

2022-03-28 Hamlet Net - Vanity Call Signs

Announcements:

- Biggest announcement is that the LARCFest Ham Fest is this Saturday from 9am to 1pm at the Boulder County Fairgrounds!

There will be a VE session, a live HF radio demonstration, presentation forums, food, and lots of equipment being sold!

Admission is only \$6 for adults - under 16 is free.

Of course, there will also be drawings - prizes include a \$950 DX Engineering gift card, a \$500 Ham Radio Outlet gift card, and a BHI noise reduction module, as well as a 50/50 raffle, so if you're feeling lucky, be sure to stop by!

If you are available to help, I'm sure we can put you to work!

See the ham fest flyer on the club web page at <https://w0eno.org/>

- Test Session Info
 - Had a very successful VE session this past weekend
 - 9 candidates tested, 5 got their Tech licenses, 1 passed his Tech and General, 1 upgraded to General, and two upgraded from General to Extra Class
 - Next VE session is this Saturday, April 1 at LARCFest. It is a Patriot VE session, so there is no fee to take the test. The test location is the Clover Building at the Boulder County Fairgrounds in Longmont. The test session starts at 9am.

You must pre-register for the session - there is a link to the hamstudy site on the club website at w0eno.org at the Licensing/Testing link under the Education menu.

- April 22nd will be an antenna build and test session at the Clover Building for HF antennas that LARC will use for Field day. These will be wire antennas, so stop by to see how to make and test your own antennas, as well as to help out the club!
- Chuck is also planning another antenna building activity - this time, you will be building your own 2 meter Yagi tape measure antennas. There will be a cost for this activity, but it's only \$10 - the club will provide all the materials, tools, and test equipment, and you will go home with a working and tuned antenna that you built yourself!

This antenna will come in handy for the next Fox Hunt that the club is putting on in May, as only DIY and homemade antennas will be allowed!

- Field Day is coming up in June, and the club is starting to work on planning for this event. The ARRL has released the 2023 Field Day logo and rules on their web site at arrl.org/field-day
- Special event going on all week for World Autism Awareness week. Check out call sign W2A on <https://www.qrz.com/> for more information.
- Chuck has sent out emails regarding an antenna takedown and a request for web development assistance.
- You can start earning your 2023 membership or future renewal by acting as NCS for at least 5 nets this year. You can run either this Tuesday night net or the Thursday night net (or both). We have scripts available for both, so all you need is a good connection into the repeater, and somewhere to keep track of names and call signs as people check in. If you're going to be on the net anyway, why not save some dough at the same time! There are four free memberships available for 2023, so don't wait to get started!
- Chuck has set a goal for the Club of running at least one activity a month. This can be a hands-on construction activity, an operating activity like Field Day, a fox hunt, or a special event station. The goal is to get people together to have fun with amateur radio! We have multiple locations at our disposal, as well as lots of Club equipment, so if you have an idea for something you think other hams would like to do, please let us know, and if you're willing to run it, even better!
- The Club is also looking for presentation topics for 2023. If you have any ideas, or better yet, would like to present, please let Chuck know and we'll get you on the schedule!
- All club activities are open to anyone - members and non-members. ~~If you have questions, ask them on a net or~~ send email to elmer@w0eno.org
- Club breakfast Saturday mornings at 8am at the Hidden Cafe in Longmont
 - Come meet other Club members and discuss amateur radio

Presenter: Bryan, AF0W

Topic: Vanity Call Signs

- When you were granted your first license, you received what is called a "systematically-assigned call sign" in the call area corresponding to your mailing address

- The US is divided into 10 regions or call areas, numbered 0 through 9
- Colorado is in the 0 area, along with North and South Dakota, Minnesota, Nebraska, Iowa, Kansas and Missouri
- The FCC sequentially assigns the next available call sign for a given area when a new license is assigned
- As of the 25th, the last 2-by-3 call sign assigned was KF0MBG (kilo-fox-zero-mike-bravo-golf), so the next one will be KF0MBH
- When you upgrade, the NCVEC Form 605 includes a checkbox where you indicate that you want to change your call sign to the next systematically-assigned one for your new license class
- You can also submit an NCVEC Form 605 to request a new systematic call sign in your current license class at any time.
- Another way for you to change your call sign is to take advantage of the FCC's vanity call sign process
 - The FCC allows all amateurs to request a specific call sign, called a vanity call sign
 - You must still conform to the call sign specifications for your license class (Tech and General: 2x3 and 1x3, Extra: those plus 2x2 and 1x2 and 2x1)
 - There are also geographic restrictions, such as any call sign with an "L" (lima) as the second letter can only be assigned to amateurs in Alaska
 - There are also some other restrictions, such as the call sign cannot contain the letters "SOS" or Q-Signals such as "QRS"
- Some people want their initials or a catchy acronym (K9FBI) in their call sign, some want a family member's call sign, some want a shorter or easier-to-pronounce (or send via CW) call sign
- The FCC allows an amateur with an expired license to renew it for up to 2 years after it expires
 - Because of this, you cannot claim an expired call sign for 2 years and one day after its expiration date
 - If an amateur has passed away (or becomes a "silent key" in ham lingo), you can request that the FCC cancel the call sign if you can provide information such as a death certificate or obituary for the SK

- Note that the FCC will generate an "expiration date" for such a call sign that will give everyone 30 days notice so that others have a chance to apply for it - it is not "reserved" for you
- The call area (i.e. number) in a call sign used to have to match your station location (much like telephone area codes)
 - If you moved to a new call area, you had to get a new call sign containing that call area number
 - Now, you can request a vanity call sign from any call area
 - This is similar to how phone number area codes. A number of years ago, the area code in your phone number corresponded to where you lived. A phone number with a 915 area code was from west Texas - guaranteed.
 - At some point, phone numbers (including area codes) became portable. You could now take your number with you - so if you moved to Colorado, you could keep that 915 area code.
 - You may hear some operators who have been licensed for a long time complain about this, as they were used to identifying locations based on call signs
 - For example, if they hear a W6 (whiskey-6) call sign, they assume it's someone on the west coast - and possibly use this information to point their directional antenna to try to get a better signal
 - Nowadays, you can look up a call sign on either the FCC web site or on QRZ to get their address - QRZ will even show the bearing from your location to theirs
 - This is also why you may see information on older amateur radio web sites saying that you have to identify as "Portable" if you are outside of your home call area
 - For example, if I'm operating from El Paso, Texas instead of Colorado, I'd identify as "AF0W portable 5" to indicate that I'm physically operating from area 5
 - While you're welcome to identify like this, there is no longer a requirement to do so
- Used to be a regulatory fee per application (\$20?) - that went away in 2015, but since the FCC has implemented the \$35 administrative fee for license modifications, you have to pay it when requesting a vanity call sign

- Apparently, you can submit a request to the FCC to refund this fee if you are not awarded any of the call signs on your application.
- You can apply for up to 25 call signs per application
- Vanity call signs are assigned by a random lottery between all people applying on a given date unless you are a former holder of the call sign, or it belonged to a deceased relative
 - So if the first date a call sign becomes available is today, anyone submitting a vanity request for it will be entered in a drawing, and one of them will randomly be selected to receive it, so it's not a "first come, first served"
- There are currently 50 1x2 and 2x1 available
- You apply for a vanity call sign by logging into the FCC ULS licensing manager and clicking on the "Vanity Call Sign" link on the right
- ae7q.com and radioqth.net have vanity call sign information
 - AE7Q shows a "phonetic weight" and "Morse weight"
 - For example, my first callsign was KD0ZZX (kilo-delta-0-zulu-zulu-xray) - quite a mouthful!
 - It has a phonetic weight of 12 syllables compared to AF0W with a phonetic weight of 8.
 - My first callsign has a Morse weight of 86, while AF0W has a weight of 54, meaning if I ever learn Morse code, it'll take less time to send my current call sign

Summary

- If you are unhappy with your current call sign, there are options for getting a different one, including a new systematically-assigned call sign, or a vanity call sign
- To get access to the shortest call sign groups, 2x1 and 1x2, you've got to get your Amateur Extra license first

Questions:

- **The question for the week is:** If you have a vanity call sign, how did you pick it, and if you don't, do you plan on getting one eventually?
- **In my case,** I do have a vanity call sign. I was pretty lucky - I managed to snag a 2x1 call sign off my first vanity application.

I wanted to get a "final call sign" quickly, so if I was to eventually get a hat, shirt, or

something else with my call sign on it, I wouldn't have to change it later if my call sign changed.

I just picked the lowest CW and phonetic weight call signs that were available at that time - the letters don't have any significance to me

More Info:

- Ham radio call sign history: <https://www.eham.net/article/38849>
- AE7Q: <https://www.ae7q.com/>
- RadioQTH: <https://www.radioqth.net/>
- FCC ULS: <https://www.fcc.gov/wireless/universal-licensing-system>

Notes:

- If you have ideas for net topics or general meeting topics / presenters, please let us know! Tell us on a net, or send email to k0itp@w0eno.org

Email to elmer@w0eno.org

1. K0ITP - Chuck - Firestone
2. W0PPC - Steve - Lyons / Echolink Alaska
3. KM6SJA - Steve - Longmont
4. WB0AFA - Jeff - Frederick
5. NA0A - John - Boulder
6. AF0W - Bryan - El Paso via Echolink -
7. KV0N - Raman - Lafayette
8. AE0DO - John - North of Longmont
9. AB1R - Eric - Castle Pines

You don't have to relinquish your Alaska KL7 or Hawaii H6 call sign when you move

One former club member who is now silent key had the systematically-assigned call sign AC0DC

One thing to keep in mind is to always use proper phonetics - don't say "K0-big little ladies"

AB1R - Requested a refund via FCC web site - was this after \$35 fee? Was for \$35 fee. Took about 2 months per refund.