

SANDUSKY VALLEY

Amateur Radio Club Notes and News

Notes from the
President:

2 Meter Repeater

New "QRN Column"
Contributed by Joe
Hoffman, W8JH

On The Air Editorial
By Becky
Schoenfield, W1BXY

Monthly Contests
and Special Events:

Upcoming DX
Stations:

Hamfests:
Swap and Shop:

Topic for the Month:
Solar Activity
written by
N4HNN



Notes from the President

Fellow Hams and Friends,

Survival of the fittest! In the animal world, those who maintain a healthy lifestyle, have a better chance of a long life. In Amateur Radio, clubs that have the support of its members, will be around for a long time. The future of SVARC looks very good due to participation of many members in club activities. I can't thank those who have placed the club high on their priority list enough. It is a great pleasure to be associated with them, and be with them at our events. Join in the fun. If you are a member, become more active. If you are not a member, join.

73, Hope to see some new faces soon.

Jay K8VCE

Repeater Operations

Should any one have any trouble accessing the repeater, please just drop me a note at rondyke2000@yahoo.com or text me at 423-231-6315 and I will be glad to see what can be done to make things better.

The “QRN” Column

Contributed by Joe Hoffman, W9JH

In last month's column I mentioned that Ham Radio is a big tent encompassing many things. We will explore corners of that tent in due time, but today's column will focus on the center of the tent. At the heart of all our activities is the fact that Ham Radio is a means of communication.

The majority of our time is spent having fun with communication, as it should be. However, the Amateur Radio Service (ARS) is rooted in a history of providing communication when other means fail or simply do not exist. Allow me to set a historic timeline for some of the ways we communicate as Amateur Radio operators.

Starting way back in the 1830's Samuel Morse and Alfred Vail developed Morse code. This is a standardized system of dots and dashes to represent letters, number, and punctuation for telegraph communication. This method of communication is often called Morse Code or CW. It was used primarily for commercial telegraph communication starting with a famous message sent from Boston to Washington in 1844. By 1901 Marconi had successfully achieved the first transatlantic transmission. Hams and mariners adopted this mode. The SOS distress signal was adopted in 1906, three years before the Titanic disaster. Hams started using CW around 1901 as well, so it's been part of our heritage for some time now!

In the interest of brevity I will skip the early days of voice communication and jump to a major innovation called Single Side Band (SSB). This method was developed to improve communication efficiency by eliminating the carrier and one sideband, reducing bandwidth by half and increasing signal "talk power". Although this was first patented in 1915, it wasn't until after WWII that there was widespread adoption by radio amateurs following World War II, growing

popular in the 1950s-60s. Many of us remember how this caused a kerfuffle in the ham community with the new “Donald duck” sounds on the air.

Again, I will skip forward in time to discuss the third common way that hams communicate, specifically digital modes. RTTY was the original mode, used by the military in WWII. Hams picked up surplus equipment after the war and used these monstrous, noisy machines to communicate. Now hams can use a computer to emulate this mode (and many others) at a tiny fraction of the cost and complexity. One of those computer modes is discussed below.

The most recent digital mode is WSJT. This mode was invented by a ham, Joe Taylor (his callsign is WSJT). Joe happens to be a Nobel prize winning astrophysicist who is a physics professor at Princeton University. He was the primary developer of this amazing weak signal communication mode, and he provided it to the amateur radio community free of charge! This is a fairly recent invention, started in 2001 which led to the WJST-X suite of software in 2013. Joe and his co-conspirators continue to refine, innovate and improve the suite of communications software to this day. And the software continues to be provided at zero cost to amateurs. You may see him at some of the larger hamfests like Dayton.

That's enough for this month, hopefully I didn't bore you too much with a very brief synopsis of the past nearly 200 years of our history.

73,

Joe, W8JH

On The Air Editorial

America 250 WAS Certificate

Celebrate America All Year, On the Air 2026 is bound to be one heck of a year, what with it being our country's semiquincentennial - a mouthful of a word that's indicative of half of 500 years.

ARRL will help you celebrate America's 250th birthday all year long with an on-air event. The America250 Worked All States (WAS) Award is similar to ARRL's time-honored and much-sought-after WAS Award in that the goal is to make and confirm contacts with all SO states. In 2026, however, after confirming all your WAS contacts via ARRL's Logbook of The World (LoTW) you'll be awarded a special America250 WAS certificate for the achievement. And, like the traditional WAS Award, you can challenge yourself to do it multiple times, in various ways - once you've achieved "basic" WAS, try to contact all SO states

on 10 meters, via Morse code, or a number of other ways. You can earn endorsements for each of those achievements, in the form of stickers to place on your award certificate.

Another special aspect of the America250 WAS Award involves ARRL's Hiram Percy Maxim Memorial Station, the famed WIAW. The WIAW call sign will be lent to specific stations across the country throughout 2026, so you can contact WIAW in all SO states and earn the America250 WAS Award that way. Each state will be on as WIAW twice - once early in the year, and once later in the year, for a week each time. WIAW state activations are already under way for New York and Illinois, so fire up your station this week!

You can get more information about the operating event by reading "Celebrate America's Semiquincentennial With the America250 WAS Award," in the Jan Feb issue of On The Air. Complete details, as well as the rules, are at arrl.org/america250-was.

Enjoy chasing the states this year, from sea to shining sea!

73,

Becky, W1BXY. Reprinted with the permission of the ARRL

Monthly Contests: MARCH 2026

(Reprinted From Great Lakes Newsletter)

- **March 1 -- NSARA Contest (CW, phone, digital)**
- **March 1 - 2 --North Carolina QSO Party (CW, phone, digital)**
- **March 3 -- ARS Spartan Sprint (CW)**
- **March 3 -- AGCW YL-CW Party (CW)**
- **March 4 -- UKEICC 80m Contest (phone)**
- **March 5 — NRAU 10m Activity Contest (CW Ph Dig)**
- **March 7 — ARRL International DX Contest SSB (phone)**

- **March 7 — Russian YL/OM Contest (CW Ph)**
- **March 8 — Classic Exchange CW (CW)**
- **March 10 - DARC CW-Training Contest (CW)**
- **March 14 - SARL VHF/UHF FM Contest (Ph)**
- **March 14 - SARL Field Day Contest (CW Ph Dig)**
- **March 14 - South America 10m Contest (CW Ph)**
- **March 14 - Oklahoma QSO Party (CW Ph Dig)**
- **March 14 - Idaho QSO Party (CW Ph Dig)**
- **March 15 - YOTA Contest (CW Ph)**
- **March 15 - Wisconsin QSO Party (CW Ph Dig)**
- **March 16 - Bucharest Digital Contest (Dig)**
- **March 21 - Virginia QSO Party (CW Ph Dig)**
- **March 28 - Sasquatch Stomp (CW)**
- **March 28 - Africa All Mode International DX Contest**
 - **(CW Ph Dig)**

Please Check the ARRL, QST and Great Lakes Contest pages for a complete list of the March times, dates, frequencies, etc.

Special Events: March 2026

Collected from March QST 2026

Mar, 3 - Mar. 14, 00012 - 23592, N1KL, Wheelwright, MA **Geratol Net. 50 Plus Years of Service.** 3.668, QSL. Kevin Lynch, P.O. Box 124, Wheelwright, MA 01094. www_geratol.net

Mar. 7, 14002 - 21002, W4OT, Vero Beach, FL. Vero Beach Amateur Radio Club. **Pelican Island National Wildlife Refuge.** 14.035 14.250 21.290 28.350. QSL. Vero Beach Amateur Radio Club c/o: IRC EOC, 4225 43rd Ave., Vero Beach, FL 32967. www.w4ot.com

Mar. 14 - Mar. 15, 18002 - 01002, N2RE, Mount Laurel, NJ. David Sarnoff Radio Club. **Pi Day.** 7.031 7.227 14.031 14.314. QSL. Donald G. Corrington, 7 Pinewald Ln., Burlington, NJ 08016-3421. <https://n2re.org>

Mar. 21, 13002 -19002, N4SRC, Kissimmee, FL. Solivita Radio Club. **Solivita Car Show**. 14.074 18.124 24.980. QSL. Solivita Radio Club, 117 Auburn Dr., Kissimmee, FL 34759. SSB on 18.124, 24.980; FT8 on all frequencies (10 through 40 meters). www.solivitaradioclub.weebly.com

Mar. 21, 13302 - 21002, K3S, Port of Baltimore, MD. Nuclear Ship Savannah Amateur Radio Club . **First LORAN Experiments**. 7, 14, 18, 21, 28. QSL. Ulis Fleming, 980 Patuxent Rd., Odenton, MD 21113. www.qrz.com/db/k3s

Mar. 21 - Mar. 22, 14002 - 23592, K4NVA, Sterling, VA. Sterling Park Amateur Radio Club. **Virginia QSO Party**. 1845 3860 7260 14270. QSL. Sterling Park QSL Bureau - Attn: VAQP, P.O. Box 29, Sterling, VA 20167. The theme is "Virginia is for Lovers?" with special 1x1 call sign bonus stations that spell "Lovers:" K4L, K4O, K4V, K4E, K4R, and K4S. Also, in support of the ARRL Year of the Club, designated Virginia affiliated club call signs will also be bonus stations. See the VAQP website for complete rules and regulations. www.qsl.net/sterling

Mar. 21 - Mar. 23, 00002 - 04002, NJ2KC, Bridgeton, NJ. New Jersey Knights of Columbus Amateur Radio Club. **Free Throw Championship for Youths**. 7.2250 14.2500 21.4125 28.4500. QSL. Thomas M. Perrotti, 785 Vineland Ave., Bridgeton, NJ 08302-4822. www.nj2kc.org

Working special event stations is an enjoyable way to help commemorate history. Many provide a special QSL card or certificate!

Certificates and QSL cards:To obtain a certificate from any of the special event stations offering them, send your QSO information along with a 9 x 12-inch self-addressed, stamped envelope (3 units of postage) to the address listed in the announcement.To receive a special event QSL card(when offered), be sure to include a self-addressed, stamped business envelope along with your QSL card and QSO information.

Monthly DX Information:

This weeks Bulletin is made possible with information provided by The Daily DX, 425 DX News, DXNL, OPDX, Contest Corral from QST, and the ARRL Contest Calendar and WA7BNM websites. Thanks to all.

MAURITIUS, 3B8. Matt, DL5PT, is QRV as **3B8/DL5PT from Flic-en-Flac until the end of March.** Activity is in his spare time on 20 through 10 meters using FT8. QSL to home call.

RODRIGUES ISLAND, 3B9. Robert, **3B9FR**, has been QRV on 10 meters using FT8 around 1600z. QSL to home call.

SRI LANKA, 4S. Peter, DC0KK, is QRV as **4S7KKG until the end of March.** Activity is on 60 through 6 meters using FT8, and on Satellite QO-100. QSL to home call.

NAURU, C2. Phil, FK1TS will soon be QRV as **C21TS and here until July.** Activity will be on the HF bands using FT8. QSL to home call.

THE GAMBIA, C5. Przemo, SP3PS, and Magda are QRV as **C5SP and C5MB**, respectively, **from Sanyang until March 2026.** Activity is on 40, 20, 15, and 10 meters using SSB, FT8, and FT4. QSL direct via SP3PS.

ENGLAND, G. Special event station GB50PUNK is QRV during **2026** to celebrate the birth of Punk Music 50 years ago.

GUINEA-BISSAU, J5. Livio, IZ3BUR is QRV as **J52EC until March.** He has been active on 15 and 10 meters using SSB. QSL direct to home call.

CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC, TL. Joao, CR7BNW, is QRV as **TL8BNW until June 2026.** Activity is on 40, 20, 15, and 10 meters using SSB and FT8. This may also include 160 meters. QSL via LoTW.

BENIN, TY. Gerard, F5NVF, is QRV as **TY5GG until April 6.** Activity is on the HF bands. QSL via LoTW.

ANTARCTICA. Tom, VK2TBC, will be QRV as **VK0TBC from the Australian Casey Base from February until December.** QSL to home call.

This week's bulletin is made possible with information provided by F8DVD, JA1GZV, The Daily DX, 425 DX News, DXNL, OPDX, Contest Corral from QST and the ARRL Contest Calendar and WA7BNM web sites. Thanks to all.

BOUVET, 3Y. Team Bouvet will soon be QRV as **3Y0K**. Activity will be on 160 to 10 meters using CW, SSB, and FT8. RTTY, and 60 meter activity may be later into the DXpedition. QSL via M0OXO.

MALDIVES, 8Q. Lubo, OM5ZW and Laco, OM4WM will be QRV as **8Q7ZW** from **Thulusdhoo Island, IOTA AS-013, from February 28 to March 12.** Activity will be on 160 through 10 meters using CW, SSB, RTTY, and FT8. QSL via LoTW.

FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY, DA. Special event station **DD2026WPG** will be QRV during **March and April for the 2026 Winter Paralympic Games** being held in Italy. QSL via bureau.

FRANCE, F. Francois, F8DVD is QRV as **TM23AAW from Macon until March 2** to celebrate the 23rd Antarctic Activity Week. Activity is on 40 through 10 meters. QSL to home call.

GUINEA-BISSAU, J5. A group of operators are QRV as **J51A from Bubaque Island, IOTA AF-020, until March 15.** Activity is on 160 to 6 meters using CW, SSB, and FT8. QSL via Club Log.

JAPAN, JA. Moto, JA1GZV is QRV as **JS6UKY/6 from Miyako Island, IOTA AS-079, and Okinawa Island, IOTA AS-017, until March 6.** Activity is on 40 through 10 meters using CW. QSL direct to home call.

MINAMI TORISHIMA, JD1. Take, JG8NQJ is QRV as **JG8NQJ/JD1 from Marcus Island, IOTA OC-073, and is here for three months.** Activity is in his spare time on the high HF bands. QSL via bureau.

ARGENTINA, LU. Members of the Radio Club QRM Belgrano will be QRV as **LU4AAO and with other callsigns from February 28 to March 8** to celebrate the club's 58th anniversary. QSL via operators' instructions.

DENMARK, OZ. Special event station **OZ100OZ will be QRV from March 1 to 8** to commemorate the first licensed Danish amateur radio activity 100 years ago. QSL via OZ1ACB.

PALAU, T8. Operators OK1BOA, OK2ZA, OK6DJ and OK3RM will be QRV as **T8OK from March 3 to 19.** Activity will be on all bands and modes. QSL via OK6DJ.

ST. KITTS AND NEVIS, V4. Chris, WA7RAR is QRV as **V4/WA7RAR from St. Kitts, IOTA NA-104, until March 7.** Activity is on 20 through 10 meters using CW and SSB. This includes being active from various POTA sites. QSL via LoTW.

NAMIBIA, V5. Gunter, DK2WH is QRV as **V51WH near Omaruru until March 24.** Activity is on 160 to 6 meters, including 60 meters. QSL to home call.

ANGUILLA, VP2E. Operators Adrian, SQ2RAD, Janusz, SP9FIH and Jack, M0PLX, will be QRV as **VP2EAD, VP2EWE, and VP2ELX, respectively, from March 3 to 20.** Activity will be on 160 through 6 meters using CW, SSB, RTTY, FT8, and FT4. QSL via operators' instructions.

CAMBODIA, XU. Members of radio club **XU7AMO plan to introduce a group of students to amateur radio until March 2.** Activity is with a focus on Satellite QO-100, and LEO Satellites RS-44, SO-50, and FO-29. Club operators plan to demonstrate CW, SSB, and various digital modes as well. QSL via N0MMA.

SOUTH SUDAN, Z8. Diya YI1DZ has returned to Juba and is QRV as **Z81D.** Activity is on 80 through 10 meters, including 60 meters, using SSB and FT8. QSL via OM3JW.

THIS WEEKEND ON THE RADIO. CQ 160-Meter SSB Contest, North American RTTY QSO Party, NA Collegiate RTTY Championship, NCCC FT4 Sprint, Weekly RTTY Test, QRP 80-Meter CW Fox Hunt, NCCC CW Sprint, K1USN Slow Speed CW Test, UBA DX CW Contest, South Carolina QSO Party, UBA Spring 2-Meter Contest, NSARA Contest, SARL Hamnet 40-Meter Simulated Emergency Contest, North Carolina QSO Party and the WAB 3.5 MHz Phone will certainly keep contesters busy this upcoming weekend.

Hamfests: (Fun places to go to!)

(from ARRL Website)

03/08/2026 - Northern Ohio Amateur Radio Society Winter Hamfest

Location: Elyria, OH

Type: ARRL Hamfest

Sponsor: Northern Ohio Amateur Radio Society

Website: <https://www.noars.net/hamfests/winter-hamfest/>

03/15/2026 - Toledo Mobile Radio Association Hamfest and Computer Fair

Location: Perrysburg, OH

Type: ARRL Hamfest

Sponsor: Toledo Mobile Radio Association

Website: <http://www.w8hhf.org>

04/11/2026 - Cuyahoga Falls Amateur Radio Club 70th Hamfest

Location: Cuyahoga Falls, OH

Type: ARRL Hamfest

Sponsor: Cuyahoga Falls Amateur Radio Club, Inc.

Website: <https://www.cfarc-hamfest.org>

Swap and Shop:

For Sale:

DX Engineering OMNI-Tilt Vertical Antenna Tilt Base, Brand new never set up, List price at DX Engineering is \$163.97. Would like to get \$100.00.

Icom 7300. Asking \$950.00

Yaesu FT-891 Asking \$500.

Please contact Dan Whitt, W8DJW at 419-366-3256

From a recent Silent Key the following items are available:

SPE Expert Amp 2K. List \$6,995.00. Asking \$5,000.00

Kenwood TS 890S Transceiver. List \$4,329.95 Asking \$3000.00

Kenwood SP 890S Speaker. List \$ 285.99 Asking \$200.00

**Kenwood TS480HX. 200 Watt Unit no Automatic Antenna Tuner List \$1499
Asking \$800.00**

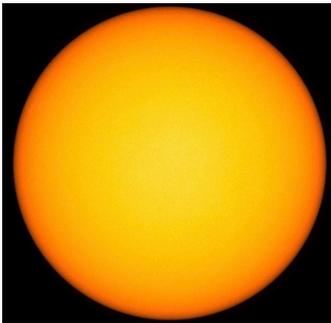
MFJ Deluxe RF Preselector II. Asking \$75.00

**MFJ. HF/SWR Analyzer Asking \$175.00 each
2 Available**

**Max 2000 Antenna. HF Base Station 24 FT (New, still in Box). List \$319.00
Asking \$250.00**

If interested in any of the above items, please contact Ron Dyke, KZ4CW
at 423-231-6315 or email address. rondyke2000@yahoo.com

Topic for the Month



No Sunspots?

N4HNN Radio

2 days ago

There haven't been sunspots for the past few days. It isn't an abnormal phenomenon. Your HamClock, HFClock, or OpenHamClock might show a 0 (zero) or two dashed lines where the sunspot number (SSN) would typically be displayed.

We need sunspots for reliable HF communication. We also need a decent Solar Flux Index (SFI). You can still make contacts on lower frequencies, such as 40m or lower. 30m and 20m might offer decent propagation, but propagation above the 20m band will be adversely impacted.

Here are some baseline thresholds for the SSN and SFI and their influence upon HF radio propagation:

- SSN near 0 (or SFI ~60–70): Typical of deep solar minimum. Reliable communication is still possible on lower HF bands (e.g., 80m, 40m, sometimes 30m/20m for regional/NVIS or medium-distance paths), especially at night or via groundwave. Higher bands (15m, 12m, 10m) are often closed or very limited. Many operators report “low bands still rule” during low SSN periods (e.g., SSN ~63 noted as marginal but usable on 40m/20m in some cases).
- SSN 50–100 (or SFI 90–150): Transitional/average conditions. Lower-to-mid bands (80m–20m) become reliably good for global DX, especially during the day. Upper bands (17m–10m) start opening more consistently for long-distance skip, though not “every day” reliable.
- SSN >100 (or SFI >150–200+): Excellent conditions, common near solar maximum. Upper HF bands (15m–10m) become reliably open for much of the day, with 10m often propagating worldwide almost daily (as seen in Cycle 22 when smoothed SSN stayed >100). All bands up through 6m can see enhancements.

When and why might sunspots be absent?

Sunspots are not absent constantly; the Sun experiences periods with no sunspots (spotless days, where the daily sunspot number is zero) primarily around solar minimum, the quiet phase at the beginning and end of each ~11-year solar cycle. During solar maximum and much of the ascending/descending phases, sunspots are common, and spotless days are rare or nonexistent.

Here's a breakdown of how often the Sun is spotless:

- During solar minimum periods: Spotless days are frequent and can dominate for months to years. Historical examples include:
 - The transition into Solar Cycle 24 (around 2008–2009): Over 800 spotless days accumulated across the multi-year minimum, one of the deepest in recent centuries.
 - The minimum before Solar Cycle 25 (2019): 274–281 spotless days in that single year alone (about 75–77% of the year), the highest since 1913 (311 days).
 - Typical solar minima average around 400–500 spotless days over the extended low-activity period (often spanning 2–4 years), though this varies widely by cycle strength—weaker cycles have more spotless days.

Overall in a full solar cycle (~11 years): Spotless days are concentrated near minimum. Stronger cycles (higher peak sunspot numbers) have fewer total spotless days (sometimes under 300–400 across the cycle), while weaker ones can exceed 800–1,000. For context, the “typical” modern minimum sees hundreds of spotless days, but during high-activity phases (like much of 2020–2025 in Cycle 25), there were long streaks with zero spotless days—e.g., over 1,355 consecutive days with at least some sunspots visible until February 2026

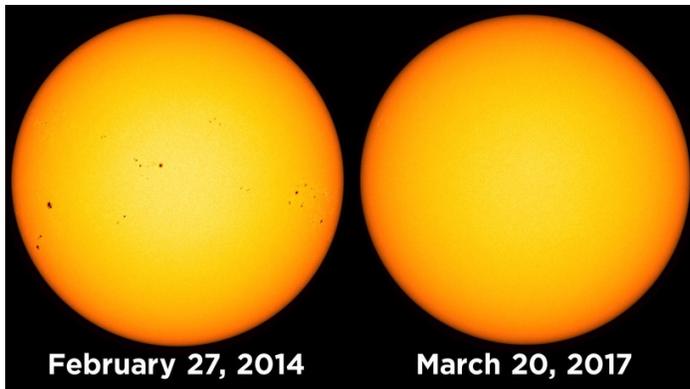
More Detail

When the Sun has no sunspots visible on its Earth-facing disk (as is the case today, February 24, 2026, with the sunspot number at 0 and heading into a third consecutive spotless day), it appears remarkably smooth and featureless in visible (white) light images.

In standard full-disk photographs or observations taken through white-light filters (which show the Sun’s photosphere, the visible “surface”), a spotless Sun looks like a near-perfect, bright orange-yellow or golden circle with no dark blemishes. The photosphere is uniformly granular due to convection cells (tiny, rice-grain-like structures called granules caused by hot plasma rising and cooling), but these are too small to see without high-resolution telescopes. There are no large dark patches (sunspots), no obvious groups or pores, and no visible active regions.

This makes the Sun look unusually “clean” or blank compared to typical views during higher activity periods, when dark sunspots—cooler, magnetically intense areas—stand out clearly against the brighter background.

Here are some representative examples of what a spotless Sun looks like in white-light views (these are from similar spotless periods; the appearance today matches this closely, as confirmed by recent reports from NASA/SDO and other sources):



This side-by-side shows a spotted Sun (left, with small dark sunspots) versus a nearly spotless one (right, smooth and uniform with no visible dark features).

These are classic examples of fully spotless days: completely smooth, bright solar disks with no dark sunspots at all—just the subtle granulation if viewed at high magnification.

Note that in other wavelengths (like extreme ultraviolet from SDO’s AIA instruments), the Sun can still show faint activity, loops, or brightenings even on spotless white-light days, but in the visible light view that most people associate with “sunspots,” it’s strikingly plain and uniform right now. Far-side activity exists (as seen from Mars perspectives), but nothing has rotated into view yet on our side. Spotless stretches like this become more common as Solar Cycle 25 declines toward the next minimum.

In Summary

The Sun is spotless very rarely during active phases (near zero frequency for years at a time near maximum), but quite often near minima—sometimes for weeks/months straight, and hundreds of days per year in deep minima. The frequency ramps up dramatically every ~11 years during the descent to minimum and stays high until the next cycle ramps up. Spotless days are a natural marker of the cycle’s ebb and flow,

with more occurring in weaker cycles overall. For real-time tracking, sites like SpaceWeatherLive or SIDC/SILSO provide daily counts and historical charts.

I hope you found this informative and helpful.

73, Doug

Reprinted with Authors Permission, N4HNN, Mr. Doug McAlexander provides many U-Tube video's for many Amateur Radio Topics, including some of the best video's explaining how various rigs work, how to use them, how to do the set up for optimum performance and quality evaluations of equipment. He also provides bulletins on a weekly basis around many many different topics. Please look up his website for more very worthwhile information.

Attention Everyone

Next meet is March 7, 2026 Breakfast at Denny's at 7:00 AM and social hour starting around 8:30 AM at Sandusky County Chamber of Commerce Building, 1245 Napoleon Street, Fremont, Ohio. Meeting starts at 9:00 AM. D. Ron Dyke, KZ4CW