

QSL Managers Message

Why should I get involved with POTA?

POTA, or Parks On The Air, is a very popular activity in Amateur Radio right now. It is a program that anyone can participate in and it does make Hams better amateur radio operators. How does it do this?

- 1. The Go Kit.** What do you need to operate a portable radio station? You need a radio, a power supply, and an antenna. All radios are good. Which one you use is personal preference. I'd like to suggest that you only use a battery while operating portable...commercial power will not always be available. The antenna you use is completely up to you. My choice is an antenna that is very easy to set up and does not require anything external to operate and can operate on all the HF bands. I do not want to put wires in trees, wires on the ground or be required to pound stakes in the ground. I use the Eagle One antenna...it's nothing more than a EFLW antenna.
- 2. Keeping The Log.** POTA has Activators, hams that go to the parks and setup their radio stations, and Hunters, hams that operate from anywhere and contact Activators in the parks. Hunters are not required to keep a log of the contacts they make. Activators must submit their logs of the contacts they make to the POTA folks so Hunters will get credit for the contacts they make. There are awards for everyone in the POTA program. Many Activators keep a log on paper while they are operating portable. A paper log is more reliable than using a computer, which can fail at any time. If a computer is used, a paper log should always be used as backup. Logging programs on the computer are many and which one you use is your personal preference. My choice is Amateur Contact Log by N3FJP. Very popular and easy to use. Regardless of the log you use, you'll need to learn how to accurately copy the Call Sign of the other station to put in the log. You know everything else that needs to be put into the log. A quick note regarding Signal Reports. Everyone wants to get a Signal Report, but do you realize that Signal Reports are not required to get a Confirmation of a contact that was made? The log you submit to POTA must be in ADIF format, so you'll need a computer logging program to do this. You can enter your contacts one at a time from your paper log if you have the internet available (not my favorite way of doing it).
- 3. Overcoming MIC Fright.** The majority of new hams are afraid to get on the radio because they don't know what to say...they suffer from MIC Fright. Listen and learn how other operators are making contacts. Practice writing down Call Signs. Start by hunting. It's easy and you'll quickly earn some POTA awards for making contacts in different parks. When you are comfortable Hunting...try Activating a park. Put your Go Kit together along with your log and get out in a park.
- 4. Practice Makes Perfect.** The first time you do anything you are not very good at it. You must do something many times before you get good at it. The same goes for operating your radio. You have to do it many times before you are proficient. I'll never forget the first time I went to Activate a POTA park. Put my stuff in the car, drove out to the park, got my antenna set up, got my radio all set up, only to discover that I left the battery at home. Take everything down, drive home, get the battery, drive back to the park and set everything up again. My suggestion is to put everything in your car, drive about 5 or 10 feet and stop, set everything up and make some contacts while you are still at home. When you can do this without a problem then go to the park.

Are you interested in **ARES**? If you are then you should be very interested in POTA because you'll be doing all the same things...except that you'll be doing it when there isn't an emergency or disaster. POTA is for everyone...Technicians, Generals and Extras.

And, most important of all, it's FUN...at least a lot of hams think so. If you would like to learn more about POTA please let me know, or talk to James, KW5CW. He is very active in the POTA program.

73

Lee N5SLY
lee.n5sly@gmail.com