

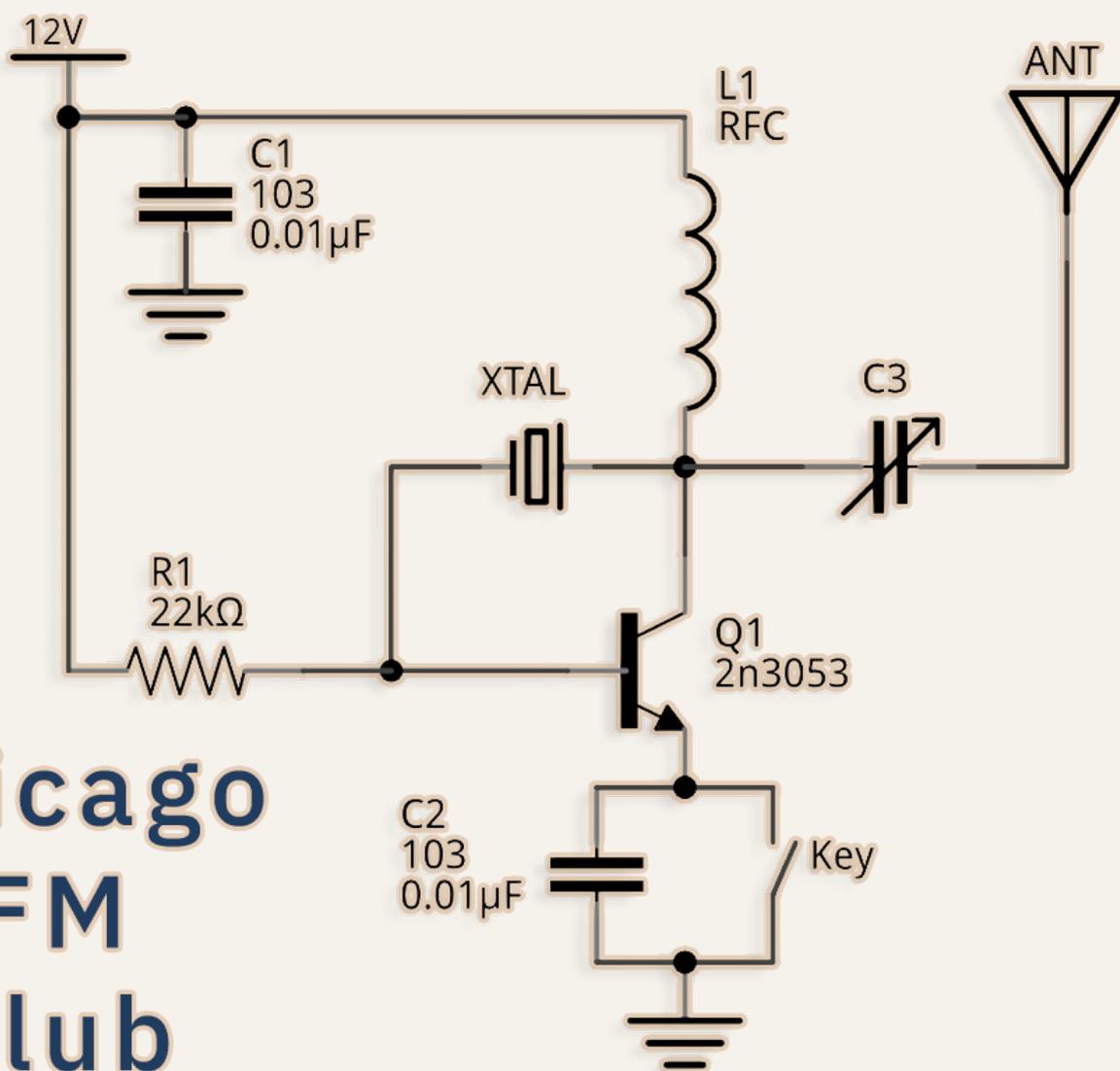
Squelch Tale



CHICAGO FM CLUB • EST 1965

VOLUME 61 | ISSUE 2

FEBRUARY 2026



Chicago
FM
Club

Hello to all my fellow CFMC members,

Well, here we are in February. It may be starting to look like spring, but don't be fooled—we still have some winter to get through. While it's still a little cold outside, this is a great time to start thinking about all those antenna projects you want to tackle once the weather finally warms up.

I don't have too much to report this month. The club is doing well, and we have plenty of events coming up throughout the year. I'm hoping to see our new members come out and join us, along with our longtime members too.

Don't forget our meeting this Wednesday night. If you haven't been to a meeting yet, please come check it out—meet your fellow members, enjoy a cup of coffee and a donut or two, and sit in on the presentations.

If any of our members have ideas for events, please let us know. We're always open to suggestions and would be happy to help get them off the ground. Like they say, it takes a village to raise a child—well, it takes a village to run a club as well.-----

73,

Paul Gris | *N9JZY, Chicago FM Club President*



Upcoming CFMC Events

Please check on the air for the most up to date info

Fri - 2/20 | 7:00pm
Friday Night Social
D'Agostino's Pizza and Pub
*3131 N Thatcher Ave
River Grove, IL 60171*

Wed - 2/25 | 7:30pm
CFMC Monthly Meeting
16th District Police Station
*5151 N Milwaukee Ave
Chicago, IL 60630*

Fri - 2/27 | 7:00pm
Friday Night Social
Ricobene's
*252 W 26th St.
Chicago, IL 60616*

Fri - 3/6 | 7:00pm
Friday Night Social
Gulliver's Pizza & Pub
*17W517 Roosevelt Rd
Oakbrook Terrace, IL 60181*

Fri - 3/13 | 7:00pm
Friday Night Social
Portillo's
*7308 W. Lawrence Ave.
Harwood Heights, IL 60706*

Sat - 3/14 | 10:00am
Ham and Eggs
Lumes Pancake House
*11601 S. Western Ave.
Chicago, IL 60643*

Fri - 3/20 | 7:00pm
Friday Night Social
D'Agostino's Pizza and Pub
*3131 N Thatcher Ave
River Grove, IL 60171*

Wed - 3/25 | 7:30pm
CFMC Monthly Meeting
16th District Police Station
*5151 N Milwaukee Ave
Chicago, IL 60630*

CFMC Repeaters

70 cm Repeater

443.750 (+5MHz) PL 114.8

EchoLink: 62478 or WA9ORC-R

AllStar: Node 555492

Regarded as the crown jewel of the Chicago area ham community, CFMC's 443.750 MHz repeater offers exceptional coverage spanning from Northwest Indiana to Southern Wisconsin — even reaching parts of Michigan. Connected to AllStar (Node 555492) and EchoLink (Node 62478 / WA9ORC-R), this system consistently delivers impressive long range performance. It's also home to the long-running Night Watch Net, held nightly at 10:00pm, welcoming operators from near and far for friendly check-ins and conversation.-----

2-Meter Repeater

146.760 (-0.6MHz) PL 107.2

EchoLink: 448319 or KD9YDD-R

AllStar: Node 555491

The club's flagship 2-meter repeater operates on 146.760 MHz with a PL tone of 107.2 and is available on both AllStar (Node 555491) and EchoLink (Node 448319 / KD9YDD-R). This robust Motorola Quantar system, known for its clarity and dependability, supports nets, public service events, and daily traffic, serving as a reliable meeting point for hams across the region. The 146.760 output frequency also serves as the CFMC emergency frequency should repeaters go offline.-----

WIRES-X (System Fusion)

145.350 (-1.6MHz) DCS 072

Located in Park Ridge with an antenna elevation of 180 feet, the CFMC System Fusion repeater on 145.350 MHz supports both C4FM digital and analog operation (DCS 072 on the analog side). Integrated with the WIRES-X network, it allows operators to connect to hundreds of rooms and repeaters worldwide at the push of a button. Whether operating locally or checking into nets across the globe, this repeater offers flexibility and reach while remaining accessible to analog users.-----

220 MHz North

224.100 (-1.6MHz) PL 110.9

AllStar: Node 555490

CFMC proudly supports the often-overlooked 1.25-meter band with two well-placed repeaters. The northern site, located in the suburbs and operating on 224.100 MHz, runs a 15-watt DX Radio repeater and is connected to AllStar Node 555490. Though modest in power, its performance and reach are impressive, offering solid coverage across northern Chicagoland. This repeater provides a quiet, low-traffic space for ragchews and exploring a less crowded portion of the amateur spectrum.-----

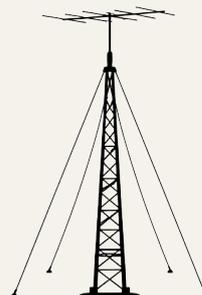
220 MHz South

224.180 (-1.6MHz) PL 110.9

Strategically located in Worth, IL, the southern 220 repeater mirrors the performance of its northern counterpart. Operating on 224.180 MHz, it uses a DX Radio 15-watt single-site repeater. This system extends CFMC's reach into the southern suburbs and offers hams another opportunity to explore the 220 MHz band — an excellent option for clear, local communications with minimal QRM.-----

All Licensed Amateur Radio Operators are welcome to use the CFMC Repeaters for normal station-to-station calls. If you enjoy using them and like the people you hear, consider joining our Club.

The Chicago FM Club is a not-for-profit amateur radio club operating the WA9ORC repeater systems. Membership is open to all licensed amateurs and is encouraged for those who use the repeaters often.-----



The Night Watch

443.750 - Every Night at 10:00pm

CFMC's most attended net offers a great mix of camaraderie, conversation, and community. Come for the knowledge, stay for the fun each and every night of the week!-----

Monday "Drive at Five"

443.750 - Monday at 5:00pm

Do you have a case of the Mondays? Kick off your week with the Drive at Five! This relaxed, mobile-friendly net is perfect for your commute or your shack.-----

Tuesday 2-Meter Info Net

146.760 - Tuesdays at 9:00pm

The 2-Meter Info Net is a casual, ragchew-style net where members and guests can hear the latest updates about club events, activities, and announcements.-----

Wednesday 220 Round Table

224.100 - Wed at 7:30pm *(Except Meeting Nights)*

Grab your 220 radio and join the 220 rebels on a social net focused on keeping the 220 band alive. Don't have a 220 radio? Don't worry, you can still join with Allstar on Node 555490.-----

Thursday 2-Meter Tech Net

146.760 - Thursdays at 8:00pm

Got a question about radios, antennas, software, or anything ham-related? The Thursday 2-Meter Tech Net is your place to learn and share. Bring your questions and join the discussion. No question is too small, and everyone is welcome!-----

Sunday

Night Watch - 10pm

Bill Deans | KD9TWA

Monday

"Drive at Five" 220 Net - 5pm

Kevin E Suddoth | KD9ZDR

Night Watch - 10pm

Paul Gris | N9JZY

Tuesday

2-Meter Info Net - 9pm

Tom Stobble | KB9AJM

Bob Sunden | N9XCD

Night Watch - 10pm

John Cerza | N9SRV

Wednesday

220 Round Table - 7:30pm

Jim Fanning | KD9WNR

Night Watch - 10pm

Kevin E Suddoth | KD9ZDR

Thursday

2-Meter Tech Net - 8:00pm

Naeem Ahmed | N9DDD

Night Watch - 10pm

Craig O Talley | KD9UQE

Friday

Night Watch - 10pm

Marc Holland | AA9HM

Saturday

Night Watch - 10pm

Joshua Hamlett | KD9MXV

Night Watch January Check-In Stats

	Call	Name	Check-Ins
1	W9BAZ	Mikey	27
2	WX9LAR	Larry	24
3	N9SRV	John	21
3	KC9KXG	Jim	21
4	KD9ZDR	Kevin	20
5	KD9MXV	Joshua	19
5	WI9HF	Chad	19
6	KC9IMF	Alan	18

Night Watch Monthly Check-In Stats

Month	Call Signs	Check-Ins
June	96	529
July	96	683
August	93	579
Sept	97	492
Oct	81	486
Nov	79	466
Dec	102	560
Jan	91	489

RADIO of the MONTH

Icom IC-7300

The Icom IC-7300 has firmly established itself as one of the most popular and widely recognized HF transceivers in amateur radio. Since its introduction, it has earned a reputation for combining strong performance, modern features, and an approachable design that appeals to operators at all experience levels. Years after its release, it remains a common fixture in many shacks and continues to be a trusted choice for everyday HF operation.

Covering HF and 6 meters, the IC-7300 supports SSB, CW, and digital modes with ease, making it a versatile option for a wide range of operating interests. Its direct-sampling SDR architecture provides excellent receive performance, helping operators copy weak signals clearly and effectively manage crowded bands. Whether used for casual ragchews, contest operation, digital modes, or DX chasing, the IC-7300 has proven itself capable across many operating styles.

One of the most recognizable features of the IC-7300 is its built-in spectrum scope and waterfall display. These visual tools give operators immediate insight into band activity, making it easier to locate signals, identify open frequencies, and monitor changing conditions. While not required for effective operation, the ability to see activity across the band has become a defining part



of the IC-7300 experience and a feature many operators quickly come to rely on.

The radio's overall interface strikes a thoughtful balance between simplicity and depth. Common controls are easy to access, while more advanced adjustments are available without feeling overwhelming or overly complex. This design makes the IC-7300 approachable for newer HF operators while still providing the flexibility and control that experienced operators expect from a modern transceiver.

Over time, the IC-7300 has earned a reputation not just as a capable radio, but as a dependable one. Its longevity and continued relevance speak to a design that got many things right from the start. For operators looking for a proven HF transceiver with modern features and a strong support ecosystem, the IC-7300 remains a solid and reliable choice.-----

Jeff Wuerth | *KD9RVJ, Squelch Tale Editor*



IC-7300

- **Transmit:** HF, 6M
- **Modes:** SSB, CW, AM, FM, RTTY
- **Output Power:** 100W (25W AM)
- **Power:** 13.8V DC ~21A
- **Antenna Tuner:** Integrated

Meeting Minutes

Chicago FM Club (CFMC) Meeting Minutes				
Date		Wednesday, January 28, 2026		
Location		16 th District, Chicago Police Department		
Meeting Called to Order		19:33		
Officers Present			Board Members Present	
President	Paul, N9JZY	Present	Doug, KD9YFR	Present
Vice President	John, N9SRY	Present	Paul, N9ISP	Present
Secretary	Jim, KD9WNR	Present	Kevin, KD9ZDR	Not Present
Treasurer	Barry, K9FMB	Present	Alan, KC9IMF	Present
			Charlie, W9CEF	Present
			Joshua, KD9MXV (Trustee)	Present
Member Introductions				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recitation of Pledge of Allegiance • Roll Call of All Present <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Total of 22 Members were present 				
Announcements				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board Meeting - January 20, 2026 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Bill, KD9TWA confirmed as VE Team Chairperson ○ Charlie, W9CEF confirmed as Education Chair ○ Board agreed to begin working on updating the Constitution and Bylaws <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Approval to incorporate a new section into the Bylaws pertaining to the management and acceptable use policy for our websites and social media platforms. • Membership Status <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 172 on Transition Roster <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ One New Member: Joe, KE9EPJ ○ 116 Confirmed 2026 Members ○ 56 Pending Renewals ○ Members that have not renewed by March 1st will be removed from the roster. 				
Reading and Approval of Minutes				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members were polled to confirm receipt of the Minutes from the previous meeting as published in the Squelch Tale. A motion was made to accept the Minutes by Paul, N9ISP and seconded by Vern, K9VRT; The Minutes were accepted by voice vote. 				
Treasurers Report				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Barry, K9FMB presented the Treasurers Report and announced that the Treasurers Report is available for review by any Voting Member. A motion was made to accept the Treasurers Report by Joe, K9CTA and seconded by Paul, N9ISP; The Treasurers Report was accepted by voice vote. 				

Committee Reports

- VE Team:
 - Vern, K9VRT
 - One new Technician: Charlie, KE9???
 - Vern is retiring as VE Chair
 - Vern oversaw 91 sessions and administered over 400 Exams!
 - Bill, KD9TWA taking over as VE Team Chairperson
 - Radio Expo:
 - John, N9SRY
 - Radio Expo Chairperson position still OPEN
 - Charlie, W9CEF volunteered as co-chair for 2026
 - Tech Committee:
 - John, N9SRY
 - Status of the D-star Repeater
 - Not currently on-the-air; To be removed from Website
 - Discussion on redeployment of a Repeater at the site
 - Straw Poll will be sent to members for feedback (see New Business)
 - Status of the 2m Repeater
 - The Quantar Repeater is being Serviced
 - Currently on backup Kenwood Repeater
 - Temporarily No P25
 - Operational, but needs work on Antenna; Waiting for better weather.
 - Website:
 - Jim, KD9WNR
 - CFMC Website
 - Homepage Updated with a Tiled Gallery... Easier to update and more interactive.
 - All Board and Committee appointments updated.
 - CFMC Social Media
 - By decision of the Board, the CFMC Discord will remain a Members Only forum. Members that have not renewed their membership will be “kicked” March 1st.
 - We have updated the “Rules” on our Facebook Group and Discord Server. New Users must acknowledge them before joining.
- No Memes or Altered Content**
To maintain integrity and respect for individuals and intellectual property, the following is prohibited on this page:
- Memes, altered images, or AI-generated animations depicting real persons.
 - Any content that uses copyrighted material without proper authorization.
- Violations may result in removal of the content and further action as necessary.*
- Squelch Tale:
 - Jeff, KD9RVJ
 - New look for 2026
 - Clarified timing of last Squelch Tale to Non-Renewing Members
 - This is the last edition of the Squelch Tale that will be received via email by 2025 Members who have not renewed.
 - Field Day:
 - Bill, KD9TWA
 - Winter Field Day was a big Success!
 - 516 Contacts
 - 1st in Illinois (currently)
 - 12th in the US (currently)
 - Over 100 Pictures taken by our Members on our Facebook Page
<https://chicagofmclub.org/winter-field-day-2026/>
 - Education
 - Charlie, W9CEF
 - We are looking for people to present relevant topics at our General Meeting.
 - Contact Charlie if you want to Present or have any ideas for topics you'd like to see.

Unfinished Business

- None

New Business

- Motion by Bill, KD9TWA, for the Secretary to distribute a Straw Poll via email to all Members asking their preferences regarding replacing the second Repeater at the Park Ridge site. Seconded by Joe, K9CTA.
 - Straw Poll will be developed to get feedback from Members:
 - No Need for a Repeater at this Site?
 - Replace/restore the D-Star Repeater?
 - Put up a Repeater in another Mode (i.e., DMR)?

Adjourn

- A motion was made to adjourn the meeting by Bill, N9WRP and seconded by Joe, K9CTA. The motion was passed by voice vote.
- The meeting was Adjourned at 20:33

50/50

- Jeff, KD9RVJ ran the 50/50; Won by Joe, KD9WXE; Joe donated the winnings back to the Club.

Post Meeting Presentation

- Joshua, KD9MXV gave a presentation on "Ethics and Operations for Amateur Radio".

CFMC Winter Field Day 2026

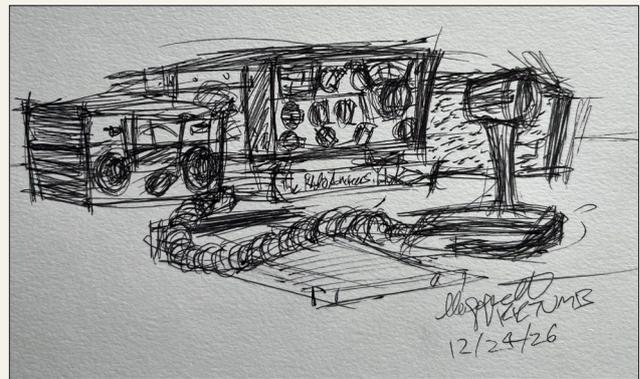
Winter Field Day 2026 was a tremendous success for the Chicago FM Club, bringing together strong operating, great fellowship, and an outstanding level of participation throughout the entire weekend. Operating under the club call sign W9C in the Indoor category, members and guests gathered at Camp Reinberg for a full weekend of winter operating, hands-on learning, and community engagement.

From Friday setup through the final hours on Sunday, the event maintained steady momentum and a welcoming atmosphere. Stations were active across multiple bands and modes, with operators, loggers, and visitors all contributing to a highly productive activation. Over the course of the weekend, the club logged an impressive 516 QSOs, achieving a final multiplier of 7 and a total score of 3,612. Following log submissions, W9C held one of the highest scores in Illinois, reflecting the dedication, preparation, and teamwork that defined the entire weekend.

One of the standout highlights of this year's event was the vintage Drake "boat anchor" HF station supplied by Doug, KD9YFR. The station quickly became a favorite among operators and visitors alike, offering a unique opportunity to operate vintage HF equipment in a live Winter Field Day environment. It generated a great deal of interest throughout the weekend and served as both an

educational and nostalgic operating experience alongside the club's more modern stations.

The club would also like to extend a special thank you to Paul, N9ISP, for generously donating meat for the weekend BBQ. His contribution helped keep everyone well-fed and added to the warm, social atmosphere that made the event so enjoyable despite the winter conditions. Meals and shared downtime between operating shifts gave members a chance to connect and simply enjoy being together on the air and off.



Another wonderful addition to the weekend was the presence of the Radio Arts Club from the Art Institute of Chicago, who joined us on-site during the event. Their visit brought a creative perspective to the activation, and one of their members even produced a hand drawing of the vintage Drake station, capturing a unique artistic interpretation of the operating setup. It was a fantastic opportunity to introduce amateur radio to a new and creative audience, and their enthusiasm added an extra layer of energy to the entire weekend.

Operating from the heated cabin at Camp Reinberg provided a comfortable and flexible base of operations, allowing members to participate for a few hours or the entire weekend. The ability to come and go,



CFMC Highlights

combined with continuous on-site activity from Friday afternoon through Sunday morning, helped ensure consistent operating and strong overall results. Just as importantly, the event showcased what the Chicago FM Club does best: collaboration, mentorship, technical experimentation, and community involvement.

Overall, Winter Field Day 2026 was not only a high-scoring event for W9C, but also a meaningful and memorable experience for everyone who attended. The combination of strong operating, unique station setups, great food, and enthusiastic participation made it one of the club's most successful winter activations to date.

As we look ahead, planning will soon begin for Summer Field Day, and we hope to see even more members, guests, and first-time operators join us for another full weekend of on-the-air activity and club fellowship. If you enjoyed Winter Field Day — or were unable to attend this year — Summer Field Day will be another excellent opportunity to get involved, get on the air, and experience amateur radio in a fun and collaborative field setting.-----

Jeff Wuerth | *KD9RVJ, Squelch Tale Editor*





Fox Hunt Info

-1st Sat Hunt - Across from Whole Foods, Elmhurst, Rt 83 north of St Charles Rd - CFAR input 147.750 MHz

-2nd Sat Hunt - Downers Grove Fitness & Rec Center parking lot, off Belmont Rd south of Ogden Av - Simplex 146.565 MHz

-3rd Sat Hunt - Centennial Park, Addison, Rohlwing Rd, 0.4 miles south of Lake St - CFMC input 146.160 MHz

-4th Sat Hunt - Wood Dale Rd & Sivert south of Thorndale - Simplex 146.34 MHz

Hunters gather about a half hour before the hunt. Everyone is invited to participate or ride along (call in advance). All hunts start at 8PM.

January 17, 2026

Fox; Matt | KC9SEM Patty | N9PLS

There were 4 hunt teams. They headed north to Hanover Park. John's team met up with Marty and Bill. We were in a parking lot with Marty and Bill heading west and John's team went east. We found Matt and Patty in their car for the win with Marty and Bill returning a minute later for 2nd. Don and Tom followed a while later to end the hunt.

We went to Giordano's in Streamwood for the munch.

Hiding Spot - 41.989484, -88.153671
Parking lot to Ignite Medical Resort of Hanover Pk off Lake St.-----

Story by:
Mike Brost | WA9FTS

Results:

1. John | WD9EXW
Mike | WA9FTS (Janet)
2. Marty | N9LTE (Bill)
3. Don | W9RA
4. Tom | N9CBA

February Meeting

The Chicago FM Club will hold its February meeting on Wednesday, February 25th at 7:30pm at the 16th District Police Station. We look forward to seeing both new and longtime members as we continue kicking off the year with upcoming events and club activities.

Please note that VE testing will not take place prior to this meeting. The club is implementing a new scheduling protocol for testing.-----



VE Testing Procedure Update

The Chicago FM Club is updating its VE testing procedure to better streamline scheduling and ensure sessions are properly staffed and organized. Moving forward, all exam sessions will be scheduled through the official online session calendar at <https://hamstudy.org/sessions>.

Members and prospective hams looking to test should now use this site to locate and register for available exam sessions, rather than expecting walk-in testing before regular club meetings. This new process will help our VE team plan ahead, manage attendance, and provide a smoother testing experience for everyone involved.

Please be aware that, as part of this transition, testing will no longer automatically take place before monthly meetings unless a session is specifically listed and scheduled online. We encourage anyone planning to test to check the HamStudy session page regularly and register in advance to secure a seat.-----

CFMC on the WEB

 Check out our website
<https://www.chicagofmclub.org/>

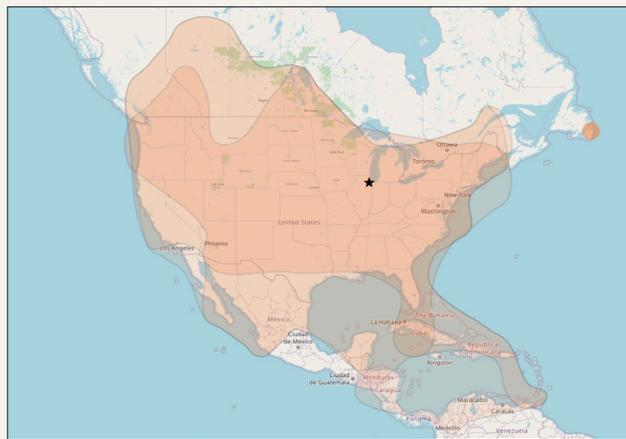
 Chat with us on Discord

 Connect with us on Group.io
<https://groups.io/g/CFMC/>

 Join us on Facebook

 Follow us on X
https://x.com/CFMC_WA9ORC

Tech Talk



What Makes Winter HF Different

One of the most noticeable differences during winter months is the reduction in atmospheric noise. Thunderstorms, which contribute significantly to background noise on HF, are far less common. This results in lower noise floors, particularly on 80 and 40 meters, where weak signals can often be copied more easily than during the summer. When combined with the in-shack noise cleanup discussed last month, this quieter environment allows operators to hear signals that were previously buried.

Shorter daylight hours also play a major role in shaping winter propagation. As the sun sets earlier, the ionosphere transitions sooner from daytime to nighttime conditions. Forty meters often becomes productive earlier in the evening, while 80 meters can open well before midnight and remain active into the morning hours. Higher bands such as 20 meters may have shorter daily openings, but when conditions are right those openings can be strong and remarkably clean.

Winter also enhances grayline propagation — the period around sunrise and sunset when signals can travel long distances along the boundary between day and night. Because winter nights are longer, grayline effects last longer as well, providing extended opportunities for long-distance contacts, particularly on the lower HF bands.

Antenna performance in winter is often better than expected. Snow cover and frozen ground can improve ground conductivity, sometimes benefiting vertical antennas and low-band installations. Even modest wire antennas can perform very well when seasonal conditions cooperate. Rather than focusing on antenna limitations, winter is an excellent time to learn how your antenna behaves across different bands and times of day.

Winter HF Propagation

Building on a Clean Signal

Now that we've spent time cleaning up noise inside our shacks — tracking down interference from power supplies, LED lighting, networking equipment, and other modern electronics — many of us are likely hearing the HF bands in a new way. Last month's Tech Talk focused on identifying and reducing noise generated inside our homes, and for many operators that work paid immediate dividends. With those local noise sources minimized, winter provides an ideal opportunity to shift our attention outward and focus on how HF propagation itself changes during this season.

Winter HF operation often rewards awareness and patience more than raw power. The combination of quieter atmospheric conditions, longer nights, and predictable seasonal band behavior creates opportunities that may be easy to miss if we assume the bands behave the same way year-round. With a clean receive environment, these changes become far more obvious — and far more useful.

Tech Talk

Using Propagation Charts to Your Advantage

While listening and experience are invaluable, propagation charts and real time tools allow operators to make informed decisions about when and where to operate. One of the most useful visual tools for understanding HF conditions is a real-time propagation map that shows where signals are currently being heard around the world. A particularly good learning tool is the HF Real-Time Propagation Map, available at: <https://hf.dxview.org/>

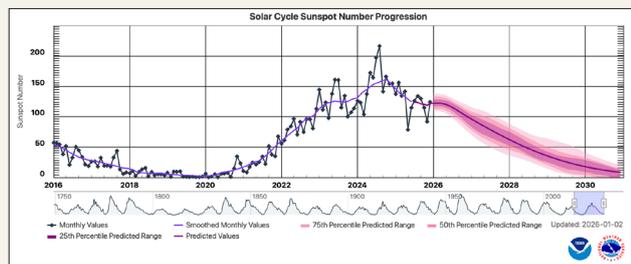
This interactive map displays current HF activity by band and location, using real reception reports to show where signals are propagating at any given moment. By selecting different bands and adjusting the time of day, operators can quickly see how propagation changes and which bands are most active.

To get the most out of these tools, it helps to understand the underlying indices and charts that describe propagation conditions.

How to Read Propagation Charts and Indices

Solar Flux and Sunspot Numbers

Solar Flux Index (SFI) and sunspot numbers are indicators of how active the sun is, which directly affects ionization in the ionosphere.

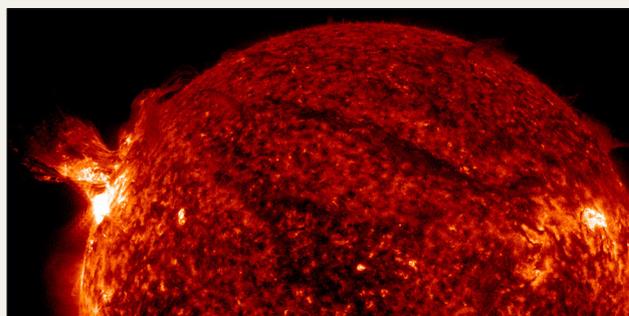


Higher values generally mean more ionization, which raises the Maximum Usable Frequency (MUF) – the highest frequency that can be reflected back to Earth rather than passing through the ionosphere into space.

When solar flux and sunspot numbers are higher, bands like 20 meters and above are more likely to support long-distance contacts. During periods of lower solar activity, these higher bands may have shorter or less reliable openings, while lower bands such as 40 and 80 meters remain dependable. Watching trends in solar flux over several days can help operators anticipate improving or declining conditions rather than reacting after the fact.

K-Index and A-Index (Geomagnetic Activity)

The K-Index and A-Index measure how disturbed the Earth's magnetic field is due to solar activity. These values are critical for understanding stability on the HF bands. A low K-Index (generally 0–2) indicates calm geomagnetic conditions, which usually correspond to stable and predictable propagation. Higher values suggest geomagnetic disturbances that can cause fading, absorption, or complete band shutdowns – particularly on higher HF frequencies.



For practical operating, low K and A values are good news, especially for DX work. Elevated indices don't necessarily mean the bands are unusable, but they do suggest that lower frequencies may perform better and that propagation paths may be less reliable

or more directional.

Real-Time Propagation Maps

Real-time propagation maps combine actual reception reports to show where signals are being heard right now. These maps are especially useful because they reflect real-world conditions rather than predictions. Areas of activity indicate active propagation paths, while quiet regions suggest limited openings.

By cycling through different HF bands on a propagation map, operators can quickly identify which bands are active at a given time of day. Watching how the map changes over several hours can also reveal how openings develop, peak, and fade — an excellent learning exercise during winter evenings.

Putting the Charts Together

The real power of propagation charts comes from using them together. Solar flux and sunspot numbers provide a broad picture of potential band performance. K-Index and A-Index values indicate how stable those conditions are likely to be. Real-time propagation maps then confirm what is

actually happening on the air.

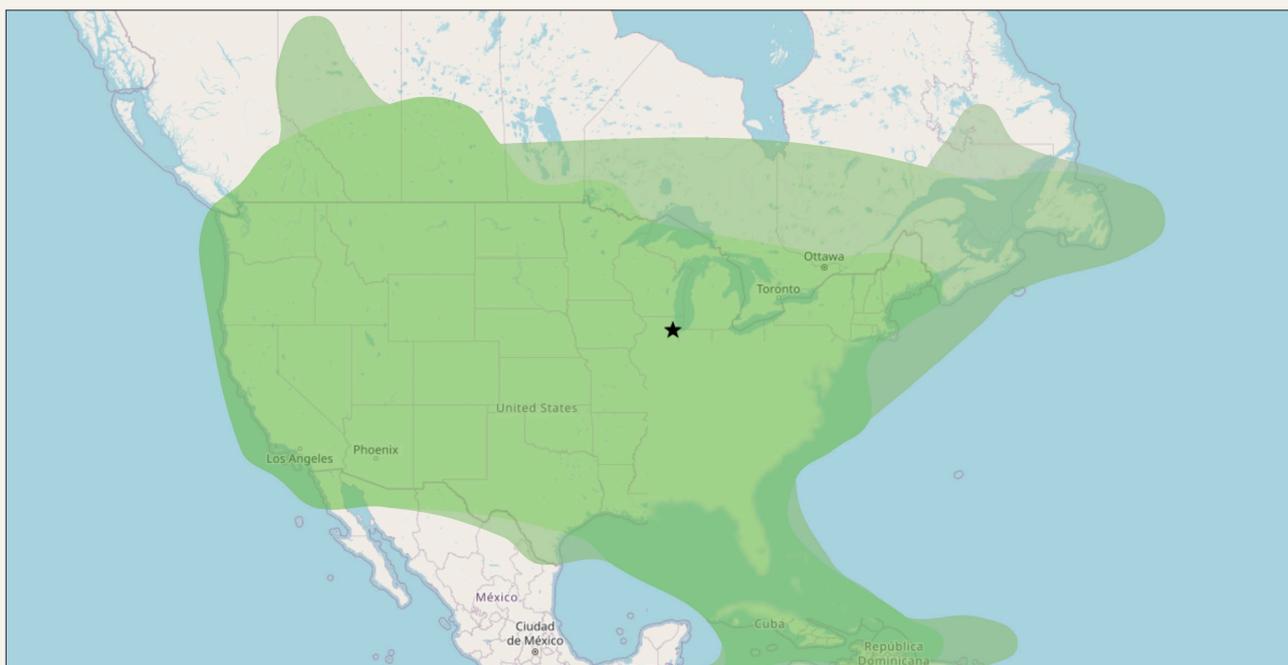
Instead of tuning aimlessly, operators can check these indicators to decide which bands are most promising, when to operate, and what kind of contacts are likely to be successful. Over time, patterns emerge, and the charts become less abstract and more intuitive.

Listening, Learning, and Applying It On the Air

Winter HF propagation is not mysterious — it follows patterns shaped by solar activity, daylight cycles, and atmospheric conditions. With a clean receive environment, careful listening, and a basic understanding of propagation charts, operators can take full advantage of what winter has to offer.

The habits formed now — paying attention to timing, understanding band behavior, and using available tools — will carry forward into every season. Winter may be cold outside, but for HF operators, it remains one of the best times of year to learn, experiment, and make memorable contacts.-----

Jeff Wuerth | *KD9RVJ, Squelch Tale Editor*



Chicago

FM Club

Club Officers

President.....*Paul Gris* | N9JZY
Vice President.....*John Cerza* | N9SRY
Secretary.....*Jim Fanning* | KD9WNR
Treasurer..... *Barry Friedman* | K9FMB

Board of Directors

Doug Harland | KD9YFR
Paul Abernathy | N9ISP
Kevin E. Suddoth | KD9ZDR
Alan Moyzis | KC9IMF
Charlie Ferreira | W9CEF

Chairs

Repeater Trustee.....*Joshua Hamlett* | KD9MXV
VE Testing.....*Bill Deans* | KD9TWA
Radio Expo.....*John Cerza* | N9SRY
Field Day.....*Paul Gris* | N9JZY
Website Administrator.....*Jim Fanning* | KD9WNR
Website Editor.....*Bill Deans* | KD9TWA
Refreshments.....*Joe Degrazia* | K9CTA
Newsletter.....*Jeff Wuerth* | KD9RVJ
Announcements.....*Kevin E Suddoth* | KD9ZDR
Net Manager..... *Kevin E Suddoth* | KD9ZDR
Education Coordinator..... *Charlie Ferreira* | W9CEF

Silent Keys

Tom Gotski | KD9YOV
Jeffrey Kohn | KC9TEW
Alvin Monroe | KD9TPL
Joe Gratchner | KC9BUF
Wanda Nagel | KC9LRZ
Thomas Wilkus | N9TWE
Arthur G. Waner | WB9DQT
Michael Moline | KD9NJC
Bruce Schrader | N9QIY
Robert F. Schiff | KA9HHH
Rich Jurgaitis | KA9GQF
Anton J Wenskus | KA9CRV
Orson H. Baker | AB9WQ
James R. Liston | N9HSH
Patrick McPherson | WW9E
Marilyn Gardner | W9LUO
Thomas J. Dykas | NV9U
Andrew J. Galiardo | WD9GCN
Robert G. Felix | KF9TB
Jerry Aagard | N9IPH
Mitch Schweda | WV9MJS
Joe Genovese | WA9KOD
Elton Caron | WA9AYQ
George Drish | WB9WIP

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