

**Federally licensed amateur radio operators who are veterans now have
new venue in national American Legion radio club**

INDIANAPOLIS (May 19, 2011) – With 700,000 federally licensed amateur radio operators, or “hams,” in America, the nation’s largest veterans service organization, The American Legion, has formed a special entity to provide a forum for military veterans who today are engaged in a hobby that provides emergency communications “when all else fails.”

Meeting in Indianapolis May 4-5, the National Executive Committee authorized the establishment of The American Legion Amateur Radio Club.

“The beauty of amateur radio is that it attracts folks of all career interests, from doctors, PhD’s, engineers, rocket scientists to mechanics, housewives, construction and office workers, students and everything in between - many of them military veterans,” said Robert L. Morrill, chairman of the national public relations commission. “Hams provide backup communications to Emergency Management Agency (EMA) offices across the country when ‘all else fails’ and have done so with distinction in virtually every major disaster when cell towers and commercial communications have been knocked out after earthquakes, hurricanes, tornadoes, and man-made disasters.”

As to the membership benefit, National Commander Jimmie L. Foster noted that, “Just like other public outreach methods, this is one more way to reach a different group than our current efforts are targeting. Hams are folks who are more likely to try to help others because they’re good neighbors. This club continues that tradition of service to community while providing a direct connection with veterans support links.”

In January, 2005, The American Legion signed a statement of affiliation with the Department of Homeland Security to support emergency disaster preparedness. Subsequently, a booklet was made available to posts, The American Legion Guide to Post Disaster Preparedness and Response. Amateur radio support was an integral entity.

“The potential to serve here is limitless,” Foster said. “Legionnaires who are hams can help others get licensed, coordinate with local emergency authorities, provide counseling and assistance to schools and a whole array of other support.”

“While some people may think that ham radio is an old technology, the simple truth is that hams were working with digital transmissions long before folks had home computers, and they provided the impetus to make ‘wireless’ happen. They were transmitting emergency calls from their cars long before anyone had a mobile phone to do the same,” Morrill said. “Today hams are conducting broad spectrum experiments on the ham bands that may eventually become routine ways to communicate for all of us.”

“The basic message is that ham radio is alive and growing in America and that there are thousands of veterans who are dedicated ham radio operators,” Foster said. “And a lot of them are not yet carrying American Legion membership cards.”

Membership in the club is free to members of The American Legion family with current federal amateur radio licenses. Because the club has just been authorized, Morrill invites licensed Legion family hams to join now but to be patient; it will take time to solicit equipment donations and get a national club station assembled and on the air. Licensed Legionnaires, members of The American Legion Auxiliary, members of the Sons of The American Legion and Legion Riders can join by sending their full name, call sign, address and Legion/Auxiliary/SAL membership number to k9tal@legion.org. An attractive membership card will be mailed. Reports will be made available via Legion media as progress is made.

EQUIPMENT DONATIONS

The American Legion Amateur Radio Club is looking for HF and dual-band VHF/UHF transceivers and associated gear donations in order to set up a headquarters station and begin national radio nets. Any hams who may have upgraded their station and are willing to donate their old station to TALARC may receive a tax deduction as The American Legion is a non-profit 501 (c) (19) organization which has a 501 (c) (3) subsidiary trust entitled "American Legion Charities – contact your tax consultant for details. If you have radio gear you are willing to donate, please email us at k9tal@legion.org.

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Thanks,

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