

Radio Rally

Jay & Liz McClellan, K8DC & K8DCL

Overview

This event is a combination road rally, scavenger hunt and trivia contest conducted using ham radio. Teams of 2 or 3 drive to checkpoints and compete to solve puzzles, find items and answer questions while communicating with a Net Control Station. Bonus points can be earned by answering trivia questions, and there's a bonus for having a non-licensed person talk on the air so non-hams are encouraged to participate.

Checkpoints

The course consists of a series of checkpoints to which teams will be directed by the net controller. Each team will visit the same set of checkpoints but not in the same order so that people don't all arrive in the same place at the same time. Checkpoints will be identified with a street address and map given to teams at the start, and there will be a parking area available at every checkpoint. Team members will need to get out and walk around up to a few hundred feet from their vehicle, so it's important to wear clothing and footwear appropriate for the weather.

Questions

For each checkpoint there is a set of questions to be answered. Each team will be given a printed list of all the questions beforehand, but the questions may be in a different order for different teams and they won't know which questions go with their current checkpoint until told by the net controller.

Some questions will be relatively easy, and others will be more challenging but they aren't intended to be extremely difficult. The answer to each question will be something one can see easily, though it might be off at a distance. A team scores one point for each correct answer, with no penalty for wrong answers. Here's a sample question:

- 21.** It has wheels that never roll and doors that never open. What color is it?
a. Red b. Green c. Blue d. Yellow e. Brown

Answers will be recorded by filling out an answer sheet that will be scored after the team returns.

Bonus Questions

Teams can score extra points by answering bonus questions that are announced periodically by the net controller. The controller will read the question and ask teams to call in by giving their FCC call sign if they think they know the answer. The controller will acknowledge the first call sign heard in the resulting pileup, which can be a bit tricky when using a repeater so it might not always be the first team that tries to call in. After the controller acknowledges a call sign, this person must give an answer within 5 seconds. The team will score one point for a correct answer, or *lose one point* for an incorrect answer or if they fail to answer within 5 seconds.

Because bonus questions may be announced at any time, it may be slightly advantageous to have a handheld transceiver that can be carried while walking around outside the vehicle at checkpoints. No more bonus questions will be given out after the first team completes the course and returns to the starting point.

Communication

The event is coordinated over ham radio using a *directed net*, and a goal is to help all participants learn and practice good net etiquette. A directed net is often used for emergency communication where exchanges must be brief, efficient and accurately understood under sometimes-noisy conditions. But this event is all for fun and there's no penalty for making mistakes so just do your best and don't worry about it. The rules are simple:

1. Contact the net control station (NCS) by giving just your tactical call sign e.g. *Team 5*, and don't say anything else until acknowledged by the NCS. Do not transmit to any other stations unless the NCS gives you permission to "go direct".
2. Use the phonetic alphabet for all letters and numbers, and repeat what you hear to confirm that you heard it right. The phonetic alphabet will be printed on materials given to each team, for those who don't have it memorized.
3. End each exchange by giving your own FCC call sign, or the call sign of your team's licensed control operator if you are not licensed. There's no need to say "over" or "clear" or anything else; your call sign means you're done.

Here's a typical exchange:

You: Team 5

NCS: Team 5, go ahead

You: We are finished at checkpoint Echo.

NCS: Copy finished at Echo, proceed to checkpoint Bravo and answer questions One Eight and One Niner.

You: Copy checkpoint Bravo, questions One Eight and One Niner. K8XYZ

NCS: N8ABC

Non-licensed Operator Bonus

A team scores one bonus point for having a non-licensed operator talk on the air. The easiest way to accomplish this is to have a non-licensed team member who handles the team's radio communication under supervision of a licensed control operator, and this is highly encouraged. This person must tell the net controller that they are a non-licensed operator in order to score the bonus point.

If a team consists of all licensed hams, they can score the bonus point by getting any non-licensed member of the public to talk on the air to the net controller during the event. A team member should first contact the net controller and state that they have a non-licensed person ready to talk before putting the person on the air.