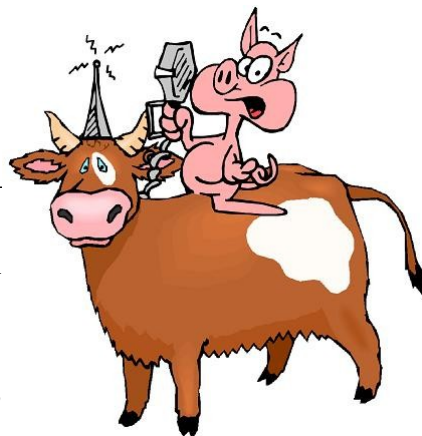
Clubs may bring banner, handouts, class information and demonstrations to show and use during their time in the booth.

We are also looking for individuals to volunteer. You do not have to be part of a club.

There is an admission fee (\$15) and parking fee (\$10 per car) to the fair. We have been awarded an ARDC grant and will be reimbursing those fees to everyone who participates after the fair has ended. The reimbursements will be mailed to your Qrz.com address.

We need your support to make this a success! Please go to this link to sign up:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScvo1vUzuiuJTHbTtDLeApQQD1m4ZzX9kVe_hF2416e6apho3g/viewform



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If you would like further information, please go here: <https://nediv.arrl.org/project-big-e>

For more information, feel free to contact Larry Krainson, W1AST at: W1AST@arrl.org or 413-348-3289 (VM answers Computer Care, leave a message).

Editor Sought for *The SPARC* – Joe Chapman, NV1W



Sharp-eyed readers will note that I have once again assumed editorship of *The SPARC*, amateur radio’s finest news source™. After three years as Editor, Doc Kinne, KE1ML/M7RCK has decided to retire. I will try and keep it afloat, but would appreciate having another club member to step in and take over.

With the activity on the Groups.io mailing list and greater participation in our monthly meetings due to Zoom, there has been discussion of converting *The SPARC* to a quarterly format, which either I or the new editor will probably do at some point.

You will note by the volume number on the masthead that BARC has been producing this newsletter for 35 years now!

Learning CW with POTA – Joe Chapman, NV1W

I will start with a shout-out to the Long Island CW Club at <https://longislandcwclub.org/>, not just because they’re one of the best resources around for people who are just starting to learn CW, but because one of their mantras is the best way to learn the code is to get on the air and use it.

One of the best ways to get on the air and use the code is through the Parks on the Air program, which you can learn about at <https://parksontheair.com/>. There are two ways to participate in the program: one is as an activator, where you go out to a park and call CQ. The other is as a hunter, where you come back to the activators. Being a POTA activator is an easy introduction to “running” (calling CQ), though it is hunting that couldn’t be simpler.

As a digression, a few code speed data points:

- 5 wpm — very slow, was once the speed required for Novice/Tech
- 10 wpm — speed at which mentally doing a lookup begins to fail
- 13 wpm — once the speed required for General
- 18 wpm — in my opinion a good speed for a ragchew, also a common POTA speed
- 20 wpm — once the speed required for Extra
- 25 wpm — some consider this a minimum speed for a “skilled” CW operator
- 35 wpm — about the upper limit of what you’ll hear on the air; mostly used in contests
- 75 wpm — candidate for the world record (Ted McElroy in 1939)

By “mentally doing a lookup” I mean having a little chart in your mind that maps dots and dashes to letters rather than hearing the Morse element. So you hear “didahdit” and instead of hearing that sound as an R you think, “dot, dash, dot... say, that’s an R!” This is an especially tempting thing to do with numbers, because it’s so easy to count dits and dahs, and it’s a hard habit to break.

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Note that the typical POTA speed, 18 words per minute, is just on the relaxed side of the middle. It's fast enough that you're not going to pick up any bad habits, but not fast enough to be too scary. (You can even find a contest that uses those speeds, the K1USN SST (<http://www.k1usn.com/sst.html>) but that's another article.)

Now, the reason that hunting couldn't be simpler is that you know what the activator is going to say. Like a contest, the POTA exchange is short and follows a conventional pattern, and if you're not sure you can just listen to a few QSOs. (You might hear a P2P, or "park to park" exchange, in which park numbers are exchanged—something like "K-8405"—but if you're not hunting from a park yourself you don't need to worry about it.)



This is a typical contact:

- *activator*: CQ POTA W1ABC
- *you*: KC1XYZ
- *activator*: KC1XYZ GA UR 55N 55N BK (*KC1XYZ, good afternoon, you are 559 559, back to you*)
- *you*: BK UR 5NN 5NN MA BK (*back to me, you are 599 599, Massachusetts, back to you*)
- *activator*: BK TU 73 DE W1ABC (*back to me, thank you, best wishes frm W1ABC*)

If it's not the afternoon you may hear GM (*good morning*) or GE (*good evening*). The 55N and 55N are signal reports (or "RST reports") encoding readability, signal strength, and tone, which you can read about in various introductory amateur radio books and webpages. The activator may throw in one or two R's at the end, which means Roger, message received.

Finally, if conditions aren't great, or the activator's Morse code is a work in progress, you may get asked for repeats, either with ? (dididahdidit) or AGN (*again*), or with a part of your call. It can be as short as the last letter! If you go back and forth a few times, you can either reduce speed by about 2 wpm, or send "Farnsworth" style with extra space between each letter.



One thing to remember in POTA, whether you're an activator or a hunter, is that the other person wants to work you! Activators need ten contacts for a successful activation.

Finding a POTA activator can be done just by spinning the tuning dial, something I recommend in these days of depending on the Internet for everything. Try looking around 14.060 MHz. On the other hand, there is a dedicated spotting page at <https://pota.app/#/>.

Continuing online, you can find a lot of material on YouTube. I'm especially fond of the field activation videos posted by Thomas Witherspoon, K4SWL (you can find him with a Google search). He basically just turns his camera on and lets it run during an activation, so you get to see it, warts and all (sample: forgetting to attach his antenna). He also posts a link to a field report with a list of all his equipment so, I dunno, if you think he has a really great *feedline* you can order one yourself.

Northeast HamXposition is This Month – Joe Chapman, NV1W

The Northeast HamXposition (including the ARRL New England Division Convention) returns to the Best Western Hotel and Conference Center in Marlborough, MA on August 25, 26 and 27. It will feature a flea market, talks, a DXCC/Contest dinner and a banquet, a "Tech in a day" class, a foxhunt, and a whole bunch of other stuff that you can read about at <https://hamxposition.org>.

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BARC Meeting Calendar for 2020

Unless otherwise noted, all meetings and VE sessions will take place at Artisans Asylum.

General Meetings

September 21	2023	Thu	7:30 pm
October 19	2023	Thu	7:30 pm
November 16	2023	Thu	7:30 pm

VE Sessions

October 9	2023	Mon	7:30 pm
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Member News – Joe Chapman, NV1W

This space is reserved for your news! Send it to NV1W at joechapman@alum.mit.edu.

Technician Classes in the Fall – Joe Chapman, NV1W

This just in: Robert, W1ZQI, is putting together BARC's first Technician class, to be held this fall at Artisans Asylum. Details are still being worked out, but the current plan is to have two evening classes per week for four weeks in September and October and to finish up with a VE session.

Details will be published to the Groups.io mailing list and information will be available on www.barc.org. If you're interested, send a message to w1bos@arrl.net and we will make sure you don't fall through the cracks.

BARC Net Preamble

The control operator for the BARC Net is Joe, W1JJF. He rarely misses a net, but when he does any ham can take up the position and run the net. Even King Hussein, JY1, at least if he weren't a silent key! To assist you in opening and closing the net the BARC Net Preamble is printed below. Do not be afraid to step up and take the challenge.

Is there any further business for the repeater before we begin the Boston Amateur Radio Club Net? This is «YOUR CALL». Calling the Boston Amateur Radio Club Net. This is «YOUR CALL», my name is «YOUR NAME» and I am located in «YOUR TOWN». This net meets each Monday evening at 9 pm Eastern Time on the 145.230 Boston repeater, PL 88.5. This net is an informal round table discussion concerning matters of interest to the members of the Boston Amateur Radio Club and the Boston Amateur Radio community in general. When checking into the net, please say, "this is" and drop your carrier to check on doubling. Then give your call sign, name and location. All amateurs are welcome to join the net. Any check-in's for the Boston Amateur Radio Club Net please call now.

[Compile the list of the check-ins and proceed with the net.]

Is there any further business for the net before I close? Hearing nothing, this is «YOUR CALL» closing tonight's session of the Boston Amateur Radio Club Net. I would like to thank everyone who participated in the net and those



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who stood by while I ran the net. The Boston Amateur Radio Club Net will return next Monday evening at 9 pm Eastern Time. This is «YOUR CALL» returning the repeater to general amateur use. 73.

I See the Future

19–20 August	ARRL 10 GHz & Up — Round 1
19–20 August	North American QSO Party, SSB
20 August	ARRL Rookie Roundup — RTTY
20 August	Flea at MIT, Cambridge
25–27 August	Northeast HamXposition, ARRL New England Division Convention
26–27 August	W/VE Islands QSO Party
4 September	BARC Net, 145.23 Boston Repeater, 9:00 pm
9 September	Deadline for articles for the September SPARC
9–10 September	ARRL EME — 2.3 GHz & Up
9–11 September	ARRL September VHF Contest
10 September	North American Sprint, CW

▲ Note change from usual date and/or location

As you might expect, there are many more events (public service, hamfests, flea markets, etc.) taking place—some only peripheral to ham radio. For information on these, covering much of the Northeast, the “Ham - Electronic Flea Market” and the “PSLIST” lists tell the story. Of course, if you know of an event that would be of interest to the readers, please let the Editor know.

For an up-to-date calendar of events, including web links, visit <http://www.barc.org/calendar>.

Businesses Can Advertise Here

The SPARC accepts commercial advertisements. BARC encourages monthly promotion of your products and services which would be of interest to hundreds of our members and others interested in the Amateur Radio Service.

The rates for display advertising are:

1 col × 2 in. (business card)	\$15 per issue
1 col × 2 in. (business card)	\$75 per 6 consecutive months
1 col × 2 in. (business card)	\$125 per 12 consecutive months
1 col × 4 in. (½ column)	\$30 per issue
1 col × 9.5 in. (full column)	\$60 per issue

Originals of ads must be presented to the Editor in MS Word or .jpg format to print 1:1. Other composition will be at extra cost. We will be glad to quote other ad sizes and durations. Members are urged to seek prospective advertisers who are appropriate to our readers. For additional information, contact Joe Chapman, NV1W, at 617.267.6349 or nv1w@arrl.net.

Two Ways to See Yourself in Print! (well, PDF) – Joe Chapman, NV1W

We are always looking for articles for the newsletter. I have reserved this space for your articles, reviews, tips, how-tos, hints ‘n’ kinks, photos, schematics, or other ham related information. Photos of you operating or your shack are

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especially welcome. Send your submissions to the Editor, Joe, NV1W, at nv1w@arrl.net. Articles for the September issue must be received by September 9.

Are you a depressed BARC member because you have a treasure you must turn to cash? Cheer up, Bunky! The SPARC will run your (non-business) ad for free. Of course, a 10% donation if you sell it will be cheerfully accepted. Just send your ad to Joe Chapman, NV1W, nv1w@arrl.net.

BARC Volunteer Exam Sessions

The Boston Amateur Radio Club offers license exams quarterly. The next session will be held on Monday, October 9, at 7:30 pm. Test sessions are held at Artisans Asylum, 96 Holton St., Boston, MA 02135.

We give all exams (Technician, General, and Extra). *Testing is by reservation only.* Please bring the following with you:

- Your current license and a photocopy for the ARRL, if you are upgrading
- Any CSCEs you are claiming, and a photocopy of them
- Valid picture ID or two valid non-picture IDs
- A pen and a calculator (if you want to)
- **\$15.00** (good for all the tests you take at that session, except for retests)

Note: Written tests can be taken sequentially at the same session for the same \$15 fee. The needed FCC forms will be provided.

To reserve a seat or for further information, contact: Jim Clogher, N1ICN, n1icn@arrl.net, or Joe Chapman, NV1W, nv1w@arrl.net.



New England Sci-Tech Inc is a new 501(c)(3) STEM education center, amateur radio training center, and maker space located at 16 Tech Circle, Natick. It is home to New England Amateur Radio Inc (NE1AR) and the youth radio club Sci-Tech Amateur Radio Society (STARS). NE Sci-Tech welcomes memberships and donations via www.NESciTech.org or www.NE1AR.org.



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The Boston Amateur Radio Club is a non-commercial association of persons interested in the Amateur Radio Service. The Club is organized for the promotion of interest in Amateur Radio communication and education, for the establishment of emergency communications in the event of disasters or other emergencies, for the advancement of the radio art and the public welfare, for the representation of the radio amateur in legislative and regulatory matters, and for the maintenance of collegiality and a high standard of conduct.

The Club is open to all persons interested in Amateur Radio without regard to race, color, religion, creed, national origin, gender, disability, or sexual preference. Our General and Business meeting locations are handicap accessible. Other meeting and activity locations may be handicap accessible by arrangement.

The Club is an ARRL-affiliated club, and is a member of the New England Spectrum Management Council (NESMC). The Club is also an associate member of the Courage HandiHams system.

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Greater Boston Net Directory

Daily 7 pm	MARI (Mass/Rhode Island CW Net) (NTS)	3.565
Daily 8 pm	Eastern Mass 2M Traffic Net (NTS)	145.230 (PL 88.5 in/100.0 out)
Daily 8 pm	Slow Speed CW Net	28.160
Sun–Fri 9:45 pm, Sat 10 pm	Heavy Hitters Traffic Net (NTS)	MMRA-linked repeaters: 146.610, 146.670, 146.715, 146.820, and all 222 and 440 repeaters
First Mon 8:30 pm	EMA Section ARES Net	146.610 and all MMRA links
Mon 7 pm	Two Meter SSB Net	144.244 USB
Mon 8 pm	New England DMR Net	DMR New England Talk Group (TG 3181)
Mon 9 pm	BARC Club Net	145.230 (PL 88.5 in/100.0 out)
Tue Thu Sat 5 pm	MA RI Phone Net (NTS)	3.978
Tue 8 pm	Sci-Tech Amateur Radio Society (STARS) Net	446.325 (PL 146.2)
Tue 8 pm	MMRA Club Net	146.610 and all MMRA links
Wed 8 pm	Wellesley Amateur Radio Society Net	147.030; 444.600 (PL 88.5)
Wed 9 pm	Waltham Wranglers Swap Net	146.640 (PL 136.5)
Sat 9 am	Northeast SATERN Net	7.265
Sun 9:30 am	Yankee SSB Net	50.275
Sun 8 pm	Algonquin Amateur Radio Club Net	446.675 (PL 88.5)
Sun 8:30 pm	NSRA Net (with Newslines)	145.470 (PL 136.5)
Sun 9 pm	CAARAnet	145.130 (PL 107.2)

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