

SEARC NEWSLETTER

Vol 1 issue 3



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SEPTEMBER 19 Member Meeting

Astoria Public Library
10th Street & Duane

The library opens at 10, so **the starting time of the meeting is 10:30**. The meeting will be hybrid in-person/zoom.

There will be a short(!) business meeting, and then Dave W7PDQ will give a presentation on **The W7BU Repeater Link System**: How the various repeaters are "LINKED" to form a single radio repeater.

Coming Events

Membership Meeting	9/19
Membership Meeting	10/17
Technician License Prep Class	10/10,17,24
Testing Session	10/24
Radio Resource Class	11/14
Annual Meeting	11/21

David KE7ZFP



Meet David Skarra. He is a long time member of SEARC, and a very long time member of the ham radio station aboard the Lightship Columbia! While he was attending to the ham room duties on the ship, he managed to make contacts in every country of the world, with the exception of the Philippines. (Yes, really!)

David started his career as a valuable member of the Marine Corps, featuring his vital skills at Morse Code. David says there is still a place for Morse Code and he encourages everyone to learn it.

Next time you get to see David either in person or over zoom, ask him to tell you a story of his time stationed in Puerto Rico! He sure has some amazing stories about his time there.

David, Thank you for coming out to the International Lightship weekend. You are a valuable member of SEARC and a memorable example of the skills people have used to support our country and one another over the decades.

Thank you for your service.

International Lighthouse and Lightship Day, 8/15/2026



Top and side: International Lighthouse and Lightship Weekend 8/15/26;

Below: KMUN block party 8/8/26



Page 1 top: What do the nautical flags on the new Mariner's Exhibit Hall say?

Photo Credits: Page 2: Claire KM7CYI
Page 1 & 4: Ellen AA7EN

Questions and comments on this newsletter? See www.W7BU.club, or email webmaster@w7buams.club.

Volunteering for Radio Repeater Site Maintenance

“The rest of the story”

All we do is paint..... That’s what someone said about helping at a repeater. But why....

Ham radio equipment is expensive, fragile, moisture sensitive, and when placed at a remote location, it needs to be in a protected environment.

The “club” owns the equipment and a lot of it was paid for and installed from the pocketbooks, vehicle usage, tools, and many hours of labor by volunteers dedicated to our club mission of having a reliable linked repeater system.

So, if you, as an individual in the club own this equipment, and just like your own personal radio equipment, I would assume you want it cared for so it doesn’t get damaged and provides a long service life.

It is in that context that I would like to start with an explanation of what it takes to own, and maintain, a reliable repeater system. Here are 10 things to think about.....

1. **Location:** Most Repeaters need to be at the highest point that serves the largest area.
2. **Landlord/Tenant:** Since the club does not “own” land, we must establish and maintain a functional relationship with those land owners or risk losing the site.
3. **Facility:** Many of the buildings housing repeaters are owned by others and need to be maintained in a way that keeps the owner happy and our equipment protected.
4. **Towers:** Regardless of ownership, towers are structures that support enormous weight from equipment, wind and weather, and need to be constantly monitored and maintained.
5. **Power:** Most of our sites have commercial power and some are solar only. Solar comes with a lot of maintenance and replacement cost. Many of the sites have expensive banks of batteries for backup power. We are fortunate to have agreements where others pay the commercial power bill, although that is another relationship that needs to be maintained.
6. **Access:** Many repeater sites are in remote locations with difficult travel and locked gates across sensitive lands. It takes the right vehicles, gate keys, insurance, and agreements to assure that access when needed. Sometimes winter or other weather complicate it.
7. **Security:** Like most remote sites, ours are also under constant threat of vandalism and theft. Because we may be co-located with equipment owned by others, there is a need to limit publicly exposing us or our partners to those who would do us harm.
8. **Operational Readiness:** Keeping a system always operational means an outage or critical system need, requires a timely response 24/7 by dedicated volunteers that will drop what they are doing and make the system a priority. It doesn’t only happen on a Saturday when the sun is shining.
9. **Safety:** Anyone that has worked around electricity, high climbing, traveling mountain roads, using lift equipment, working with RF, battery banks, uneven ground, ladders and rooftops, and many other aspects of our work, will know that, as volunteers, there is nobody that will pay our bills if we get hurt, or heaven forbid killed, while working on our repeater sites. It is for that reason this potentially hazardous job be taken seriously and that qualified volunteers assist others in learning how to perform our tasks as safe as possible. There should really be no exception.

(Continued)

Even though we don't fall under Occupational Safety Rules, there is no reason why we can't strive to follow the spirit of those rules as volunteers. Many of us have worked in hazardous jobs so we should already know how to spot and mitigate hazards, while also teaching others.

10. Radio Equipment: After the long list of items above we eventually come to the "Radio Equipment" used to provide a linked repeater system. Without all the above items being maintained, we would not have all the pieces that make up this system.

The 9 items above the 10th (Repeater Equipment) are there as a part of having the system. It means that we do a lot of items that are not "working on radios" that may seem unimportant, when in fact, they are all part of the building blocks that assure we have the repeater sites from which we can operate.

There was a time when our buildings leaked water, were rat infested, had insufficient power, fire hazards, and some were literally falling down around the equipment, and just not safe or sanitary to work within. Over time the volunteers of this club have improved those conditions, obtained access to better facilities, worked out partnerships for power and space in collocated buildings, and put us on a path toward secure, safe, and operationally resilient repeaters.

So, while we do need those that are willing to learn how to "work on repeaters", more importantly we also need those who are willing to do the many other task such as cleaning, caulking, carpentry, roofing, weed and brush cutting, hauling, climbing, and yes... even painting.

There is plenty to do for those who are willing and motivated to stay busy. Although we do like to take a break and talk about the wonderful view that repeater sites offer.

The land and facilities that we occupy, while not ours, need to be maintained as if they belong to us. We don't pay rent but need to show our appreciation and care, somehow, for the space given. Because if we don't, then we risk losing a repeater site from a critical location.

So, as you enjoy using our repeaters, please consider how you can play a part in one or more of the items that need maintenance by volunteers. Does it mean you will get to "work on radios", well there is some of that, especially to those that are available and willing to take on whatever is needed to keep our repeater sites available. There will probably always be painting but in the process you will also get some great views and learn how repeaters sites work, and my THANKS!

—Dave Neys, W7PDQ

The nautical flags on the new building at the Maritime Museum spell out "COLUMBIA"

Here is W7BU:



W



7



B



U



W



7



B



U



WORLD RADIO DAY

FEBRUARY 13, 2027

*Connecting
People
Connecting
the World*



On the
LIGHTSHIP COLUMBIA

— ASTORIA, OREGON —



We Connect Communities™

**SUNSET EMPIRE
AMATEUR RADIO CLUB**
— www.W7BUhams.club —

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