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The ARRL Letter



John E. Ross, KD8IDJ, Editor | December 18, 2025

[ARRL Home Page](#)

[ARRL Audio News](#)



In this Issue:

- [A Great After-Holiday Gift ... ARRL Kids Day!](#)
- [Get Your Keys and Bugs Ready for ARRL Straight Key Night](#)
- [Obsolete Part 97 Rules to be Deleted February 10, 2026](#)
- [New Technician Class Question Pool Released -- Effective July 1, 2026](#)
- [Up to \\$25,000 at Stake in New ARRL Student Coding Competition](#)
- [Amateur Radio in the News](#)
- [ARRL Live Events and Podcasts](#)
- [In Brief...](#)
- [Announcements](#)
- [The ARRL Solar Report](#)
- [Just Ahead in Radiosport](#)
- [Upcoming Section, State, and Division Conventions](#)



A Great After-Holiday Gift ... ARRL Kids Day!

Twice a year, ARRL offers an event designed to promote amateur radio to our youth ... Kids Day! Kids Day number one takes place on the first Saturday of the year and for 2026, that's January 3. The event runs from 1800 UTC through 2359 UTC. You can operate as much or as little as you like. It's all designed to give on-the-air experience to young people and hopefully foster interest in getting licenses of their own. It is also intended to give older hams a chance to share their station and love for amateur radio with their children.

Here's how it works: You can invite your kids or grandkids to your station, explain how it works, and then take turns talking on the radio. You could also share the excitement with your neighbors, a Scout troop, a church group, or the general public at a library or a shopping mall.

You can use most any frequency from 10 - 80 meters. You can also use one of your favorite repeaters... with permission from the repeater's owners. Be sure to observe third-party restrictions when making DX QSOs. Then the real fun starts...take pictures, write your story, and send them to ARRL. With a [signed release form](#), your story can appear in ARRL publications like *QST*, as part of the Kids Day and Youth write-ups, Strays, Up Front, and more. Send stories to contests@arrl.org.

Then, the part that will light up the kids' eyes even more...a [Kids Day Certificate of Participation \(PDF\)](#). It's downloadable, and every kid who has participated gets to take one home to hang on their wall!

Signup is easy at [Kids Day](#) on the ARRL website. You'll get all of the information you'll need to make this after-holiday gift a yearly event! And remember....there is another ARRL Kids Day on the third Saturday in June!



Get Your Keys and Bugs Ready for ARRL Straight Key Night

ARRL Straight Key Night (SKN) is just 2 weeks away! Every year on January 1, Straight Key Night is on the air from 0000 UTC through 2359 UTC.

This 24-hour event is not a contest; rather it is a day dedicated to celebrating our CW heritage. Participants are encouraged to get on the air and simply make enjoyable, conversational CW QSOs. The use of straight keys or bugs to send CW is preferred. There are no points scored and all who participate are winners.

All authorized amateur frequencies may be used, but activity has traditionally been centered on the HF bands. Logbook entries for Straight Key Night must be received by January 31, 2026. Votes for "Best Fist" and "Most Interesting QSO" will be tabulated and included in the results.

The 2025 SKN results indicated that 144 participants reported 945 contacts. While many were seasoned CW operators, some participants noted that they made their first CW contacts in many years during the 2025 event.

All you need is your favorite straight key or bug. Many participants dust off vintage radios and keys and put them back into service each year just for this event! So get your fist ready, grab your key, and enjoy a fun New Year's Day on the air.

For more information, visit [Straight Key Night](#).



ARRL Letter Editor John Ross, KD8IDJ, uses his J-38 key, made by Lionel, for SKN.

Obsolete Part 97 Rules to be Deleted February 10, 2026

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) in October 2025 adopted a Report and Order to delete almost 400 obsolete rules pertaining to its wireless services. As [previously reported by ARRL](#), among the deletions were four in Part 97 that govern the Amateur Radio Service.



ARRL reports that the notice of the Report and Order has now been published in the [Federal Register](#). Unless an objection is raised by January 2 that the Commission finds to deserve its consideration, the following four Part 97 provisions will be deleted as of February 10, 2026:

1. **§ 97.27.** This provision is duplicative of a statutory provision related to the FCC's right to modify station licenses.
2. **§ 97.29.** This provision specified an obsolete procedure to replace paper licenses. ARRL proposed deleting this section in comments filed earlier this year.
3. **§ 97.315 (b)(2).** This obsolete provision grandfathered HF amplifiers purchased before April 28, 1978 by an amateur radio operator for use at that operator's station, and grandfathered those manufactured before April 28, 1978, for which a marketing waiver was issued.
4. **§ 97.521(b) and Appendix 2.** This rule and appendix relate to obsolete VEC regions.

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New Technician Class Question Pool Released -- Effective July 1, 2026

On December 18, 2025, the National Conference of Volunteer Examiner Coordinators (NCVEC) Question Pool Committee (QPC) released the



revised [2026-2030 Technician Class \(Element 2\) question pool](#). It will be required for all

exam sessions beginning July 1, 2026. The new pool includes 409 questions (27 new, 30 removed, and about 155 modified), compared to 412 in the prior pool. The pool also includes three diagrams used for some of the questions.

This updated question pool incorporates significant changes compared to the prior pool. The questions were checked for technical accuracy and relevance to current amateur radio practices, as well as for grammar, syntax, format, clarity, and for redundancy within and between the pools.

VECs and Volunteer Examiners must use test designs based on the new pool starting on July 1, 2026. Current ARRL VEC Technician Class exam booklets (2022 series) and computer-generated Technician Class exams created from the 2022 question pool are valid until June 30. After that, old versions should be destroyed.

ARRL will have new editions of Technician Class study materials, including *The ARRL Ham Radio License Manual*, *Gordon West Technician Class License Prep* book, and *ARRL's Tech Q&A*, by May 2026.

View all question pools on the [NCVEC](#) website.



Up to \$25,000 at Stake in New ARRL Student Coding Competition

Pre-registration is now open for the [ARRL Student Coding Competition](#), a new national challenge designed to engage young radio amateurs in shaping the future of amateur radio through software development. Open to ARRL-member amateur radio operators aged 21 and younger, the competition will invite students to design a mobile app that supports ARRL and the amateur radio community. Cash awards totaling up to \$25,000 will be presented to one or more winning entries.

The competition officially begins on January 1, 2026, when complete rules and application specifications will be released at coding.arrl.org. Participants are reminded not to start

coding yet — entries must follow the published requirements. Project submissions will be due by March 31, 2026. Entries will be judged on how well they meet the specifications, user interface design and usability, code quality and stability, and the inclusion of extra features.

Adult ARRL members are encouraged to help spread the word and support the next generation of amateur radio innovators. [ARRL Student Membership](#) is free for full-time students aged 21 and younger, removing a key barrier to participation. Young hams, educators, and mentors are encouraged to pre-register now at coding.arrl.org to receive updates as additional details become available and to prepare for this exciting opportunity to contribute lasting tools to amateur radio.



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Amateur Radio in the News

[“Ham radio operators make radio contact with North Pole”](#) / The News - Enterprise (Kentucky) December 11, 2025 -- *The Harrison County Amateur Radio Club is an ARRL Affiliated Club.*

[“Joe Walsh On Alcohol, Ham Radio And The Eagles/James Gang Connection”](#) / Forbes, December 13, 2025 -- Part 1 interview series with Eagles and James Gang guitarist Joe Walsh.

[“Kids talk to Santa Claus over ham radio at Museum of Radio and Technology”](#) / WOWK (West Virginia) December 14, 2025 – *Tri-State Amateur Radio Association is an ARRL Affiliated Club.*

[“Amateur Radio Club holds annual dinner meeting”](#) / The Highland Press (Ohio) December 15, 2025 -- *The Highland Amateur Radio Association is an ARRL Special Service Club.*

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ARRL Live Events and Podcasts



On the Air LIVE

ARRL Education Specialist Wayne Greene, KB4DSF, will lead another session in this recent series introducing various methods and modes for emergency communications. During this session, he'll discuss the digital mode JS8 and how it can be used to send messages to family and friends — even to those who are not hams — outside of a disaster area. The session will be held on Tuesday, December 23, 2025, at 8 PM Eastern. Registration is required via the ARRL Learning Center at learn.arrl.org.

Up Next: JS8 for Emergencies

- Date: December 23, 2025
- Time: 8 PM Eastern / 5 PM Pacific
- [Register Now](#) | [Previously Recorded Sessions](#)



ARRL Audio News

Listen to [ARRL Audio News](#), available every Friday. ARRL Audio News is a summary of the week's top news stories in the world of amateur radio and ARRL, along with interviews and other features. [More info](#) | [Listen on Blubrry](#) | Also available on iTunes and Apple Podcasts.

On the Air

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Programming Your Handheld



In support of the November/December 2025 article "Ten Tips for Programming Your 2-Meter Handheld," Karin Thompson, KD4DXX, of RT Systems, joins the podcast to talk about how to approach the crucial task of programming your handheld.

[Listen Now](#)

[More info](#) | [Listen on Blubrry](#) | Also available on iTunes and Apple Podcasts.

An advertisement for the digirig mobile digital modes interface. It features a black rectangular device with a screen and buttons, labeled "digirig mobile". To the right, a list of features is shown: "• Audio and rig control", "• Single USB connection", and "• Small & rugged". Below the device is the website "digirig.net" and a row of social media icons for Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Reddit.

In Brief...

Happy belated birthday to entertainer and comedian Dick Van Dyke, who celebrated his 100th birthday on December 13! Van Dyke served as a narrator for the ARRL film, "The World of Amateur Radio." The film, shot in the mid-70's, presents a then-contemporary introduction to amateur radio aimed at newcomers and the general public.

Commissioned by ARRL and produced by Dave Bell Productions, the film updated earlier ARRL outreach material with then-modern production values and contemporary subject matter. Also on the film were Roy Neal, K6DUE (SK), then a correspondent for NBC News; then-U.S. Senator Barry Goldwater, K7UGA (SK); former Navy radio operator and TV/radio host Arthur Godfrey, K4LIB (SK), and [Hollywood Producer](#) Dave Bell, W6AQ (SK). As an outreach and educational resource, the film served ARRL's efforts to introduce a new generation to amateur radio at a time of rapid technological change.

The Virtual NTS Training Net (VNTN) will take a break over the holidays and will not meet on Christmas Eve or New Year's Eve. The net will resume its normal schedule on Zoom beginning January 6, 2026, at 7 PM ET. VNTN has been in existence since 2024, providing amateurs who may not be within range of a local VHF traffic net an opportunity to learn traffic-handling skills. For more information, visit nts2.arrl.org/virtual-nts-training-net.



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Announcements

ARRL Headquarters in Newington, Connecticut, will close early at noon Eastern Time on Christmas Eve, Wednesday, December 24, 2025. ARRL HQ will remain closed on Thursday and Friday, December 25 - 26, and will also be closed on Thursday, January 1, 2026, in observance of Christmas and New Year's Day. There will be no [W1AW transmissions](#) during the holiday closures. The *ARRL Letter* and [ARRL Audio News](#) will also be on hiatus, returning with special editions on New Year's Eve, Wednesday, December 31. We wish you and yours the very best for the holidays!

The 2026 Southeast VHF Society Conference (SVHFS) conference will be held on April 16 - 19 in Macon, Georgia. All interested in VHF and above amateur operation are invited to attend. The conference will begin with a Thursday night social at a local establishment. The technical conference begins Friday morning and will include a luncheon with a guest speaker and continue technical presentations in the afternoon. The conference events continue with an evening flea market and hospitality suite. Saturday morning the technical presentations continue and conclude early afternoon when the antenna range and rover display opens. The conference ends with an in-house banquet including: a guest speaker, awards, and door prize giveaway. Please visit www.svhfs.org or <https://groups.io/g/SVHFS> for further details, which will include hotel and conference registration details, and call for papers.

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ARRL has earned a 2025 Candid Platinum Seal of Transparency. Originally founded in 1994 and known by many as GuideStar, the organization became the largest source for information about nonprofits. Candid was formed in 2019 following the merger of GuideStar and Foundation Center, and helps donors to find ARRL and learn about the organization's impact. Members and

prospective donors can visit [ARRL's profile](#) on Candid to see how donations help extend our reach in serving the amateur radio community and developing the next generation of hams.

Platinum
Transparency
2025

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ARRL's [2025 Holiday Gift Guide](#) is now available, featuring amateur radio equipment and station accessories from well-known businesses. The guide also includes a special offer from ARRL. 'Tis the Season! Browse and shop at tinyurl.com/arrl-holiday-gift-guide-2025.

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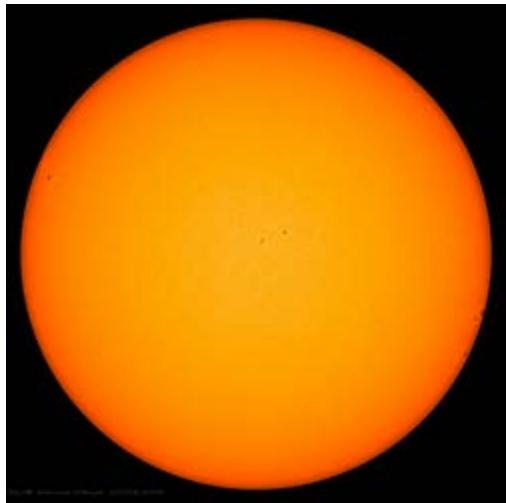
Full details may be found on the ARRL HR web page at www.arrl.org/careers.

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The ARRL Solar Report



ARRL Solar Report for December 18, 2025

Solar activity has been at low levels with only a few C1 flares from Region 4307. Slight growth and consolidation were observed in that region as it neared the SW limb. Slight decay and separation were observed in Region 4311. The rest of the spotted regions were either stable or in decay. Beginning on December 17, an approximately 13-degree filament eruption, centered near N37E12, was observed in SUI 304 imagery. CME analysis will be conducted as imagery becomes available. Solar activity is expected to be low with a slight

Solar image courtesy of NASA/SDO
December 18, 2025.

chance for M-class flares (R1-R2, minor-moderate) December 18 -20.

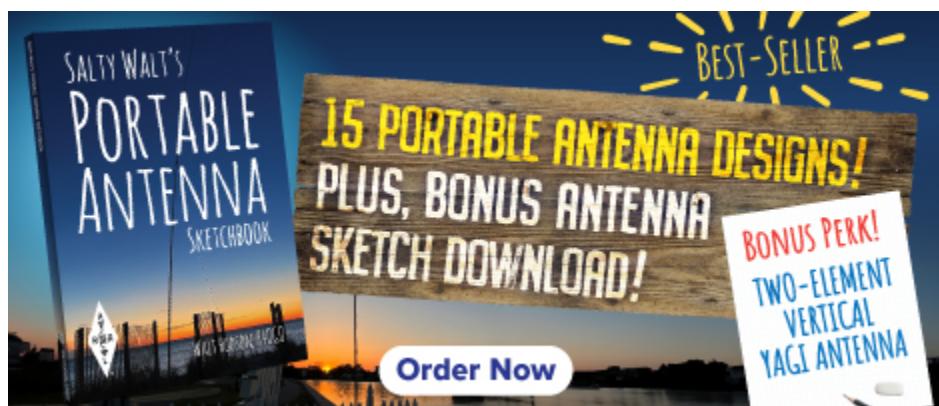
Solar wind parameters continued to be under the influence of a negative polarity coronal hole high-speed stream (CH HSS). Solar wind speed was mostly in the 550 - 650 km/s range. Solar wind parameters are expected to continue to be enhanced through December 18 under negative polarity CH HSS influence. HSS influences are expected to gradually diminish December 19 – 20.

The 10.7-centimeter flux: December 18, 120; December 19 - 21, 115; December 22, 125; December 23, 125, December 24, 145, December 25, 155.

Predicted sunspots: December 18, 120; December 19, 115, December 20, 126, December 21, 111; December 22, 131; December 23, 108; December 24, 136.

For more information concerning radio propagation, [visit](#) the ARRL Technical Information Service, read [A Quick Guide to HF Propagation Using Solar Indices](#), and [check out](#) the Propagation Page of Carl Luetzelschwab, K9LA.

For customizable propagation charts, visit the [VOACAP Online for Ham Radio](#) website.



Just Ahead in Radiosport

- December 20 -- Feld Hell Sprint (digital)
- December 20 -- OK DX RTTY Contest (digital)
- December 20 -- RAC Winter Contest (CW, phone)
- December 20 - 21 -- Croatian DX Contest (CW, phone)
- December 21 -- [ARRL Rookie Roundup](#) (CW)
- December 21 - 22 -- Run for the Bacon QRP Contest (CW)
- December 24 -- SKCC Sprint (CW)
- December 26 -- NCCC FT4 Sprint (digital)
- December 26 -- Weekly RTTY Test (digital)
- December 26 -- NCCC Sprint (CW)
- December 26 -- DARC Christmas Contest (CW, phone)
- December 27 - 28 -- Stew Perry Topband Challenge (CW)
- December 27 - 28 -- Original QRP Contest (CW, phone)
- December 28 -- RAEM Contest (CW)
- December 29 -- YOTA Contest (CW, phone)
- December 29 -- QCX Challenge (CW)
- December 29 -- QCX Challenge (CW)
- December 30 -- QCX Challenge (CW)
- December 31 -- Bogor Old and New Contest (phone)

Remember to visit the [ARRL Contest Calendar](#) for more events and information.

Upcoming Section, State, and Division Conventions

- January 10 | [Ham Radio University](#), ARRL New York City-Long Island Section Convention, Brookville, New York
- January 16 - 17 | [Southwest Florida Regional Hamfest](#), ARRL Southern Florida Section Convention, Fort Myers, Florida
- January 30 - 31 | [Jackson MS Capital City Hamfest](#), ARRL Mississippi State Convention, Jackson, Mississippi
- February 7 | [Hendricks County Hamfest](#), hosting the ARRL Indiana Section Convention, Danville, Indiana
- February 13 - 15 | [Orlando HamCation](#), hosting the ARRL Southeastern Division Convention, Orlando, Florida
- February 20 - 21 | [Greater Houston HamFest](#), hosting the ARRL Texas State Convention, Rosenberg, Texas

Remember to search the [ARRL Hamfest and Convention](#) Database to find events in your area.

Have News for ARRL?

Submissions for *The ARRL Letter* and ARRL News can be sent to news@arrl.org. -- John E. Ross, KD8IDJ, [ARRL News Editor](#)



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Listen to [ARRL Audio News](#), available every Friday.

The *ARRL Letter* is available in an accessible format, posted weekly to the [Blind-hams Groups.io](#) email group. The group is dedicated to discussions about amateur radio as it concerns blind hams, plus related topics including ham radio use of adaptive technology.

NCJ -- National Contest Journal. Published bimonthly, features articles by top contesters, letters, hints, statistics, scores, NA Sprints, and QSO parties.

QEX -- A Forum for Communications Experimenters. Published bimonthly, features technical articles, construction projects, columns, and other items of interest to radio amateurs and communications professionals.

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The *ARRL Letter* is published Thursdays, 51 times each year. ARRL members may subscribe at no cost or unsubscribe by editing their profile at www.arrl.org/opt-in-out.

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