

Local News
Immediate Release

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Free Ham Radio Class

Area residents will have the opportunity to take a free, four session course that provides instructs the student with the basic knowledge needed to pass the entry level ham radio license, the Technician Class license. The license is issued by the Federal Communications Commission, is good for ten years and free. The FCC exam is administered at the end of the course by local accredit volunteer examiners and cost \$15, This class is not presented every year, but has had students from 7 to 70 and has better than a 95% success rate. Class begin at 6pm on Tuesday, March 7 at the Keystone Place apartments and run for four consecutive Tuesdays.

The course will be taught by three local hams will instruct the local class.. William Leggat, Dickson City, John Miarecki, Scranton and Robert Chimel, S Abington Township. Together the trio have over 150 years of ham radio experience, have communicated with more than 300 countries and even contacted astronauts on the International Space Station. NASA uses ham radio as a backup form of communications and relaxing activity

Chimel noted that while there are many reasons to become an amateur radio operator, the biggest benefit of being able to communicate with other hams, around the world, without any wires or the internet. Hams establish friendship around the World and experiment with exotic forms of communications by linking their radio with their computer. Others enjoy learning about people around the World or as an introduction to electronics.

Mr. Leggat stated that New hams usually spend less than \$100 to begin this exciting hobby and high power or large antennas are not necessary. Leggat, noted that using only a five foot wire and 1 watt of power, he was able to chat with an amateur at the South Pole.

Several local hams frequently spoke with the International Space Station and became friendly with the ISS Commander. In fact, Douglas H Wheelock lives in the Binghamton, NY area, but his parents live in Susquehanna county. A few of the hams even were invited to a gathering at the parents home for a family gathering.

Some amateur even use the ham satellites that were built by hams around the world and even bounce signal off the moon and meteorite tails.

Ham radio is not only a great hobby, but is the primarily form of emergency communications during any disaster. According to Homeland Security, When a disaster hit, all forms of communications, the internet and electricity usually fail, the only reliable form of communications Chimel, who is also the Radio Officer for Lackawanna County Office of Emergency Management, stated that Ham radio enables licensed amateurs to quickly and easily establish reliable communications within the state, nation or world using inexpensive wire antennas and two way radios that can operate on batteries or solar power. The internet, landlines phones or cellphone, and most forms of communications require an advanced infrastructure and, at least eventually, electricity.

While many people may think of ham radio requiring huge, expensive radios and a person sending the International Morse Code, the reality is very different. Ham need no longer learn the Morse code, although it remains a very popular form of communications. In fact, computers can easily send and translate the code, do teletype, send color, television pictures and transmit many digital formats where the users never hear a sound, but monitor the conversation as it types out on their monitors.

The classes will be held in the second floor meeting room at Keystone Apartments, Main Avenue in Dickson City, a half mile after the Route 81 exit. Students are asked to please park behind the building. The class will run from 6 to 9 pm. The final class will offer the students the opportunity to take the entry level exam and upcoming successful completion they may try for a higher level license, without paying an additional fee. Boy Scouts will be able to achieve their Radio Merit Badge and upon obtaining a license, the new Radio Communicator badge.

To register for the class, or for additional information, potential students may contact Bob Chimel also known as WA3LWR at WA3LWR@comcast.net or William Leggat also known as WA3LLF, at Wleggat@comcast.net.