



GETTING STARTED

It's easy to get the ball rolling. If there is a post member who already holds an FCC license as a radio amateur, ask him or her to check out The American Legion Amateur Radio Club. Established by the National Executive Committee Resolution No. 11 in May 2011, the club has a website at www.legion.org/hamradio with complete details. Membership is open to all members in good standing of The American Legion, the American Legion Auxiliary, Sons of The American Legion and Legion Riders who hold valid FCC amateur radio licenses. There is no fee for joining TALARC. Your licensed member can evaluate the best way for your post to get involved based on a variety of factors and provide your post commander and executive committee with recommendations.

Activities can range from something as simple as conducting an amateur radio licensing class to putting in a ham radio station at the post and even starting a post radio group. While this activity might not be suitable for every post, those that have become involved have enjoyed an increased growth in membership, good media coverage and participation by young people that translates into the full range of Legion youth programs.



THE AMERICAN LEGION AMATEUR RADIO CLUB

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THE AMERICAN LEGION



AMATEUR RADIO & THE AMERICAN LEGION

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WHY “HAM RADIO” IN LEGION POSTS?

Decades ago, as early as the 1930s, The American Legion’s National Security Commission encouraged posts to form amateur radio groups in support of civil defense. The American Legion even published and distributed an instructional radio course in the 1950s. Posts around the country became involved in ham radio; The American Legion Amateur Radio Network was on the air across the nation.

Today, many of those groups have not only survived, but are enjoying a resurgence of prominence that has resulted from a 2010 National Convention resolution. Resolution No. 134, “The American Legion Role in Homeland Security,” urges Legionnaires, posts, and departments to assist in Homeland Security efforts in communities, for example, by developing emergency kits and plans; by remaining informed and assisting families, schools, workplaces and communities in developing emergency plans and checklists; and by reporting suspicious activity or working with community based organizations. In support of this resolution and previous resolutions on the same subject, the Legion’s Public Relations Commission published a pamphlet on “Disaster Preparedness and Response,” which outlines steps every post can take to be ready to respond effectively during civil or natural disasters.

Ham radio is a natural fit. There has been a resurgence of interest among Legionnaires who have been licensed amateur radio operators for many years, and a good deal of curiosity from members interested in obtaining a ham license. Many are military-trained but may have had little reason until now to pursue a ham license. With today’s growth in technology, more people than ever before are passing their FCC exams and becoming licensed amateur radio operators – more than 700,000 in the United States.



WHAT YOUR POST CAN DO TO GET INVOLVED

An American Legion post has a wide array of potential involvement ranging from just surveying membership to determine if any post members are licensed amateur radio operators, to setting up a post station and even starting a post radio group if there are a good number of hams that are already members. Working with post members who are not ham operators to establish a post disaster preparedness and response team, the post can significantly enhance its commitment to the community as a significant resource for town, city and county emergency management officials. Some post members might want to obtain their ham license simply to enjoy all the benefits of a great hobby.

HOW YOUR POST MAY BENEFIT

Ramping up your post’s participation in disaster preparedness and engaging amateur radio as an emergency communications resource can gain recognition from the media, local government, the community and, potentially, new members for The American Legion.

WHERE TO GET ADVICE, MATERIALS, AND MORE INFORMATION

The American Legion Amateur Radio Club website at www.legion.org/hamradio is a great place to start. It contains a wealth of information about the club and features an online “forum” where Legionnaires from across the country are sharing their comments about their post’s involvement with amateur radio. The booklet, “Disaster Preparedness and Response for American Legion Posts” is available free on request to pr@legion.org. General information about obtaining an amateur radio license can be found at <http://www.arrl.org/licensing-preparation-exams> from the American Radio Relay League (ARRL), the national association for amateur radio.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Ham radio is FUN as well as an invaluable resource “when all else fails.” When severe weather, natural disasters or other catastrophes strike and power lines and cellphone towers are knocked out, ham radio has always stood up to serve communities across the nation. Who better to become involved than veterans and their families who proudly follow the motto, “Still Serving America.”