



# 2026 ARRL NATIONAL CONVENTION PROGRAM

Hosted by the **Huntsville Hamfest** —“The World’s Friendliest Hamfest!®” Since 1954

## STEP 1: **Register** for the ARRL National Convention Program

Friday, August 21, 2026

[www.arrl.org/expo](http://www.arrl.org/expo)

## STEP 2: **Purchase** your Huntsville Hamfest tickets

Saturday and Sunday, August 22–23, 2026

[hamfest.org/event-tickets](http://hamfest.org/event-tickets)

## Friday, August 21, 2026 Embassy Suites by Hilton Huntsville

- 8:00 AM** Arrival and Registrant Check-In
- 8:30 AM–11:45 AM** Training Tracks / Morning Session
- 12:00 PM–1:00 PM** National Convention Luncheon
- 1:15 PM–4:30 PM** Training Tracks / Afternoon Session

## Training Tracks

Participants will select a Training Track during registration. All registrants will attend the National Convention Luncheon.

### TRAINING TRACK #1

#### Mini Contest University (Mini CTU)

*sponsored by DX Engineering*

### TRAINING TRACK #2

#### Emergency Communications

Academy

### TRAINING TRACK #3

#### Salty Walt’s Portable Antenna

Workshop

## Training Track Agendas

### TRAINING TRACK #1

#### Mini Contest University (Mini CTU)—sponsored by DX Engineering

This marks the first time Mini Contest University (Mini CTU) is coming to Huntsville. Registrants will learn from some veteran amateur radio contesters. This Mini CTU will appeal to new and veteran contesters alike who are looking to hone their skills. Presenters cover general contest operations, contesting skills, and many resources and tools to get more out of contesting. *This training is sponsored by DX Engineering.*

#### Track Leader: Tim Duffy, K3LR

- 8:30 AM** “Contest Operating Techniques & Strategies” by **Kirk Pickering, K4RO**
- 9:30 AM** “Contest Station Design” by **Trina Koenig, NR4L**, and **Ron Koenig, WV4P**
- 10:30 AM** “Mobile Contesting” by **Jim Hall, AD4EB**
- 1:15 PM** “Organizing a Winning Field Day” by **Laura Morgan, K4CNY**
- 2:15 PM** “VHF & Rover Contesting” by **Chris Arthur, NV4B**
- 3:15 PM** “Multi Operator Fun at K3LR” by **Tim Duffy, K3LR**
- 4:30 PM** END

## TRAINING TRACK #2

### Emergency Communications Academy

Emergency Communications presenters will cover topics including future-proofing ARES®—the ARRL Amateur Radio Emergency Service®, PACE planning, relationship building, digital communications, emerging technologies, and other topics designed to enhance your emergency communications knowledge and preparedness. Participants will learn the skills and roles needed to become more effective volunteers.

**Track Leader: Josh Johnston, KE5MHV**, ARRL Emergency Communications and Field Services Director

#### Presenters and Topics:

- “The Future of Emergency Communications and Amateur Radio, and Building Relationships in EmComm,” with **Josh Johnston, KE5MHV**, ARRL Emergency Communications and Field Services Director
- “Welcome to Madison County and Huntsville; Overview of the ARES program in Madison County and the Interaction with Local Emergency Management,” with **Steve Smith, KM4CJ**, Assistant Emergency Coordinator, Madison County, Alabama
- “P.A.C.E. Planning, and the Importance of Having a P.A.C.E. Plan in EmComm and Daily Life,” with **J.M. Rowe, N5XFW**, ARRL Section Emergency Coordinator—Arkansas. In emergency management and disaster response, a PACE plan stands for Primary, Alternate, Contingency, and Emergency. It is a standardized methodology used by FEMA and public safety organizations to maintain critical operations—especially communications—when primary systems fail.
- “Integrating Amateur Radio Emergency Communications with Local CERT and Government Agencies,” with **Arc Thames, W4CPD**, ARRL Section Emergency Coordinator—Northern Florida. Building strong relationships with served agencies is one of the most important parts of having a successful ARES program. This presentation shares the real-world story of how Santa Rosa County CERT and ARES built a strong working relationship with Emergency Management and partner agencies. It will cover practical lessons on being present, understanding agency needs, navigating challenges, using available resources, creating meaningful training opportunities, and building trust through consistent service.
- “Developing a Successful Exercise Program and Managing a Quality Simulated Emergency Test,” with **Mike Watkins, WX4AL**

## TRAINING TRACK #3

### Salty Walt’s Portable Antenna Workshop

Join “Salty Walt” Hudson, K4OGO, and friends as they lead you through practical antenna designs, operating tips, and the how-to’s for successful portable adventures—with lessons and techniques that apply just as well to your home station.

**Track Leader: “Salty Walt” Hudson, K4OGO**

#### Presenters:

- **Walt Hudson, K4OGO**. Known to many as “Salty Walt” from YouTube’s *Coastal Waves & Wires*, Walt recently authored two ARRL books: *Salty Walt’s Portable Antenna Sketchbook* (2025) and *Salty Walt’s Next Level Portable Antenna Sketchbook* (2026).
- **Michael Martens, KB9VBR**. Michael shares, inspires and educates the amateur radio community through his YouTube channel KB9VBR Antennas.
- **John McAuliffe, W1DRF**. John is the Digital RF Engineer in the ARRL LAB. He’s also a mechanical engineer and has a lot of experience supporting members with their antenna builds and other technical investigations.

**8:30 AM** “Portable HF Activations, and Planning for Success” with “Salty Walt” Hudson, K4OGO. Topics include packing up, propagation, bands, locations, antenna selection, batteries, time of day, safety, etc.

**10 AM BREAK** (15 min.)

**10:15 AM** “Portable Activations in Action” with Michael Martens, KB9VBR. Operating portable doesn’t mean you have to settle for putting out a weak signal. Michael will offer his insights and tips for effective antennas in marginal areas and poor band conditions. Whether you are QRP or barefoot, learn how to choose the right antenna for the situation. Topics include antennas for tough situations; ground conductivity and why it matters; and using your antenna analyzer, and what to do when you don’t have it.

**11:45 AM DISMISSED FOR NATIONAL CONVENTION LUNCHEON**

**1:15 PM** “Improving your Portable Antenna System” with John McAuliffe, W1DRF. Gain a better understanding of what is happening in your antenna and learn techniques to improve your antenna’s performance both while you are building it and while you are deploying it. Topics will include baluns, chokes, transformers, and related applications and designs.

**2:45 PM BREAK** (15 min.)

**3:00 PM** “Putting it All Together, and Making Portable Contacts” with Walt K4OGO, Michael KB9VBR, and John W1DRF. Includes time for Q&A.

**4:30 PM END**