

# Pacific Northwest SOTA Newsletter

January-February-March 2024

Greenleaf Peak & the Moon by Roland-K7FOP

## **That First CW Activation**, by Darryl-WW7D

Ask any experienced CW op and they will tell you that CW is fun. Particularly so while working through a pile-up with a spectacular mountain-top view. For people newly learning CW, just the thought of this can be terrifying. Over the years, I've met a number of SOTA participants who have learned CW with the full intention of doing CW SOTA activations, but have not made the plunge.

That first CW activation will be hard, but each activation gets easier after that. And before you know it, you're having fun communicating in CW. The real hurdle is that first CW activation. I've put together a few ideas on how to prepare for the big event. A little bit of preparation and a few pointers may be just what you need. These are only suggestions—adopt the ones that will help you succeed.

### Preparation

There are several CW-related skills that will aid you in a smooth first CW activation. In short:

- (1) achieving basic CW competency,
- (2) learning to copy and send CW under "field" conditions,
- (3) learning typical CW SOTA exchanges for both chaser and S2S QSOs, and
- (4) learning to recognize callsigns of frequent chasers.

Basic CW competency comes with practice and use. As you prepare for your upcoming activation, try to practice CW, both sending and receiving, every day, even if only for a few minutes a day. You will learn more quickly practicing 10 minutes per day seven days a week than practicing 70 minutes once a week.

Don't forget to practice common prosigns (73, AS, TU, GL), frequently used Q-signals (QSL, QRS, QRZ, QRL) and commonly used punctuation (/ , ?). When you practice sending, use a device that provides feedback. For example, set power to zero on a KX2 or KX3, enable CW decryption, and you can see how well your "fist" can be decrypted. Consider working with an Elmer either over the air or over the internet (e.g. VBAND, <https://hamradio.solutions/vband/>) doing mock SOTA QSOs.

There are numerous software tools that can help improve your ability to copy CW. On Android phones, Call Sign Trainer will help you practice call signs. It has a SOTA mode that will send some common international SOTA calls (skill 4!). Copying CW under real-world conditions is worth practicing in advance—it requires the ability to copy basic CW but also to filter out other CW signals, pops, clicks, heterodynes, and white noise all in the presence of QSB (signal fading). Morse Runner (<https://www.dxatlas.com/MorseRunner/>) provides excellent practice for this. It simulates the pile-ups you will experience "running" in a contest. It can be configured to use international SOTA callsigns (<https://www.on6zq.be/w/index.php/SOTA/Participants/>) so you can practice skill 4, as well. Other helpful

online tools include Morse Code Ninja (<https://morsecode.ninja/practice/index.html/>), CWOPs trainer (<https://morsecode.world/international/trainer/character.html/>), Morse Runner Community Edition (<https://github.com/w7sst/MorseRunner/releases/tag/v1.83/>) and Daily Morse Code Scales (<https://cwops.org/fundamental-practice-files/>).

As part of your practice sessions, spend time listening to SOTA exchanges on the air. If you don't have a usable home station, use remote receivers over the internet to find and monitor SOTA (or POTA) activations (try websdr.org or kiwisdr.com). The next step is to get on the air and chase some SOTA activators from home. It's okay to start out using a CW reader on your computer and using a keyboard and macros to send all or part of the exchange. Participating in SOTA QSOs will help build competence and confidence. If you do use the computer to copy and send CW, gradually reduce your reliance on it. Try to copy in your head and use the computer only to verify or correct what you've copied. Shift from using the keyboard to using a paddle or key for slower exchanges. Eventually, you will build speed and accuracy. When you feel ready, go to a nearby park, set up your gear, and chase SOTA in CW. Monitoring and chasing SOTA will provide low-stress practice while exposing you to callsigns of frequent chasers and other activators. Some of these chasers and activators will work you on your first activation—you will already know their callsigns in CW. You will also learn the "language" of SOTA exchanges, and get more comfortable picking one station out of a pile-up. And you will learn that even the best operators make plenty of mistakes, and just move on with the exchange. No big deal. The next step is to chase S2Ss in CW during your own SOTA activations. This gives you an easy taste of CW activations under field conditions, but one QSO at a time and on your own terms. You already have a good idea of what the other station will send. If the other activator has a big pile-up, wait for the pile-up to taper off. This will remove the pressure for a hurry-up QSO. You can proceed at a slower pace and get repeats, if needed. The other activator is more likely to slow down for you at the end of the pile-up.

#### Just Before You Go

You've decided you are ready! You've identified the summit and are preparing for your adventure. Make templates of typical CW SOTA messages on a 3x5 index card. Include your callsign and the summit reference (see the example template). Include a CQ sequence, a QRZ sequence and the exchange for a regular chase and an S2S exchange. Keep each element simple and short. For example, most chasers will find you from a spot, so a long or elaborate CQ is unnecessary. Creating the template will compel you to consider the different message sequences used in an activation and will help you develop your exchange style. Keep in mind that a template can become a distraction in the field (think windy day). So, consider reviewing it just before you start calling CQ and then working from memory to the extent possible.

Consider practicing your summit reference in CW until you are comfortable with it. You may well have S2S chasers, and one should send a summit reference after the signal report. Practice having QSOs with yourself sending both ends of the exchange. SOTAWatch can help you find callsigns and references for the "other" operator. By convention, SOTA references sent in CW include the "/", but not the "-".

Consider making a written plan in the form of a checklist! Things will be less overwhelming if you focus on accomplishing the next item on your list. (See the checklist box.) As you create a checklist, think carefully about band selection. Usually, 20m will bring in a bunch of chasers, perhaps more than you want at one time. So, consider starting on 40m or 30m. These bands will probably produce a slower stream of regional chasers. Bands from 17m to 10m may be productive and even include some DX, but they are more variable; signals are often weak with strong QSB. A good sequence that will minimize 20m pile-ups is to start on 40m, move to 30m, perhaps move to 17m next, and then go to 20m last. You can also consider doing a hybrid activation. Begin by covering several bands on SSB, and then switch to CW later. This should reduce the size of pile-ups as many chasers will have already caught you on SSB.

**CQ: CQ CQ SOTA DE W7XYZ W7XYZ K**

**Check Frequency: QRL? <pause> QRL?**

**Long QRZ: QRZ DE W7XYZ SOTA K**

**Chase 1<sup>st</sup> Response: W6ABC TU 5xN 5xN BK**

**Chase 2<sup>nd</sup> Response: BK QSL 73 TU <dit><dit> <pause> QRZ?**

**S2S 1<sup>st</sup> response: W6ABC TU 5xN 5xN ON W7W/RS-038 BK**

**S2S 2<sup>nd</sup> Response: QSL TU S2S 73 GL <dit><dit>**

Set up an alert for your activation. Mention in the comments that this is your first CW activation. Some new CW ops add things like “Big spaces pse” or “QRS 12 WPM pse”. SOTA chasers are patient and understanding people. If they see your comment, they will likely slow down and do what they can to help you through the exchange.

- Activate 2m while setting up HF (146.58 or 146.56)
  - Find a clear frequency
  - Start calling CQ
  - Spot myself
- Check for S2S opportunities
- Activate on 40m CW around 7.063
  - Send QRL
  - Start calling CQ
  - Spot myself
- Check for S2S opportunities
  - .
  - .
  - .

Program the CW memory keyer in your radio. Set up one memory to send out a short, simple CQ (see the template) and a second memory to send out a QRZ. Fire a message off when you need a short break to complete logging a QSO, turn the log page, swat mosquitoes, grab a bite of food, or just give your brain a brief break from sending CW. If you are concerned about flubbing your summit reference, you can put that in a memory, too.

Headphones are a great tool to improve your focus by reducing distractions, wind noise, etc. Finally, make sure your radio is configured to send out RF. Check the power output setting. Review the menu system if you aren’t completely comfortable with the radio already. Know how to change the sidetone volume, and maybe how to use the receiver incremental tuning (RIT) for off-frequency chasers.

### That First Activation

With a pack on your back and checklist in hand, go forth and hike. Relax. Enjoy!

At the summit, put your plan into action and try to stick to it. When you send out that first CW spot, put a comment in the spot similar to what you put in the alert.

Chances are, the very first CW station to respond will blast out something too fast for you to copy. No problem...you are prepared. Calmly send “QRS” at about the speed you want them to reply at, and they should slow down. If not, send QRS again. The QSO is yours to control. If a chaser wants points for chasing you, they will have to slow down.

Send CW at the speed you can comfortably copy. Good chasers will slow down to match your speed. If you find yourself asking strong stations to repeat their call signs, consider slowing your keying speed until you can reliably copy call signs of strong stations the first time.

Should a pile-up appear, stay calm and keep it under control. Listen for any letters you can make out in the initial burst of callsigns. Suppose you hear “W0”. Wait for the pile-up to die down and send “W0?”. Chances are, a W0 station will reply. Even if several W0 stations reply, you can probably catch another letter and respond with “W0E?” until you get down to a single reply.

Three things you must avoid doing to keep control of your pile-up. First, when you send “W0?” and “KC7BAD” replies, don’t answer! Rather, repeat “W0?” again. If no W0 station replies, then send out a “QRZ?”

The second thing to avoid is answering “tail-enders”—stations that send their call after everyone else. Even if you can clearly copy their call, resist answering. Otherwise, other stations will start doing the same thing, and your pile-ups will spiral out of control as everyone tries to be the last caller.

The exception, of course, is when you hear an “S2S” at the end of a pile-up. You will want to give the Summit-to-Summit (S2S) callers top priority. After all, they are probably QRP so get ‘em while you can hear ‘em. It is also possible the other person needs to pack up and leave in a hurry (storm arrival, intolerable cold, biting insects, out of time, etc.).

Third, for the same reason, resist answering stations that send their call twice in a pile-up. Don’t reward this bad behavior, or other stations will behave the same way. The results may well be mayhem. (When there isn’t a pile-up, sending a call sign twice is helpful in some circumstances.)

Keep your contacts short and simple (see the template). Don’t send your call sign with every exchange or even every QSO. While you are “running” on a frequency, the FCC requires you to send your callsign at least every 10 minutes and at the end of your use of the frequency. Also, you shouldn’t send your summit reference with every QSO. It is customary to send your summit reference for an S2S QSO, however. Don’t worry if you cannot copy the other person’s reference. It isn’t a required part of the exchange. You can find the other person’s reference on SOTAWatch or in the database later. I recommend keeping a log on paper rather than trying to type the information into a cell phone. Chances are, you can make log entries, corrections, and notes much faster on a paper log, and doing so will help avoid long awkward pauses during or between QSOs. Logging on waterproof paper (e.g. Rite in the Rain all-weather notebooks) works well when it is drizzling, snowing, or sweat is dripping onto your log. It also works great in bright sunlight. Cell phone logging can be

challenging, if not impossible, in these situations. You might also consider making an audio recording of the entire activation so you can verify chaser callsigns or review your performance later. Some rigs can help with logging by recording the stream of CW characters you send.

Finally, if you are still hesitant to do a solo CW activation, consider bringing along a mentor who is an experienced CW SOTA operator. The mentor can look over your shoulder and help you out if you get stuck or flustered.

I've never skydived, but I imagine that first jump is simultaneously terrifying and thrilling. Your first CW activation may feel the same. Each subsequent CW activation will be less terrifying and more enjoyable. Be proud of yourself! You've just exchanged information in an arcane language using less power than consumed by your car's brake lights. The accomplishment will give you great satisfaction. Don't wait too long before trying it again. Activate frequently and make CW a part of each one. Soon you'll be wondering what all the fuss was about.

### **The Bald Summit Mast Support You Already Have with You...by Tim-N7KOM**

The forested mountains across much of the Pacific Northwest offer us SOTA Activators many easy options for getting a wire in the air. What can we do when there are no trees or shrubs? On the forested summit we may use an arborist throw-weight over a tree branch, extend a mast and simply lean it against a tree, or lash a mast to a bush, stump, or post. In September ND7Y, N7LFO, and myself found ourselves atop the barren moonscape that is the summit of Mount Saint Helens.

The summer summit of Mount Saint Helens is sandy and devoid of



features to create a mast support. We had to get creative. I extended a short 9' mast and used a voile aka "braap" strap to lash my

trekking poles to the mast. I then set this up like a tripod and deployed my wire in an inverted V. The pointy ends of the trekking poles, when driven into the ground, provide good support and the inverted V wire acts as guying support. Further stability may be added by placing a backpack or small rocks on the base of the mast.



This setup may seem a little flimsy at first glance, but it is effective. We operated HF for about an hour in the wind and had no issues with the mast falling over.

### **How to Respond When You Get a 22 Signal Report**

SOTA folks in the Pacific Northwest are a friendly lot – often asking activators about the weather, the hike, propagation. This goes well when QRP signals are unusually strong, and not so well when reports are worse than 33 or so. There's a [complete article here](#) that includes some interesting history, but here's a summary of the "R" portion of RST:

1. Unreadable
2. Barely readable, occasional words distinguishable
3. Readable with considerable difficulty
4. Readable with practically no difficulty
5. Perfectly readable

As you can see, if you are given a 22 report, the other operator is getting perhaps only 20 percent of your transmission. In order to convey any information, clear language and consistent repeats are needed to get your message across.

**Getting Started with Summits on the Air—according to the ARRL Learning Center** (note: paywall). [Produced by Adam-K6ARK](#), these may be useful to newer ops. And our own James-WA7JNJ also has an excellent set of [introductory videos for SOTA](#).

**It's time for...the 2024 SOTA 10m Challenge.** The solar cycle is heating up, and the 10-meter band is showing its stuff. The “challenge” is to get on 10m as an activator or chaser. Maybe it's a good time to build a gain antenna or even a simple dipole to hear the weak ones and to be heard half a world away...

### **Things to do this Winter – LEARN CW**

[CW Academy](#) and the [Long Island CW Club](#) are two often recommended resources for learning CW.

### **Things to do this Winter – BUILD A KIT**

A kit could get you a complete transceiver or maybe a simple dummy load/Wattmeter to see what your rig puts out. There's nothing more ham-like than assembling your own gear – and few things more SOTA-like to use it in the field.

### **Things to do this Winter – MAKE A NEW ANTENNA**

End-fed half-wave or trapped dipole for HF, or maybe a 2m Yagi? Tune it with Nano VNA or antenna analyzer.

### **Things to do this Winter – FIX SOMETHING**

Around here I am caught up on repairing fiberglass poles but there's work to be done to set-up radio features.

### **Things to do this Winter – LOG YOUR CONTACTS!**

Let's get caught up this winter and have our SOTA log reflect our SOTA activity. Chasers too!

### **Things to do this Winter – READ THE MANUAL**

For all those times when you can't find the right menu setting in your transceiver, or can't turn off “LOCK” on your HT, or want to change your CW speed – maybe you (and I) will sit down with the radio manual and practice a few things.

### **Things to do this Winter – UPDATE YOUR PNWSOTA BIO**

Not that many folks read the bio notes you provide when signing up for <http://www.pnwsota.org/>. HOWEVER, many of you have something like “Just getting started!” that you entered five years ago. Make it real for your activity today!

**Things to do this Winter – ADD YOUR NICKNAME ON QRZ**, also email addresses are handy to connect with others.

### **Things to do this Winter – WRITE (OR UPDATE) A PNWSOTA.ORG TRIP REPORT**

A good number of trip reports are six or eight years old or older – if you know that the information is out of date or maybe there's never been a trip report written, help out those that would like to follow. **SEE PAGE 8.**

### **Things to do this Winter – TRY A SNOWSHOE ACTIVATION**

Activating in the winter by snowshoe is both a treat and a challenge – here are some summits to consider:

<b>Oregon</b>	<b>Washington</b>	<b>Idaho</b>	<b>Montana</b>	<b>British Columbia</b>
Peak 4620 <a href="#">W7O/CN-090</a>	Sky Mountain <a href="#">W7W/KG-054</a>	Peak 5779 <a href="#">W7I/SI-217</a>	Granite Butte <a href="#">W7M/CL-085</a>	Mount Harper <a href="#">VE7/TN-018</a>
Peak 4925 <a href="#">W7O/CN-086</a>	Nason Ridge <a href="#">W7W/CH-204</a>	Howard Mtn <a href="#">W7I/SI-215</a>	Crater Mtn <a href="#">W7M/CL-112</a>	Hollyburn Mtn <a href="#">VE7/GV-011</a>
Mud Creek Ridge <a href="#">W7O/CN-062</a>	Hex Mountain <a href="#">W7W/CW-105</a>	Chinese Peak <a href="#">W7I/SI-177</a>	Peak 5940 <a href="#">W7M/CL-161</a>	Black Mtn <a href="#">VE7/GV-013</a>
Clear Lake Butte <a href="#">W7O/CN-059</a>	Hurricane Hill <a href="#">W7W/NO-086</a>	Scout Mtn <a href="#">W7I/SI-037</a>	Peak 7215 <a href="#">W7M/CL-105</a>	Mt. Strachan <a href="#">VE7/GV-012</a>
Tumalo Mtn <a href="#">W7O/CM-011</a>	Old Pass Hill <a href="#">W7W/CW-071</a>	Shafer Butte <a href="#">W7I/BC-064</a>		Zoa Peak <a href="#">VE7/FV-023</a>

## **Snowshoe Summits in VE7 by Bruce-VA7SGY**

The VE7 SOTA association offers many opportunities for SOTA adventures year-round. In this brief summary we offer five summits that can be activated by snowshoe (or sometimes by someone wearing good snow boots). Two of these are in the immediate area of the city of Vancouver. One is a day trip from Vancouver and the fourth is in the Thompson-Nicola area; a beautiful subregion of VE7.

Safety is always important and SOTA activators understand that. Vehicles passing out of the urban area of Greater Vancouver and the Fraser Valley must have snow tires marked M+S or showing the mountain snowflake logo are mandatory outside of Greater Vancouver and the Fraser Valley. Some roads and highways also require drivers to have a set of chains with them in the vehicle; they do not have to be on the tires but must be already adjusted to the vehicle so they can easily be fitted if conditions require it. Police patrol these roads and might turn you back or fine you if your vehicle is checked and found to be inadequately equipped. In all cases, read avalanche forecasts before hiking ([www.avalanche.ca](http://www.avalanche.ca)) and be sure you have appropriate training and equipment for your adventure. The Ten Essentials are even more essential in the winter; it is easy to lose your way, darkness comes quickly and early, injuries can happen. Please take the time to be safe.

In this guide I will point you to [AllTrails.com](http://AllTrails.com). It's a great resource but not the only one. In my experience relative to these summits, trip details are accurate, including directions to trailheads. Other sources on the internet will lead you to further information. I have activated all of these peaks; let's talk if you have questions.

Let me introduce you to Hollyburn Mountain (VE7/GV-011, 4(+3) points) in Cypress Provincial Park (POTA VE-0716) above North Vancouver. This summit offers spectacular southern views over the city and south to the San Juan Islands of Washington as well as western views across the Georgia Strait to Vancouver Island. Access to this summit is without any fee. There is a marked snowshoe trail which is often so hard packed that it can be walked in boots. Use "Hollyburn Peak via Winter Access Trail" in AllTrails; there you will find the elevation gain. Activations may be completed with 2m FM and a handheld transceiver or with HF. There is room to set up a mast and an antenna. You can expect to have cellular phone service on the trail and the summit.

Across the Cypress Bowl from Hollyburn Mountain, and still within Cypress Provincial Park, lies Black Mountain (VE7/GV-013 4(+3) points). Black Mountain also offers great views in all directions and access is free. Again, a marked snowshoe trail ascends from the Cypress Mountain Resort Main Lodge. Pay attention to one detail – the trail is within the provincial park but crosses through the Resort; go into the Lodge as you arrive in order to register for a free permit to use the park's trail. Use "Black Mountain Plateau Winter Trail" in AllTrails; this trail can also often be traversed by a hiker with boots rather than snowshoes. Activations may be completed with 2m FM and a handheld transceiver or with HF. There is room to set up a mast and an antenna. You can expect to have cellular phone service on the trail and the summit.

A third summit in the area is Mount Strachan (VE7/GV-012, 4(+3) points). Many routes to the south summit cross ski runs and so are closed in winter. Activators can use "Mount Strachan South Peak via Collins Trail" in AllTrails. The final distance to the North Summit, the location of the Activation Zone, will need to be done by bushwhacking unless a trail has already been broken. My understanding is there is no marked trail to that summit in winter. A fourth SOTA summit in the area, St. Mark's Summit, is closed in winter because of avalanche danger.

Another four-point summit that makes for a very enjoyable activation is Harper Mountain outside the city of Kamloops. VE7/TN-018, 4(+3) points, is the basis for the family operated Harper Mountain Resort, offering skiing, snowboarding and snowshoeing. Compared to the skiing at Cypress Mountain Resort, both the runs and the line-ups for the lifts are much shorter. It offers great recreation for beginners through intermediates on the slopes. But we are here to talk about snowshoeing! A resort snowshoeing pass is required to access the trails and get to the summit. If you want to snowshoe up the pass is quite inexpensive, less than \$10. If you want to snowshoe down the mountain to the base of the lift, you can ride the chair to the summit; that pass is about \$20. At the summit you can do your activation with 2m FM but there is not as much traffic there as in the Vancouver area and so it might take longer. There is room for an HF antenna but you must be strategic and might end up choosing to erect it in one of the forested parts of the activation zone so as not to be in the way of skiers. Harper Mountain is a great way to get your points and you can expect to have cell service most of the time on the trails and on the summit. Kamloops is a wonderful destination for a weekend trip with many hotels and restaurants. There are other SOTA summits in the area that can provide good adventure by snowshoe. Finally, between Vancouver and Kamloops, and quite close to the major highway going between them, there is Zoa Peak (VE7/FV-023, 6(+3) points). Zoa offers stupendous views with mountains in every direction. This trail begins with a significant climb – some google searching for terms like "snowshoe Zoa Peak" will lead to some trip reports and

conversations that point to a winter route to the summit that is a little longer and a lot less steep. Give yourself as much time as possible for this outing; being at the trailhead at/before sunrise is important and carry light along with your other safety equipment. This trip is a great adventure but is through the wilderness and you are far from significant numbers of people. You can expect cellular service along most of the trail and also at the summit.

There are more than 2,200 summits in VE7. Very few are drive-ups. It would be difficult to find a 10-point summit that a typical SOTA activator could safely climb. Saying that, the views and the feeling of accomplishment that come from reaching your goal are breath-taking. If you want any more information, please reach out to me (QRZ info is accurate) or to others you see near the top of the VE7 Honour Roll. We would be glad to help you trip plan or to meet up and hit the trail together.

Bruce Cairnie, VA7SGY

### QRG Guidance for SOTA Activators

What might be amiss about the following (actual) SOTAWatch spot frequencies? 18.110 MHz SSB, 18.167 MHz SSB, 7.018 MHz, 14.348 MHz, 14.225 MHz, 28.520 MHz, and 432.1 MHz FM?

18.110 MHz is the break between CW and SSB portions of the 17m band and there would be some emissions below 18.110 MHz – an extra kHz would put you clearly inside the SSB allocation. This is also true for 14.225 MHz which is the break between Advanced Class and General Class licensees – leaving out access for General Class chasers.

18.167 MHz only allows for 1 kHz of USB emissions where 3 kHz is more appropriate (also true for 14.348 MHz).

7.018 MHz is in the Extra Class portion of the band, leaving out chasers without that license. This is also true for 28.520 MHz, where Technicians have access to 28.3 to 28.5 MHz phone.

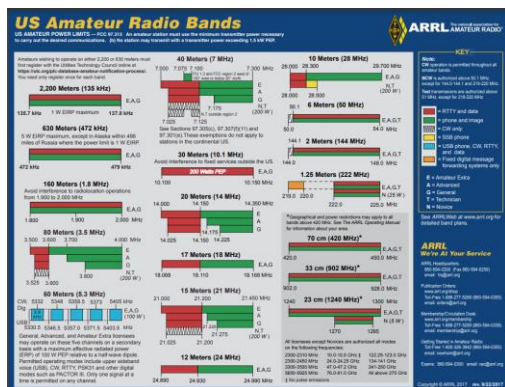
And while 432.1 MHz is the standard 70cm calling frequency for weak signal SSB and CW only – the calling frequency for FM is 446.00 MHz.

On a related note, the CW QRP calling frequencies of 7.030 and 14.060 MHz are very busy, and should be avoided, as should any digital watering holes like x.074 MHz.

Although many of these examples might be seen as trivial, the [SOTA General Rules](#) require that every individual operate under hers or his own privileges (3.7.1). This is true for both activators and chasers. Another way to look at it would be that, we are always to operate where we have permission – this goes for summit access as well as QRG. The resources for operating privildges and for convention are easy to find – the ARRL publishes a [handy full color band chart](#), and also a [detailed band plan](#) for avoiding interference between modes.

In review:

- Take a copy of the band chart on your activations,
- Be thoughtful about operating around band edges because of emissions spillover, and
- Try to operate in the General portion of bands (SSB, CW) to give all chasers a chance to log you.



## Band Plan

**Graphical Frequency Allocations**

**Band Plan**

**Considerate Operator**

**Phone Patch Guidelines**

**3 GHz Band**

**60 Meter Band**

### Band Plan

A band plan refers to a voluntary division of a band to avoid interference between incompatible modes.

### Resources

- [Sharing arrangements](#)
- [Detailed packet frequencies \[PDF\]](#)
- [Phone patch, autopatch and HF/VHF/UHF operating guidelines](#)
- ["Considerate Operator's Frequency Guide"](#)

## A New Perspective on Summit Write-ups, by Bill-WJ7WJ

The usefulness of a good write-up was just made apparent to me by a misadventure. First, let me give you my definition of a good write-up. It is one that helps the next activator get to the summit. It's fine and often entertaining to read other aspects of one's journey to the top, but first and foremost it should be a clear set of directions. I am personally fond of GPS waypoints (in DDD.ddddd format) Some of the early blog posts were mostly blog posts. Which is to say they detailed an activator's adventure. Newer blog posts tend to be more practical guides for the follow-on ops. That is a good thing.

My misadventure was on Stanley Peak (W7O/NC-030). Previously activated and well documented by NR7Y, Brian.

The very short version is Moby Truck failed to shift into 4x4 and I got it stuck trying to do the 36-point turn required to get it pointed back down the hill. I spent a couple of hours with a high-lift jack, strap, tire chains, and a come-a-long, all to no avail. I had no cell service. So, I decided to walk back to Tillamook. Meanwhile, back at the ranch, my lovely and talented wife called the Tillamook County non-emergency dispatch. When they asked her where I was, she read them the directions from Brian's excellent write-up. The dispatcher said after each road she named that she knew where that was. I was eventually picked up by a deputy about four miles north of Tillamook. You will have to wait for Paul Harvey or me with a beer in hand for "The Rest of the Story".

The point, however, is if it was a real emergency, and I was unable to extract myself, what a blessing it would be for the search and rescue team to have such good information!

Thanks Brian and others with such write-ups. I will endeavor to make mine as good.

Bill-WJ7WJ

## Variable Powerbank and Trigger Cable – Review by Josh-WU7H and Etienne-K7ATN



There has been lots of discussion on running 12V radios from 5V USB powerbanks – pictured is one turnkey solution. Along with the MTR-3b and a logbook, a [variable output powerbank](#) is at upper right, and just to the left, a [trigger cable](#) that selects the output voltage of the powerbank to be 5V, 9V or 12V.

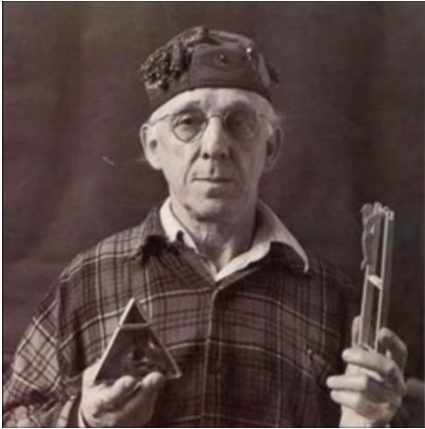
A radio like the FT-817 pulls about 3A at 12V – beyond the 1.5A this powerbank can deliver. I think this setup would be okay for a backpacking trip where you wanted to charge your GPS, phone, and headlamp and also run a simple QRP rig like the [MTR](#), [QCX](#) or [QMX transceivers](#), or the [Venus SW-3B](#).

Although it may be a comprehensive power solution for SOTA and other devices, it is heavy at 256g (plus 50g more for the trigger cable) while the MTR itself is just 133g. The powerbank does a 'fast charge' with an appropriate USB charger. A sample delivered about 2.65Ah or 31.6 WH at a regulated 12V.

On a sunny day and no matter how the trigger indicator was shaded, I couldn't read the dim voltage display. I had to use the battery voltage on the MTR to confirm how the trigger was set. The powerbank capacity indicator seems to do a poor job, indicating 2/4 bars after only one activation, but the actual state of charge seems much higher. Some RFI or noise was noted when the powerbank was held right next to the antenna, but only on 20m and up.



# ARTS PAGE



← Click here to hear Ivor Cutler sing about the [Little Black Buzzer](#) – you should practice the chorus now to prepare for the sing-along at the next SOTA Campout!

## Things to do this Winter, by Bill-WJ7WJ

The rain pounds down on my roof  
My thoughts of activating go poof  
It's an atmospheric river?  
The thought makes me shiver.  
It's the recliner I choose  
which causes this muse:

If I was a river, I'd be one in the sky.  
No narrow valley, instead way up high.  
If I was a river, the atmosphere for me.  
raining down on all I see.

If I was a river no canoe would I float  
airplanes maybe, but no skinny ass boat  
If I was a river, I'd flow like a fountain,  
opposing gravity, sea to mountain  
Climate change caused me they say  
but maybe just bored with the usual way.



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