



PRESSER

The Newsletter of the ARRL West Central Florida Section

Section Cabinet

Section Manager
Darrell Davis, KT4WX

Assistant Section Manager
Section Emergency Coordinator
Section Traffic Manager
Dave Rockwell W4PXE

Technical Coordinator
Darrell Davis, KT4WX

Assistant Section Managers

- Jimmy Russ, AB4KA
- Mike Douglas, W4MDD
- Randy Payne K4EZM
- Paul Toth NB9X
- Russ Delaney N4RTD
- Mike Lunsford KB4FHP
- Chuck Johnston W4CWJ
- Dee Turner, N4GD
- Christine Duez K4KJN
- William Miller N1CDO
- Dan Noah WX4DAN
- Doug Christ KN4YT
- Stephen Park W4OEP
- William Fetta, N7CGC
- Thomas Chance, K9XV



Section Manager Musings

Darrell Davis, KT4WX
Section Manager
West Central Florida Section,
ARRL

On Wednesday January 28, 2026, I was asked by Josh Johnston KE5MHV, the ARRL Field Services Manager, if I was willing to serve as Section Manager after Jimmy Russ AB4KA decided to step down due to health issues. After giving it some thought, I decided to go ahead and volunteer to serve as your Section Manager once again.

It is normal practice for ARRL Headquarters, specifically the ARRL Field Services Manager, to appoint a Section Manager to fill the remainder of the term of a Section Manager that resigns in mid term or dies in mid term.

My term of office will end on June 30, 2027.

Some of you may be wondering, why my term will run through June 30, 2027. ARRL Headquarters recently changed the election cycles to align them to hold Section Manager

elections at one time each year.

Previously, the ARRL would hold the three Florida Section Managers' elections back to back. The Northern Florida Section went first, then the Southern Florida Section, and then West Central Florida Section.

The Section Manager election term for the West Central Florida Section previously ran from January 1 through December 31 of the next year, which is two years. The next election term will be from July 1, 2027 through June 30, 2028.

Being your Section Manager again is somewhat analogous to putting on an old pair of shoes one has not worn in a while: familiar and comfortable. I am thankful to many of you who have given me your congratulations on being your Section Manager once again. I am like that plugged nickel: just keep turning up.

February is one of the busiest months of the year and this year was no exception, with the annual ARRL West Central Florida Section Simulated Emergency Test on February 7, called Operation Dark Start, the Orlando Hamcation February 13 through 15, the Highlands

County Hamfest on February 21, and then TECHCON on February 28, to wrap up the month. March is shaping up to almost be as busy as February with the MARCFest in Manatee County on March 14, the ZAARCFest in Zephyrhills on March 21, and then the MS Suncoast Challenge on March 28.

Now I am extending my sincere thanks to each and everyone of you for what you do for you for your club, ARES, group, or in amateur radio in general. You may be thinking, "what I do is small, and not glamorous or significant." Your role is just as important as the role of the next person, and if you are not there doing your role, that job would not get done. So your role in your club, ARES group, or in amateur radio in general is important and thank you for fulfilling that role.

\That is all for this time and 73 until next time.

New SARnet CHIRP file with PDF

Rob Rosenberger, K4HST

The Playground Amateur Radio Club has published "The Best Chirp File for SARnet." Its key feature is a PDF page with a table covering each interstate. You cut out each table, tape it to a 3x5 index

card, and use your up & down buttons at designated mile markers. Club president D.J. KI4ZER invites you to download this helpful file at <https://w4zbb.org/sarnet-guideby-parc/>

Start Planning for Field Day 2026



Field Day 2026 will be here before you know it. It's not too early to gear up and get ready for ARRL Field Day! Field Day 2026 takes place June 27 – 28 and will bring together more than 30,000 amateur radio operators for one of the most popular on-the-air events in the US and Canada.

The ARRL West Central Florida Section Caravan will once again be visiting field day locations in the section that are listed in the ARRL Field Day locator.

As part of your Field Day preparations, be sure to add your site to the ARRL Field Day Locator at <https://www.arrl.org/field-day-locator>

Preparing for your FCC License Renewal



Russ Delaney, N4RTD
Assistant Section Manager

There are hams renewing their license now who have not had to pay a \$35 renewal fee in the past.

After being approached by hams needing help with the process I was able to see why there were frustrations with this.

Now, you have to pay a fee, there are no mail-in options, the CORES system changed in July 2022 requiring a new account be setup associating your FRN to your new CORES account, while working in two different systems to complete the renewal; caused me to create an make a presentation to the Lakeland Amateur Radio Club on March 9, 2026.

Even if it may be a year or two before your license is due to be renewed, you can make that process easier by already having your CORES account ready to go and your FRN associated to your account in the system.

You can view this presentation at https://delaney.rocks/downloads/Presentations/LARC_09MAR26.pdf or an overview of the procedure at

<https://delaney.rocks/license-renewal/>

*** One added note, - according to the FCC, the FCC licensing and payment web sites were NOT designed for mobile use. Though it is possible to navigate the site and submit a payment using a mobile device, it is NOT RECOMMENDED.

Do HOA Antenna Restriction Efforts Require a Change?

Russ Delaney, N4RTD

Homeowners associations exist in all 50 states, with some being more restrictive on amateur radio antennas more so than others.

The ARRL started out 2025 supporting and soliciting for support of the Amateur Radio Emergency Preparedness Act (H.R. 1094/S. 459). This bipartisan measure aims to limit HOA restrictions on amateur radio antennas, allowing reasonable installations for emergency communications while exempting small antennas from prior approval.

With the legislative calendar now well into 2026 and no momentum reported, it risks dying again at session's end unless prioritized amid competing priorities. In fact it has slim chances (under 20%)

without sudden committee action or leadership push—most bills at this stage fail, especially niche ones reliant on grassroots efforts.

Recently, in other ARRL News, Indiana's Governor signed House Bill 1152 into law that put restrictions on a number of HOA related items but also prohibited HOAs in Indiana from adopting or enforcing a regulation, rule, or other policy that prohibits a person from maintaining an amateur radio antenna.

In today's current federal legislative climate, it's hard enough to get them to work on issues that have already been passed by states for items as simple as changing how daylight savings time works. Bills such as the Amateur Radio Emergency Preparedness Act don't quite hold the weight when compared to the high-visibility items that our divided federal government spend their limited time in session discussing.

As Harry S. Truman said, "if you want a friend in Washington, get a dog." With today's stalemates in just trying to keep the federal government open, perhaps we need to seek out a different approach to antenna restrictions.

With Indiana's recent victory, perhaps we need to divide and conquer, by working toward changes on a state HOA level as opposed to the federal level. Hams in HOA-heavy states

like Florida could replicate this by lobbying state reps, especially post-hurricanes when emergency comms shine; Reddit and QRZ forums already buzz about it as a template.

Although I applaud the ARRL's efforts in drumming up support of the Amateur Radio Emergency Preparedness Act, I believe the pragmatics need to be examined about the real possibility of passing a law on the federal level. Perhaps we should learn from Indiana and divide our grass root efforts directed toward state legislators where we have a much greater chance of making a change.



As the new for 2026 sponsor of the Florida State Parks on the Air Contest (FLPOTA), the Tamiami Amateur Radio Club (TARC) in Venice would like to ask all amateur radio operators to please help us promote this contest to their fellow club members and friends. The contest has had a troubled history the past few years and TARC is committed to making 2026 the year that Florida amateurs get back out into our great state parks again in large numbers to compete for Parks on the Air activation recognition.

Florida will join Alabama, Georgia, and Texas in holding 2026 state POTA contests during the weekend of April 18-19, 2026. Our Florida contest will run from Friday, April 17 through Monday, April 20 during normal park hours of 8 am to 7:59 pm (or actual park closing time). We encourage clubs to use this opportunity to bring together experienced park activators and the many other club members who would like to learn about POTA operations. Plan to compete as a “club station” category contestant.

We have tried to keep the rules, number of operating classes, and scoring system to an absolute minimum. We want this to be more of a fun event and an opportunity for participants to explore our great state parks. The rules have BONUS incentives for first time activators and for youth (under 18) operators. Visit the event website for more information and to read the rules and frequently asked questions (FAQ) documents posted there: <https://fspota.org/>

We hope to fill the Florida parks with POTA activators on this weekend in April. The April QST magazine will have this listed as a published Special Event. Please address questions and comments to admin@fspota.org.

Thank you to Jim Miller N7JIM, Chairman of the Tamiami Amateur Radio Club (TARC) Parks On The Air

Committee, for the information used in this press release.



FLORIDA QSO PARTY FOR 2026 SET FOR APRIL 25 - 26

The 2026 Florida QSO Party will be held from 1600Z April 25, 2026 (1200 EDT – April 25, 2026) to 0159Z April 26th, 2026 (2159 EDT – April 25, 2026), and 1200Z-2159Z, April 26th, 2026 (0800-1759 EDT – April 26, 2026).

The Florida QSO Party is sponsored by the Florida Contest Group. Since it’s re-introduction to the contest scene in 1998, the Florida QSO Party has become one of the fastest growing and most popular State QSO Parties around today. This is due, in part, to the tremendous effort by the mobile teams to activate as many counties as they can in order to allow those participating from out-of-state, to achieve a county “Sweep” (working all 67 Florida Counties: <https://floridaqsoparty.org/florida-county-abbreviations/>).

Florida stations operating from home are also valuable, since that increases the chances that stations will work all counties!

Regardless if you are a serious or casual participant from Florida, or from outside of Florida, the Florida QSO Party was designed to be a FUN operating event. Why not give it a try.

For full details on the Florida QSO Party, including the rules and how to submit an entry you may go to <https://floridaqsoparty.org/>



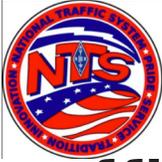
New Section Manager Appointed

On Tuesday January 27, 2026, Jimmy Russ AB4KA, stepped down as Section Manager citing numerous health issues that would not allow him to devote the proper level of energy to the position. After consultation with ARRL Headquarters, and our Division Director Mickey Baker N4MB, ARRL Headquarters has appointed Darrell Davis KT4WX to succeed Russ as the next Section Manager of the ARRL West Central Florida Section.

Davis has previously served as the 3rd Section Manager of the

ARRL West Central Florida Section for three two year terms from January 2015 through December 2020. Davis has served as Assistant Section Manager for Technology from January 2021 through January 2026, and as ARRL Technical Coordinator from January 2021 through January 2026. Davis said the following concerning his appointment as Section Manager, “I am honored and humbled that ARRL HQ chose me to serve once again as your Section Manager. I appreciate the dedication and hard work of all of our ARRL Station Level Appointees, the devotion of our ARRL members, and all amateur radio operators here in our Section. Looking forward to renewing many acquaintances and friendships made when I was previously our Section Manager.”

Davis’ appointment as Section Manager became effective on Sunday February 1, 2026. Davis will be the 6th Section Manager of the ARRL West Central Florida Section



NTS Digital Traffic Network Need Volunteers

The ARRL and Radio Relay International (RRI) are working to reinvigorating the

National Traffic System (NTS). Traffic handling was once a core element of amateur radio operations. When sending telegrams was expensive, ham radio operators offered a free alternative for noncommercial messages. With the development of the internet and text messaging on our phones, the NTS has seen a significant decline. Passing radiograms is still a critical part of our emergency communications and a component of our public service toolbox.

The Digital Traffic Network (DTN), a team effort by ARRL and RRI, has taken over a considerable portion of the NTS workload. DTN operates message servers where a local Digital Traffic Station (DTS) receive and download message for local traffic nets (e. g. our Eagle Net or the Florida Phone Traffic Net – FPTN). These digital stations then serve as liaison between DTN and the local voice or CW net (what we call the “last mile” in communications).

We need more DTS operators in our section. One advantage is you can download the traffic on your own schedule though you would need to sign into one of the local traffic nets to pass the radiograms to the recipient. If you would be interested, checkout the information at the following websites: ARRL National Traffic System – <https://arrl.org/nts>, and the Digital Traffic

Network – https://nts-digital.net/mw/index.php/Main_Page

If you are interested in being part of Digital Traffic Network, please contact our Section Traffic Manager, Dave Rockwell W4PXE via email at w4pxe@arrl.net. Rockwell will provide your information to a point of contact from the National Traffic who will assist you in getting started.



The WCF ARES Communicator for March 2026 Is Published

The March 2026 issue of THE WCF ARES COMMUNICATOR, is now available for download on the WCF ARES COMMUNICATOR page located at <https://arrlwcf.org/home/wcf-ares-communicator>.

This issue features guest columnist Christine Duez K4KJN, ARES Emergency Coordinator for Polk County ARES discussing the 2026 ARRL West Central Florida Section ARES Simulate Emergency Test called Operation Dark Start. Also the monthly ARES reports for January 2026 are listed as well.

All issues will be archived on this page for current and historical reference.



Christine Duez, K4KJN, Appointed as Assistant Section Manager

On Saturday February 14, 2025, Darrell Davis KT4WX appointed Christine Duez K4KJN as an Assistant Section Manager – Served Agencies Liaison. Duez had previously served in several cabinet positions including Section Youth Coordinator, Section Emergency Coordinator, and most recently as Public Information Coordinator. Duez has served as Emergency Coordinator for Polk County ARES since July 2020.

Darrell Davis KT4WX, Section Manager of the ARRL West Central Florida Section, made the following comments about the appointment of Duez as an Assistant Section Manager, “Christine is a skilled communicator, and is an excellent people oriented person. She will do very well as a liaison between various served agencies such as Emergency Management, the American Red Cross, and other served agencies.”

Duez in her professional career, served in numerous capacities as an American Sign Language interpreter since 1989 and holding certification with the national Registry of

Interpreters for the Deaf since 1989. Duez has obtained an Associate of Arts degree in Liberal Arts and a Bachelor of Arts degree in Interdisciplinary Social Sciences during her professional career and retired from Polk County Public Schools as an ASL interpreter for Southwest Middle School in Lakeland. Duez still does part time work as an ASL interpreter in retirement. Duez other interests include playing the piano for the Spanish ministry of her church, participation in [Toastmasters](#) (an organization that helps people build leadership and public speaking skills), growing flowers at home, and traveling.

Manager and Technical Coordinator, has added the links to the slide presentations developed by all our presenters and they are available on the 12th Annual TECHCON webpage at <https://arrlwcf.org/wcf-special-events/wcftechconference/>.

Later in the year, the 12th Annual TECHCON webpage will be archived for historical and future reference and will always be accessible via the TECHCON webpage.

Meshtastic Growing in Florida

Chris Bloxsom, AA4CB, provided the following article regarding the growing use of Meshtastic in Florida. Clubs such as the Lake Wales Radio Amateurs and others have had presentations on Meshtastic.

Here is the article:



Meshtastic: A Decentralized Communication Network

Meshtastic is an innovative, open-source communication platform that uses LoRa (Long Range) radio technology to enable off-grid, peer-to-peer messaging and data exchange.

12th Annual TECHCON Videos and Papers Now Available

The 12th Annual TECHCON was held on Saturday February 28, 2026 with about 35 to 40 in attendance personally. However, there is a “silver lining” in this cloud. Russ Delaney N4RTD, Assistant Section Manager, has processed all the videos, added the speaker slides to them, and they are now available for viewing on the ARRL West Central Florida Section YouTube Channel: <https://www.youtube.com/@arrlwcf>.

Darrell Davis KT4WX, Section

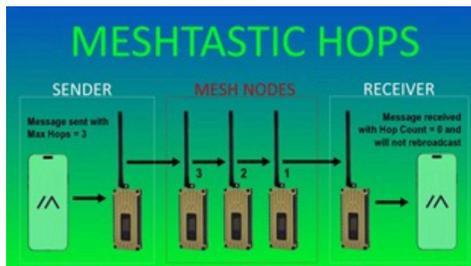
Designed for situations where cellular or internet connectivity is unavailable, Meshtastic creates a mesh network of devices that relay messages across multiple nodes. Each node functions as both a transmitter and a repeater, allowing messages to “hop” from one device to another until they reach the intended recipient. This decentralized design makes Meshtastic particularly valuable for outdoor adventurers, emergency response teams, and anyone interested in resilient communication systems.

At its core, Meshtastic operates using small, low-power hardware devices—often based on the ESP32 microcontroller combined with a LoRa transceiver module, such as those found in the LilyGO T-Beam, Heltec V3, or RAK Wireless boards. These devices can transmit data over several kilometers in open environments, with range depending on terrain, antenna quality, and transmission power. The system uses AES-256 encryption to protect communications, ensuring that messages remain private even when transmitted across shared channels.

Users interact with Meshtastic primarily through a mobile app (available on Android and iOS) or through desktop and command-line tools. The app connects to the device via Bluetooth or USB, allowing users to send text messages, share GPS coordinates, and

view nearby nodes on a map. The interface also enables fine-tuned configuration—such as adjusting radio frequencies, transmission intervals, and power levels—to optimize performance for specific use cases.

Meshtastic supports a variety of applications beyond simple messaging. For instance, it can integrate with external sensors to transmit weather or environmental data, making it useful for remote monitoring or scientific fieldwork. It also supports connection to mapping software and third-party platforms like Home Assistant, expanding its potential for home automation and telemetry projects.



Benefit: These devices can route communications entirely 'off-grid'. No need even for a smartphone or computer! There's no 4G or 5G connection, no need for WiFi or Bluetooth. The mesh is automatically structured over LoRa, using public frequencies (e.g. around 915 MHz in the US). Just like the Internet (but disconnected from it), the network is self-healing, and you can route communications through the mesh so you don't have to be within line-of-sight from the

device you're connected to.

Drawback: Being an entirely new communications platform / network, the mesh only reaches as far as there are people deploying nodes within range of each other. And... so far there aren't many of us—at least not in most cities.

After doing some research on Mesh I bought my first node. It was the Heltec V3. I got it on Amazon because I like the next day delivery. It seems to be one of the more popular and cheapest way to get started. I have also seen them on AliExpress but I love my Amazon Prime account. Setup was simple there are quite a bunch of Youtube videos out there.

One of Meshtastic's greatest strengths lies in its community-driven development. The open-source nature of the project encourages users to contribute improvements, create plugins, and share custom firmware modifications. This collaborative ecosystem has accelerated innovation and made Meshtastic highly adaptable to different needs—from recreational hiking groups to large-scale emergency networks.

In conclusion, Meshtastic represents a powerful and flexible solution for off-grid communication. Its combination of affordability, security, and extensibility makes it a leading choice for

users seeking reliable connectivity in remote or infrastructure-limited environments.

As both hardware and firmware continue to evolve, Meshtastic's role in resilient, community-based communication networks is likely to grow even further.

For more information, here are some links to help you get started:

<https://meshtastic.org/> <https://areyoumeshingwith.us/>

<https://www.fb.com/groups/876724777906303/>

<https://www.fb.com/groups/1230482455787935/>

<https://store.rokland.com/pages/meshtastic-hardware-rak-lilygo>

Here are some links to some videos to assist in your journey into Meshtastic:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oAo2sb8LpFc>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ov4s0Vnhj2s>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PkWHn9mtuiw>



Photos from Marcifest in Brandenton, FL

Darrell Davis, Section Manager, setup and staffed a table at Marcifest on March 14, 2026.

Here are a few of the photos:



Upcoming Hamfests

03/21/26 – Zephyrhills ARC Tailgate – St. Elizabeth's Episcopal Church, 5855 16th Street, Zephyrhills, FL 33539. Talk-In: 146.910 146.2. For more info visit <http://zaarc.org>

04/25/26 – TARCfest – Tampa Amateur Radio Club, 7801 N. 22nd St. Tampa, FL 33601. <http://www.hamclub.org> Gates open 8AM – 1PM. Admission is \$5, children under 12 are free. Tailgating is free with paid admission. Food, drinks, and VE Testing.

05/09/26 – East Pasco Amateur Radio Society Hamfest – 0700-1200 – 37745 Church Ave., Dade City, FL 33525. Talk-In on 146.88/- PL 146.2. Free parking, food & refreshments. Admission adults and kids, \$5. VE Testing register at <https://hamtstudy.org/sessions/EPARS/>