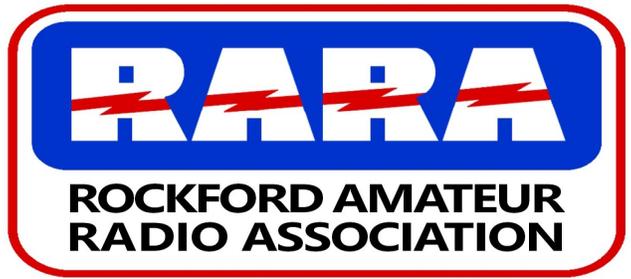


HAMRAG

Visit our website for more club and area ham information at <http://w9axd.org>, or join us on Facebook at this [LINK](#)



RARA Mission Statement

A member association with common interest of public service to the community through the use of amateur radio.

September 2020

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As we say goodbye to the summer of the year that never was and greet the fall with wonder of what is ahead, we can all look ahead with caution, but optimism for what is ahead. First, let us remember that September, as I heard a ham say on the air, the month that we check our antenna system and think of ways we might add to it to make it better. In other words make an antenna for September. If you are new to Ham radio making an antenna is one of the fun things in the hobby, and I might add one of the easiest things to do as well. Not to mention it is also one of the most rewarding when you make your first contact with something that you made.

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If this is your first, I would suggest that you start with something simple like a Dipole. Decide first what frequency that you want to use it on and then make a sketch of what you are going need. First, a dipole is two pieces of wire that you string end to end between to poles or trees, as high as you can get them. There are three insulators one on each end with a rope or whatever that ties to the pole on each end. There is also an insulator on the one wire is terminated to the shield on the coax, and the other wire is hooked to the braid of the outside of the coax. The total length of the antenna is 468 divided by the frequency in Megahertz. Just take the answer, and add about a foot, so that you have 6 inches on each wire to bend over at each end. Depending on the frequency the height and the type of wire it should be close to resonance on the frequency that you designed it for. If you have any questions just catch me or any of the other hams in the area on the air, or send me an email. I'd be happy to answer any questions you might have. Have fun, the sun cycle is just getting under way and should be going strong before long get ready for it.

NEXT MEETING

**Friday
September 11
7:00 PM**

Live

On AIR

**146.610
Repeater
Or
147.195**

One of the things you might think of doing is upgrading your license this fall. If you have any questions on the test that are giving you problems, don't fail to ask one of us on the air if you have your Tech we have four nets going each week. Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday on the 146.610 repeater or the 147.195 repeater at 7pm and on the Friday night fun net at 8pm. The second Friday night of the month we have been having the RARA club meeting starting at 7pm and generally running to the start of the Fun net at 8pm. We start that on the 146.610 repeater, but sometimes take it to the 147.195. Come join us. We have members of the club that could answer most any question you might have about ham radio.

Have fun, but be careful out there.
Larry AC9GO
larry.schubert@gmail.com



Cool Things About FT8 by KD9MAP

I've been working FT8 for a few months now, and I want to describe all the things I like about this mode.

- 1) FT8 propagates far with low power. It's not difficult to work all continental US states using 20W or less.
- 2) FT8 uses very little bandwidth. An FT8 signal fits in only 50Hz, and the entire FT8 subband takes up only 3KHz of each ham band.
- 3) FT8 is reliable, because it uses forward error correction. Even very weak received signals are decoded without errors.
- 4) Because of FT8's robust modulation scheme, even overlapping signals are decoded. So if somebody transmits on top of you, chances are very good that your QSO will succeed anyway.
- 5) FT8 doesn't use your ears. For folks like me with poor hearing, and those who have trouble understanding various spoken accents, FT8 presents less problems than phone mode. And you can listen to music or the ballgame while you are operating.
- 6) FT8 logs QSOs automatically, so you don't have to fuss with pencil and paper, and the QSO info is recorded accurately without human error. The logs are quick and easy to upload to QRZ and LoTW.
- 7) Every FT8 QSO includes an automatic exchange of signal reports. This is so much better than phone, where signal reports are often forgotten or skipped.
- 8) When you choose a callsign to contact, the FT8 software shows you the distance and azimuth to the other station instantly. It can even show you if you've worked that station before.
- 9) You can quickly see where your FT8 signals are propagating by looking at the PSKReporter map online. All the stations that are hearing your signals automatically report them, and are pinned on the map. For example, this afternoon I worked a lot on 10 meters; looking at the PSKmap, I could see that my signals were being received only on the east coast of the USA at that time of day, so I didn't waste time CQing California.
- 10) FT8 does not involve ragchewing. Some hams don't like that, but for me that's a plus, because I usually can't think of much interesting to say to random hams anyway. At the end of the day, after I've uploaded my logs, I simply step thru the day's QSOs on QRZ.com, and look at each ham's QRZ page. I can learn more about a ham by looking at his QRZ page for one minute, than I can by a half-hour of ragchewing. I see their photos, rigs, antennas, families, awards, interests, etc.
- 11) Like phone and CW, and unlike DMR, FT8 is pure radio. No part of the QSO needs nor uses the internet to propagate.
- 12) The FT8 software is free, and chances are that you do already have a computer. If your rig has CAT control, all you need is the interface cables, and, depending on your PC, maybe a soundcard like a SignalLink USB.
- 13) The FT8 software decodes all the transmissions in the entire subband, so you don't even have to worry about coordinating frequency choices with the other station. As long as you both are on the same ham band, you both copy each other without zero-beating your VFOs.

I'm sure I'm forgetting some of the cool things to tell you about this mode, but I hope I've listed enough of them to pique your interest in trying this amazing radio technology. You can be sure that in the years ahead, improvements will be made which will extend the power of FT8, and as they come out, you won't have to buy anything to take advantage of them. All you'll need to do is install a software update on your PC. JS8Call is an example of this kind of free incremental improvement to FT8.

There is a learning curve involved in setting up an FT8 station for the first time, and in making the best use of the platform after it is set up. For me that is most of the fun of the hobby: learning new things. There is plenty of info available in free documentation, and there are many local FT8 users who can offer you help if you need it.

Try it; you'll like it!
73 DE KD9MAP

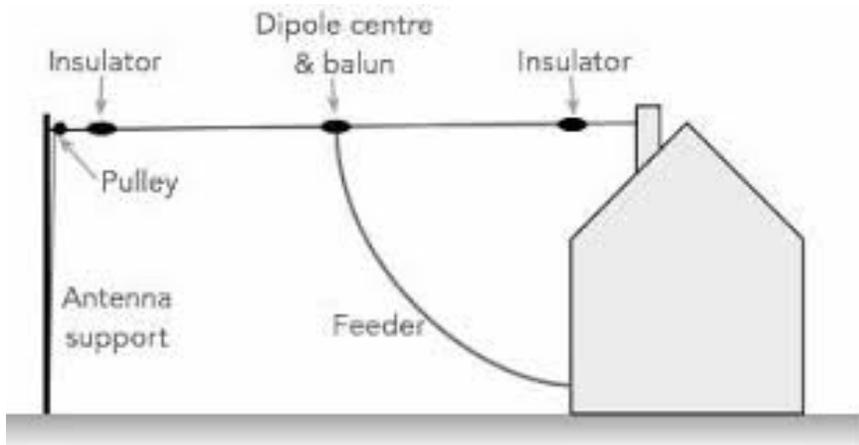
What to do during Covid 19

I was listening to a podcast the other day from England. I don't remember which one, and it really doesn't matter, but I liked the substance. One of the things that caught my attention was that they thought September was a great time to put together your antennas for the colder months to come. They went on to say everyone should build at least one antenna. Other pod-casters have pointed out that your antenna system can be the most important part of your rig. The dx commander took it one step farther. He runs several get-togethers on the air with his YouTube channel every month, mostly talking to England and Europe. One night he dropped his power from his normal 400 or 800 watts down to 10 watts, and still had a pile-up that lasted for quite a long time on 80 meters. He said he may drop it down to 5 watts the next time. Now to be fair he has a big following on YouTube, but he was able to hold conversations on the air with people all over Europe.

I've been studying some of the things that you can do to get out better. First, it doesn't matter how great your antenna is if you don't have the best coax or conductor to get the power to the antenna. Look at the loss your coax from your transmitter to your antenna. RG 58 might work great to carry a signal from the dashboard of your car to your trunk lid, but if you try to run it a hundred feet the loss is unreal. I have heard that a 3 Db loss will cut your signal in half. By making some poor choices in transmission line I probably have lost half my signal in both HF and VHF. As an extra I should know better, but it's like a friend told me shortly after I got my extra ticket. The ticket doesn't keep you from making mistakes, it just allows you to make bigger ones.

I am still thinking about the idea of making a contest on who can produce the best stealth antenna for an HOA. I've heard some good ideas from a couple of the guys, and I'm excited to see how they turn out. I have no idea what we can give as a prize. The club doesn't have a big supply of cash on hand. I'll talk it over with the board and see what we can come up with. If you have any ideas, let me know. September is a great month to go out there and make an antenna. If you have something you want to try, give it a fling. We have enough knowledge in the club if you have a question, we can find someone to answer it. Catch me on the repeater or send me an email, and I'll ask on the air if I don't know the answer.

Larry AC9GO
larry.schubert@gmail.com



AMATEUR RADIO EXAM NOTICE

Contact Brandon for more information as to the Freeport IL testing times and location.

Brandon J McGrew bmacmagoo@hotmail.com There is also testing available in Janesville.

Contact wi9fry@gmail.com For more info.

2020 RARA Officers and Board

Officers:

President - Larry Schubert, AC9GO, 815-624-7772, larry.schubert@gmail.com
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Directors: Bill Callow, 815-298-1923, KC9OJP, bill5002@comcast.net

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Repeater License Trustee - Gordon Seaman, KC9NEX, 815-262-0294, kc9nex@gmail.com

Local Events and Information

UPCOMING EVENTS

September 11 2020 - On Live Radio 7pm - 146.610

Weekly Monday Night Net 7 pm

Weekly—Tuesday Night Net - Thursday Night Net (see info below)

Area Nets

Monday Night RARA Information Net - The purpose of the net is to disseminate RARA related information as well as other Amateur Radio related information. As a club sponsored activity, please check in with Jimmy, KC9GCR, (net control). **146.610 - offset (pl 114.8)** RARA repeater at 8:00 pm, every Monday, except on holidays.

Friday Night Fun Net - Every Friday night at 8:00 pm on the **146.610 - offset (pl 114.8)** RARA repeater with Jimmy, KC9GCR, as net control.

Tuesday Night Health Net—**146.610** hosted by Larry AC9GO, 7 pm

Thursday Night Health Net—**147.195** hosted by Bill KC9OJP, 7 pm

RARA Membership Form

If you would like to join the Rockford Amateur Radio Association, please fill out the form below and mail it (with the membership fee payment) to the address shown at the bottom of the form. If you would like to join at our next meeting (see cover for meeting details), fill out the form and bring the form with your payment to the meeting and see our treasurer. **Thank you for your support!**



MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

website: w9axd.org

Membership Type: New (New memberships after July 1st are 1/2 price) Renewal

Annual Fees: \$20 - Student (up to age 24)

\$35 - Adult (25-61 years old) \$25 - Senior (Starts the year you will turn 62)

Above rate includes the
RARA monthly newsletter, HamRag (website download)
HamRag via USPS: \$12 extra

Name: _____

Call Sign: _____

Email Address: _____

Address: _____

Town: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Home Phone #: _____ Work #: _____

Cell #: _____ Ext: _____

Radio Interests: _____

May we make your phone and e-mail available for other RARA members only? Yes No

Comments: _____

RETURN THE COMPLETED FORM TO:
ROCKFORD AMATEUR RADIO ASSOCIATION
P.O. BOX 8465
ROCKFORD, ILLINOIS 61126

All membership applications to become either a new member or to be reinstated as a member of RARA must be approved by the RARA board.

Approved: _____ Membership Year ____/____/____ to ____/____/____