

A Technician's Holiday - the ARRL 10 Meter Contest

For the past few years, Technician licensees may have been wondering what all the fuss is about on HF. After all, the 10 meter band has been mostly inert and receiver hiss just isn't that interesting to listen to! As of about two months ago, however, the sunspot cycle has kicked into high gear and solar ultraviolet is bathing the upper layers of the ionosphere, opening the 10 meter band to worldwide propagation!

Just in time, there is an operating event coming up that is just made for Techs to enjoy - the ARRL 10 Meter Contest. (www.arrl.org/10-meter) It runs beginning late on Friday, Dec 9th (7 PM EST - which is 0000 UTC on Dec 10th) ending 48 hours later on Sunday. You can operate for 36 hours during that time - warning, once you start, it's hard to stop working station after station!

How do you operate? Just answer stations calling CQ by giving your full call sign once using standard phonetics on phone. If they respond, give them a signal report (usually "59" or "5NN" on CW) and your State or Canadian province or Mexican state. The DX stations you'll hear will be giving out serial numbers (the number of the contact in the contest for them) instead. That's all there is to it!

You can operate using phone (USB) or CW and work stations once on each mode. If you are just getting your feet wet on CW, try listening at the upper edge of the CW action - usually approaching 28.100 and in the old Novice band from 28.100-28.200. Call CQ ("CQ TEST DE your call") at a speed you're comfortable with and see if you get an answer. If you're unsure of your technique, just listen for a while and "sing along at home" until you've got the hang of it. Listen until you're sure of the CQing station's information. Then jump in! The CQing stations will be glad to help you through the contact.

There are categories for both single-operator and multiple-operator stations, so buddy up with a friend or a more experienced "Elmer" and enter in whatever category you prefer. If you use the Internet or some other source of information to find stations, you'll enter in the "multi-op" category. Perhaps your club can organize an operation from a member's station or set up a club station.

Once you're done, you should submit your log as described on the contest's website (www.arrl.org/10-meter). There are paper log sheets available - that's often the easiest way to start if you aren't keeping a computer log. You may submit the paper log with a summary sheet or use WA7BNM's handy website (b4h.net/cabforms/) to enter your contact information and submit the log electronically. The results of the contest will be printed in the July issue of QST and a little before that on the ARRL web site.

Sound like fun? You bet! Don't miss this opportunity to enjoy some of the best 10 meter conditions in years and learn a lot about HF operating, too!