

Ham 75 - Weather season

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First Thanksgiving, then Christmas, next New Year all happen within 5 weeks. That is ample reason to call it the Holiday Season. It really is the most wonderful time of the year.

However, we live in Oklahoma. Now is the beginning of a new season – severe weather with tornadoes. These strike trepidation into people from other areas. Here, we become weather junkies following information to track the weather movement to the street intersection and the minute in time.

How does that come about? Our area has the best meteorologists at the National Weather Service (NWS), the best on-camera meteorologists, the best storm chasers, and the best ham storm-spotters in the country. We have visited every major market and lived in areas with other forms of severe weather. This area has the best talent.

In the past couple of seasons, our severe-weather has been well, less severe. But those of us who follow the physical science, as well as the old farmers and ranchers, will assure you that weather is cyclical. It is not a unidirectional phenomenon as promoted by social science. The natural exponential decay to lower temperature takes millennia to realize. Since weather is cyclical, we may well get the ‘opportunity’ to see more ‘exciting’ weather this year.

Where can you fit in the meteorology picture? The NWS has the information. “Being a storm spotter not only means dedication but also training. Each winter and spring the Tulsa office of the National Weather Service trains members of police & fire departments, emergency management officials, and amateur radio operators on spotting techniques.”

Both of us, as amateur (ham) radio operators, have participated in the training numerous times. We plan to again this year. Note, we are discussing ‘storm-spotters’ not ‘storm-chasers’. Storm chasers are professionals in a significant risk profession. Storm spotters report on what we see. The classes are in-person or on-line. There are nine classes between February and March.

How do you become a ham? How many people do you know who wanted to be a ham at one time? In the early days, Morse Code kept many from pursuing their interest, but Code is no longer required. Some of us started the journey in high school. Others much later.

A couple of years ago, the Pastor of Evergreen Church asked a couple of us to develop ham training for weather and emergency communications for those interested, for an activity and hobby tool, and for STEM to the younger crew. At the last exam, there was a 14-year-old young man and his dad taking the beginning-level Technician exam together. Behind them was an 82-year-old taking the highest-level Extra Class exam. Two ladies, who we do not talk about age, passed their exams. One took both the Tech and then the General, while the other passed the Extra. Several others took exams. All passed.

What an amazing illustration of Ham radio. Just a simple question. What do you think the odds are that the 14-year-old will develop a societal-supporting, mentally-stimulating, well-paying STEM career?

We can help you become a ham in four weeks. Over the years, we have done it with hundreds from great-grandfathers to stay-at-home moms, from college-students to truck-drivers, from engineers to social workers. We wrote the study guide book, literally. We do not ask your technical ability; we only ask your interest level. The group is open to anyone of similar interest. You can have your ham license and get your National Weather Service storm-training before the next severe weather season. How cool is that?

With a license to learn, monthly Show ‘n Tell demos explain how-to-build your own set-ups, give time for exchange of ideas and questions, and build camaraderie. After all, Ham radio takes two to communicate. We each provide our own equipment, but another group, TARC, operates the radio network we all use for severe weather communications.

Think about you can realize a long-forgotten dream. Are you curious? What if? You can aim a youngster toward a STEM career. This is called living life together.

The article is from our newspaper column as Op117.
Life is good. Enjoy!

