

OPERATORS NEEDED FOR W1AW/5 OKLAHOMA

Greetings to all Oklahoma amateur radio operators. As you probably are aware, the American Radio Relay League, in conjunction with its Centennial QSO party celebrating 100 years of existence as an organization of, by and for U.S. amateur radio operators, has authorized each state and territory to operate using the famous callsign W1AW. Each state has been given two weeks of operation. Oklahoma's first week of W1AW/5 operation came in early January, when K5CM and others did a great job handing out contacts to the multitudes. Oklahoma's second week begins August 13 Zulu (August 12 CDST). Edmond Amateur Radio Society, assisting the Oklahoma DX Association, is coordinating the second week of operation in our state and is looking for volunteers to operate on as many bands, modes and times as possible. Our goals are 1) to give as many other operators around the country and the world a second chance to put W1AW/5 OK in the log for the WAS W1AW award and 2) to give as many OK operators as possible the chance to participate in what is truly an historic and unprecedented operating event. The following Q&A will tell you more about this opportunity and how you might participate.

What are the actual starting and ending times for this operation? Operations begin at 7:00 p.m., Tuesday August 12th CDST and run continuously until the following Tuesday, August 19th 6:59 p.m. CDST.

I haven't had a chance to listen much – is this operation similar to a special event like Route 66 or Oklahoma Statehood Day? Actually, as these operations have developed over the course of this year, it is more like a **contest** than a special event. The W1AW/s find a frequency, call CQ, get posted on the DX clusters and then the pileups begin. If you have ever participated in a DX contest or tried to work a DXpedition in a rare country, that is more like the W1AW/x experience as it has evolved. The pileups have been amazing. Exchanges are typically short – signal report, state and on to the next one.

If I participate, can I operate from my home QTH or some other station? Yes, provided that your home QTH (or the location of your operation if not your home QTH) is within Oklahoma; also, if you are operating from your home QTH you must be an ARRL member (per ARRL). If you are not an ARRL member, you can operate from the QTH of someone else, as long as the control operator is an ARRL member. Those are the only mandatory rules, but there are some guidelines that are “strongly advised” as to station hardware.

OK, what are those station hardware guidelines? In making contacts in a pileup environment, you need a big signal so that callers can hear you through the uproar and determine who you are responding to – otherwise they just keep calling and calling on top of each other, making it difficult for you to pull out anyone's callsign. So, you need power (either a high-output radio ie 200 watts or an amplifier, combined with a good antenna. Obviously, a stellar antenna might not require high-power on some bands, and high-power might partially compensate for a compromise antenna...but both are best! Also, your radio should have a modern selective receiver with appropriate filtering to allow you to isolate stations calling, and it should be capable of operating “split” ie you transmit on one frequency and listen “up”, which moves the pack off your transmit frequency so that the callers can hear your responses.

What are the guidelines for logging – paper or computer: Computer logging, and here’s why: thousands of stations will be trying to work W1AW/5 OK for various awards, each relying on their QSOs to find “matches” in Logbook of the World during Oklahoma’s second and final week of operation. It is very important that participants be comfortable with both computer logging of QSOs (in UTC time) and exporting the finished operation into an .adi file, which needs to be sent promptly to the EARS coordinator via email file attachment for forwarding to ARRL. Paper logs would have to be manually entered into a logging program after the fact, which introduces high risk of mistakes and inaccuracies (as well as a lot of trouble for someone), so they just won’t work for this particular activity. Many people use N1MM - available through a free download - but N3FJP and many others will work. The exchange and logging information is very simple - you will only need to log: **date, time in UTC, band, mode and callsign of the other station**. More information about logging and submittal of logs will be included in the operating guidelines to be furnished each operator.

What operating skills and/or experience should I have to do this activity? The ideal background would be that of a contester or DXer familiar with operating under high band-loading conditions in a competitive environment. That said, even if you do not have this background or skillset, you can try operations if you will commit yourself to listening to the upcoming W1AW/x operations around the country over the period of time between now and Aug. 12th – it is helpful to imagine yourself as the W1AW operator and practice picking up callsigns and mastering the response and pileup management in the mode of your choice. If you still are not comfortable with trying an operation on your own, you can get in with a club station such as K5EOK with the EARS group in the Downtown Community Center in Edmond, where there will be experienced operators around to help you try (note, however, that space will be limited with priority given to club members typically – get on the list as early as possible).

What do you mean by “high band-loading conditions”? Give a listen to W1AW/x operation any week on Tuesday and Wednesday nights and you will get the idea. Plus, there are a couple of other factors that make our second week a challenge – 1) where most weeks see two states operating W1AW, for our particular week it’s only us and 2) the second run of the popular North American QSO Party SSB will run Saturday/Sunday for 12 hours. Also – and this is one we will really have to be careful with – our week falls in the middle of hurricane season, and we certainly want to give wide clearance to emergency nets.

How can I tell if I am ready to do this, since my contest or DX experience is limited? As mentioned before, listen, listen, listen and observe W1AW/x operations over the coming weeks – you should have some idea whether you can handle it from studying how it all plays out. Take a look at your station with a critical and realistic eye – will you be strong enough to rule the pileups? Watch the www.k5eok.org website for more detailed operating guidelines that cover avoiding interference to nets, ragchew roundabouts, weak signal and DX frequencies, etc. Bottom line, we want you to succeed and have fun, so if you don’t think you are comfortable on your own, look for a club station and observe – jump in if you feel like it – but we want to give the world as many Oklahoma contacts as possible and really need to be efficient and effective with our operations – using this callsign brings with it a responsibility to ARRL and our fellow amateurs and reflects on our great state, our clubs and our fellow OK operators.

How much am I supposed to operate? To each of the states, ARRL says “Operate as much as you want and make as many QSOs as you can while still having fun”. Our goal in the second Oklahoma operation is to cover as many modes, bands and open-band times as possible with as many stations as possible. There will be an on-line operating schedule accessible through the www.k5eok.org website that is set up in 2 hour increments. In order to give as many qualified operators an opportunity to work during optimum band times, we request that, prior to August 1, each operator limit his/her commitment to 8 hours (with a maximum of 2 sequential time slots for the **same band/mode**; beginning August 1st through the end of the operation, each operator can sign up for as much as their time allows, grab open slots at any time, etc.

OK, I want to get some times – how do I sign up?

Send an email to w5cu@aol.com with the following information:

Name, Callsign, License Class, description of your station and power capability, description of your HF operating background, your preferred times of operation, whether you want to operate from your home QTH or another station (and the callsign of the other station, if known) and your telephone contact information including a cell phone where you can best be reached.

Someone from EARS will give you a call to discuss your participation and to explain how to use the sign-up spreadsheet.

Stay Tuned! 73 from Edmond Amateur Radio Society. Let's go for it!