

# WHAT IS AMATEUR RADIO?



by the  
**BRANTFORD AMATEUR  
RADIO CLUB**

**Meetings every Tuesday, 7:30PM at the Red Cross  
building, 25 William St., Brantford  
EVERYONE WELCOME!**

## **What is Amateur Radio?**

According to the dictionary, an amateur is "...a person who engages in a study, sport or other activity for pleasure, rather than for financial benefit or professional reasons." The word originates from the Latin "amare", to LOVE. Amateur radio operators love to contact other amateurs, and they love to experiment with electronics. Anyone can be an amateur radio operator. All you need is interest, and a licence. In amateur radio there are no race, age, creed, colour, sex or class distinctions. It is a service which emphasizes people's common interests, not their difference. Everyone is eligible.

Amateur radio exists in nearly every country of the world. Unlike "CBers", who may radiate only a few watts of power, on a relatively few channels of one band, amateurs can legally run up to 1,000 watts on thousands of frequencies on many different bands, allowing two-way communication with other amateurs around the world...and sometimes in outer space aboard the space shuttles.

Amateur radio is a hobby of self-education and emergency preparedness. Amateur radio operators, sometimes called "hams", stand ready on a moment's notice to assist whenever normal communications channels are overloaded, damaged or disrupted.

## **What Can You Do With It?**

Besides talking to other amateurs at home and in foreign countries, amateurs can increase their communications range by using "repeaters" or automatic relay stations, and tie into the public telephone system. They can also link their local repeater to others throughout the world, using the IRLP system. And, using a computer and microphone, they can link directly to other amateurs or to remote repeaters for voice contact, through the "Echolink" system. As well, some amateurs even operate their own television stations.

## **What can you NOT do?**

Since amateur radio is primarily a hobby, business communications are generally not permitted. All communications must be voluntarily provided without accepting any form of payment. You may assist the police or sponsors of a public event, help in an emergency, or operate for any other worthwhile purpose. You may not "broadcast" to the general public or transmit music over the amateur bands.

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## **Amateur Radio Call Signs**

Many provincial governments have recognized the value of amateur radio as a public emergency service by allowing amateurs to have their call signs on their automobile licence plates. These plate numbers are specially reserved only for the amateur holding that particular call sign.

Every Canadian province and territory has its own unique amateur call sign prefix. Amateurs in Nova Scotia, for example, are assigned VE1 call signs. In Ontario it's either VE3 or VA3. The Brantford Amateur Radio Club's club station is VE3BA.

## **What do Amateurs Talk About?**

Amateurs talk differently from CBers. Our "lingo" is based on communications used by professional radio operators over the years, rather than the language of the road. Amateurs don't use "10" signals, such as "10-4", and they don't give "smokey reports." Instead, you will hear us say "73" meaning "best regards." You will also hear the "Q" code, such as "QTH", meaning "location." All male operators are referred to as "old man", considered a term of respect, while women are called "YLS" or "Young Ladies."

Many amateurs specialize in working "DX" (distant stations). Some go on DXpeditions (excursions to operate from a 'rare' country). Frequently some amateurs participate in a "fox hunt", locating hidden transmitters using direction-finding equipment. There is something for everyone.

## **The 2-Metre Repeater Party Line**

Usually, the first purchase of a new amateur is a 2-metre hand-held transceiver, costing \$200 or more. Chatting on the 2-metre repeater, such as our club owns & operates, is where most "hams" start their amateur radio career. Repeater operation is much like chatting on the old "party line" telephone system. Everything you transmit can be overheard by everyone else, tuned to the repeater. You transmit on one frequency and receive on a second. The repeater antenna, usually located on a high tower, receives and retransmits your voice on the opposite frequency for greatly increased range.

## **Canwarn**

The Brantford Amateur Radio Club is part of Environment Canada's CANWARN system. When severe weather conditions are forecast, our specially trained members are deployed to watch the skies and report on unusual cloud formations (such as funnel clouds) damaging hail, or other conditions. The information helps official forecasters to issue public advisories and warnings.

# **How Do I Become An Amateur Radio Operator?**

Periodically, courses in amateur radio are offered through local radio clubs, although some individuals study on their own. You will need a "Study Guide". Then, before an amateur radio licence is issued by Industry Canada, you will be required to pass an exam. In most cases, these exams are administered by a member of a local radio club who is a department-appointed "delegated examiner." The exam consists of multiple-choice questions about electronic theory, regulations, and operating procedures. It is not mandatory to pass a Morse code test to become an amateur. Those who pass their basic exam with at least 80% are allowed to use extra bands and equipment that make long distance communication possible. Morse code, however, opens a new world of communication that is the most reliable of all. Often a station using Morse code, can get through when adverse conditions make voice communication difficult.

## **Community Service: First Priority**

The Brantford Amateur Radio Club's prime objective is to serve the community. We provide communications, without charge, for many events and situations in Brant County, assisting non-profit organizations several times each year.

Some of them are:

- **The Brantford Classic Run**
- **Paris Run for Heart & Stroke**
- **Human powered vehicle race**
- **United Way Air Show featuring "The Snowbirds"**
- **Paris Santa Claus Parade**
- **Brantford Canada Day activities**
- **Paris Canada Day parade**

**For more information contact:**

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