

PLANNING YOUR RADIO MERIT BADGE DAY

Purpose of this Document

This document provides some suggestions for planning and conducting your own Get Your Radio Merit Badge Day. It will be updated as we gain more experience.

Program Basis

The materials associated with this document are based on the 2001 copyrighted merit badge pamphlet printed in 2002. The materials are based on this being done at a club station with a large group of scouts in one day. However, the same concepts and most of the material would apply to working with individual scouts at a home station, or to working with scouts at a camp or other gathering, either in one day or in several meetings.

Suggestions

- Start early – It takes time to plan, get a merit badge counselors approved, find a place, publicize the event, get the scouts signed up, and get the volunteer Hams on board.
- Coordinate date with scout district calendar to prevent conflicts.
- If you will be using HF contacts for the scout QSO's, avoid contest weekends.
- Get a lot of club members (and others) involved. We had 20 volunteers, some for half days and some at home to make VHF contacts with the scouts and we were a few short for our first time when we had 25 scouts.
- Use care in making assignments. We initially thought any Ham would be able to teach any of the mini courses provided they got the mentor guide and class materials ahead of time. This was not the case. Some are just not teachers. Some can't tune down their extensive knowledge to a scout level. And some do not know the background information well enough to adequately cover the required material. In the future we would still try to involve every person who volunteered, but would get a few more good teachers for the classes, even if we had to recruit them from outside the area. A note in passing, we had a YL of 14 who did an excellent job teaching a class.
- Get the applicable materials out to each volunteer a few weeks before the event and then go over it in detail with them on a one-on-one basis so they are prepared and know what they should be doing.
- Determine how many merit badge counselors you will need. We had two for 25 scouts and we were very (!) rushed to get things completed since this all occurred at the end of the day. If possible, consider having the counselor(s) not tied up with teaching. They could then collect the blue cards early and get most of the stuff completed on them before the rush as the end. This would also leave them some time to supervise and assist with the requirements pass off which follow each class.
- Consider the available space and stations you have when you set a scout limit. Remember the space must also accommodate your volunteers, the scout leaders, and some parents. We had 25 scouts the first time and found that for the space we had we should have limited it to 15 scouts.
- Pre arrange for other stations to visit with the scouts. A 10 minute QSO is a long QSO which will take a cooperative effort as will working in Q signals and appropriate procedures. We were fortunate our first time that propagation was great and lots of Hams from across the nation responded to our CQ's and were willing to talk individually to the scouts for the required 10 minutes.

- Have the scouts complete special QSL cards when they complete their contact. Have them self address a stamped envelope for a reply and mail to the contacted Ham. During the QSO, have the scout ask if the Ham's address is current on QRZ so they can send them a QSL card (and get the current address over the air if not current) and request the Ham wait until they get the scout's card before sending a card so it can go directly to the scout.
- Plan on having the scouts there from 8 AM to 5 PM. We planned 8:30 to 4 and we were rushed to get all the scouts circulated in small groups through all the classes, the one-on-one passing off of requirements, and the review/confirmation/signing of each scout's merit badge blue card.
- Even if you use VHF for the scout contacts, have an HF station running throughout the event so the scouts get a feel for the fun of Ham radio. Demonstrate CW. Map the contacts. We ran both an HF station and a VHF station. The HF contacts generated a lot more enthusiasm and interest; the scouts who only got on VHF felt they had been shorted.
- Have fun and make the event enjoyable for the scouts.
- Have something for the scout leaders and parents to do so they also get a good introduction to Amateur Radio.
- Be ready to offer follow up efforts such as a licensing class and JOTA participation.
- Have a follow-up plan in case some of the scouts are not able to complete the badge requirements during the day. Of the 25, we had two that had to leave early and one who just did not understand the material. The merit badge counselor arranged to work with these later so they could complete the requirements.

Open Your Event to Young Ladies Too

- We had two young ladies attend our event. One was a girl scout and was able to earn a girl scout badge by completing these requirements. The other was a sister to a scout who showed an interest and she waltzed right through every requirement.

Use of these Materials

Copyright Notice: This notebook and its contents is copyrighted (2004) by the Valencia County Amateur Radio Association, PO Box 268, Peralta, NM 87042. Permission is hereby granted to other non-profit Amateur Radio organizations to copy and use, and to modify for their own use, this material provided it is done for non-commercial purposes and is not sold. When so used, it would be appreciated if its source is mentioned.

Request

If you do your own Get Your Radio Merit Badge Day, please share your suggestions and improvements with us. If you make improvements to our documents, we would appreciate receiving copies. You can find contact information on our www.qsl.net/vcara web site. Also, we would appreciate hearing from you if you use this material so we can decide if it is worth leaving in our web site.