

The Key Click

Monthly Newsletter of the Yelm Amateur Radio Group | N7YLM

Vol. 11, No. 7 | July 2026

yelmamateurradiogroup.org

💡 *Happy summer from the shack! Whether you're chasing DX (long-distance contacts) from your living room or setting up a portable station at the beach, July is one of the best months to be a ham.*

YARG Club Officers — 2026

President	Richard E. Bowen, WB0SRJ
Vice President	Paul F. Gagnon, N7OGB
Treasurer	Michael R. Gomez, KK7VKS
Secretary	Lubomir A. Missov, KK7WSC
Meetings	1st & 3rd Saturday, 9:00 AM Yelm Emanuel Lutheran Church, 206 Third St SE, Yelm, WA 98597

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

Fellow hams and friends of YARG,

Welcome to July — the heart of summer and one of the best times of the year to be a ham! Whether you're relaxing in the shack (home radio station) on a warm Pacific Northwest evening or setting up a portable station in the great outdoors, the bands are alive and waiting for you.

As many of you know, we are in the midst of the **Solar Cycle 25 peak** — delivering some of the best HF (high-frequency, long-distance radio) propagation conditions in well over a decade. The bands are wide open, DX (long-distance contacts) is there for the taking, and even modest antennas are producing remarkable results. I encourage every one of you to take advantage of these conditions while they last. Try a new band, chase a new entity, or just call CQ (a general call inviting any station to respond) and see who comes back!

One of the best ways to stay active and connected between meetings is our **Monday Night Social Net on the N7YLM repeater** — every Monday at 7:00 PM, followed by the **Future Net on simplex 147.470 MHz**. It's casual, friendly, and a great low-pressure way to get on the air whether you're a brand-new Technician or a seasoned Extra. All hams are warmly welcome — bring a friend!

I also want to give a heads-up about an important schedule note: our **August 2** our beloved host, **Emanuel Lutheran Church**, celebrates their incredible **100th Anniversary**. YARG is proud to call this historic Yelm institution our home, and we send our heartfelt congratulations to the entire congregation. Please plan to join us instead at the **August 1st and 15th meeting at 9:00 AM**.

73 (best wishes — the classic ham radio sign-off) and see you at the meeting,

Richard — WB0SRJ

President, Yelm Amateur Radio Group

UPCOMING EVENTS — JULY & AUGUST 2026

Date	Event	Details
July 18, 2026 (3rd Saturday)	Regular Club Meeting ★	9:00 AM — Yelm Emanuel Lutheran Church, 206 Third St SE, Yelm, WA 98597. Topic TBA; all members and guests welcome. We look forward to seeing you there!
August 1, 2026 (1st Saturday)	Regular Club Meeting	9:00 AM — Yelm Emanuel Lutheran Church.
August 15, 2026 (3rd Saturday)	Regular Club Meeting	9:00 AM — Yelm Emanuel Lutheran Church.
Ongoing	YARG Nets	Regular club net check-ins keep you connected between meetings. Three weekly nets serve our community — all are welcome! 📻 Monday — Social Net on the N7YLM repeater — Every Monday at 7:00 PM. A casual, friendly on-air social net for YARG members and guests, followed by the Future Net on simplex 147.470 MHz . Great for all experience levels — no pressure, just good conversation! 📻 Saturday — Yelm ARES Net — Every Saturday at 7:00 PM. A weekly emergency communications net for Yelm ARES (Amateur Radio Emergency Service) members and interested hams. A great way to stay sharp and practice public service communications skills. 📻 Sunday — East Thurston County District 3 EMCOMM Net — Every Sunday at 7:15 PM on DMR Talkgroup (TG) 31771. (DMR — Digital Mobile Radio — is a digital voice mode accessible via a DMR-capable radio or hotspot.) An excellent opportunity to connect with the broader East Thurston County emergency communications community. Check https://etc-ares.org/ for the most current net schedules, frequencies, and times.

🌿 Special Community Milestone — Sunday, August 2, 2026

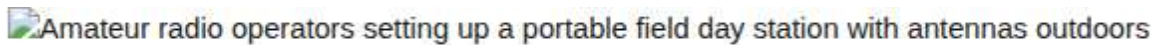
Emanuel Lutheran Church 100th Anniversary Celebration! Our beloved meeting home marks a truly remarkable milestone this summer. Congratulations to the Emanuel Lutheran Church community on **100 years of faithful service to Yelm**. YARG is proud and honored to call this historic building our meeting home, and we wish the congregation many more decades of fellowship and community. Please join us in celebrating this wonderful achievement!



Stay in the Loop

All dates and times are subject to change. Always check yelmamateurradiogroup.org for the most current and up-to-date schedule information before heading out!

FIELD DAY 2026 WRAP-UP

 Amateur radio operators setting up a portable field day station with antennas outdoors

Scenes like this played out across the country on June 27–28 as ham radio clubs operated portable emergency stations for ARRL Field Day 2026.

July is one of the finest months to be an amateur radio operator, and this summer the conditions are particularly outstanding. With **Solar Cycle 25 at its peak**, the ionosphere is energized and bands that seemed quiet just a few years ago are now alive with activity from around the globe. Whether you prefer voice, digital modes, or CW (Morse code), there has rarely been a better time to get on the air and make some memorable QSOs (radio contacts).

The results nationally were impressive: as of July 2, **the ARRL had already received more than 2,400 log entries** from clubs and individuals across the country. Clubs logged thousands of QSOs (radio contacts), ran equipment on emergency power sources like generators and batteries, performed public outreach demonstrations, and showed local communities just what amateur radio can do when the phones and internet go down.

"Field Day is amateur radio's open house — a 24-hour showcase of emergency readiness, technical skill, and pure community spirit."

Not sure where to start? Here are a few ideas to spark your summer operating:

- **Try 6 meters — "The Magic Band":** Summer sporadic-E (Es) propagation can produce sudden, stunning DX openings on 50 MHz. Monitor 50.125 MHz and be ready to jump in!
- **Work 20 meters all day long:** The reliable workhorse of HF (14 MHz) is great for both domestic and international contacts from sunrise to sunset.
- **Experiment with digital modes:** FT8 and FT4 on WSJT-X software are ideal for weak-signal work. Many hams make their first DX contacts this way!
- **Join the Monday Night Social Net on the N7YLM repeater:** Every Monday at 7:00 PM — a casual, friendly on-air net perfect for new and experienced operators alike. No experience needed, just a radio and a willingness to say hello!

After the Social Net on the N7YLM repeater, stay on for the **Future Net on simplex 147.470 MHz** — another great opportunity to connect with fellow YARG members and local hams throughout the region.

Join the Monday Night Social Net!

Every **Monday at 7:00 PM** on K7YLM Repeater, followed by the **Future Net on simplex 147.470 MHz**, hosted by KF7TNO Carol Moulton. Whether you're a brand-new Technician making your very first check-in or a longtime Extra class operator, all hams are warmly welcome. Bring a friend and see you on the air!

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Spotlight: Sarah, KD7XPL

Every ham remembers their first HF contact — that electric moment when a voice or signal comes back from hundreds or thousands of miles away. For **Sarah, KD7XPL**, that moment came recently on **20 meters**, and it's a memory she's not likely to forget anytime soon.

Sarah started her ham radio journey with a Technician class license, earning the privileges to operate on VHF and UHF bands (plus some limited HF). But she didn't stop there. After dedicated study, she passed her **General class exam**, unlocking the full range of HF (high-frequency, long-distance) bands. Within days, she was sitting at an HF rig, nervously tuning across the 20-meter (14 MHz) band — the hobby's most reliable workhorse for daytime DX — and making her first long-distance contact.

"I couldn't believe it," Sarah told us. "Someone came back to my call from clear across the country. I had the biggest grin on my face for the rest of the day."

But Sarah isn't stopping at voice contacts (phone operation). She's jumped headfirst into **digital modes**, particularly **FT8** — a revolutionary weak-signal digital protocol developed by Nobel Prize winner Joe Taylor, K1JT. Using FT8 (via the free WSJT-X software), Sarah has already logged contacts on multiple bands with minimal power, proving that you don't need a tower and a kilowatt to work the world.

Welcome to HF, Sarah — the best is yet to come! 73!

A Note of Thanks to Our Elmers

Sarah's journey — like that of so many new hams — was made easier by the patient guidance of our club's **Elmers** (the ham radio term for an experienced operator who mentors newcomers, named after a 1971 QST magazine article). These unsung heroes give their time, their expertise, and their encouragement to ensure that every new licensee finds their footing in the hobby. We are grateful for every one of you.

Share Your Story!

Are you a new ham who just earned your ticket? An experienced operator who recently hit a milestone — a new DXCC entity, a first satellite contact, or a new band? **We want to feature you!** Send your spotlight story (a short paragraph or two) to and you could appear in a future issue of The Key Click.

TECHNICAL TIP OF THE MONTH

Make the Most of Summer Propagation

If you haven't been on the HF bands lately, *now is the time*. We are currently at or near the peak of **Solar Cycle 25**, and experts agree this is shaping up to be one of the strongest solar cycles in over a decade. What does that mean for you? It means the ionosphere (the electrically charged upper atmosphere that reflects radio waves back to Earth) is highly energized — and radio signals are traveling farther, more reliably, and with more frequency than they have in years.

Here's your band-by-band guide to summer 2026 propagation:

6 METERS — "THE MAGIC BAND" (50–54 MHZ)

Summer is prime time for **Sporadic-E (Es) propagation** on 6 meters. Clouds of ionized gas in the E-layer of the ionosphere form unpredictably and can reflect VHF signals over distances of 500–1,400 miles — suddenly and without warning. Monitor **50.125 MHz** (the 6-meter SSB calling frequency) and be ready to pounce when an opening occurs. They can last minutes or hours, and the DX can be spectacular.

20 METERS — THE WORKHORSE BAND (14 MHZ)

20 meters is the reliable backbone of daytime HF DX. During solar cycle peaks, 20m can support contacts to Europe, Asia, South America, and beyond for much of the day. If you only have time for one band, make it 20 meters. Look for the CW (Morse code) sub-band below 14.150 MHz and voice (SSB) above it.

10 & 12 METERS — SUMMER SURPRISE BANDS (28 & 24 MHZ)

At solar cycle peak, **10 meters (28 MHz) can open dramatically** to worldwide DX — and when it does, even a modest station with a simple antenna can work the world. Sporadic-E also fires up on 10 meters in summer, adding regional openings on top of the cycle-driven DX. Don't ignore 12 meters (24.9 MHz) either — a quieter band with similar characteristics and less competition.

2 METERS & 70 CM — TROPOSPHERIC DUCTING

Summer stable high-pressure weather systems set the stage for **tropospheric ducting** on VHF/UHF (2m/70cm). When a temperature inversion forms, signals can travel hundreds of miles beyond their normal range. Watch for high-pressure weather patterns in the Pacific Northwest — and keep an ear on 144.200 MHz SSB for DX calling activity.

DIGITAL MODES — FT8 & FT4 (WSJT-X)

FT8 and FT4 are game-changers for weak-signal work. These computer-aided digital modes can decode signals 20+ dB below the noise floor — meaning contacts that are completely inaudible to the human ear are perfectly workable. Download **WSJT-X** (free, from physics.princeton.edu/pulsar/k1jt/) and try it on any band. It's perfect for those marginal summer conditions when voice isn't quite making it through.

CURRENT CONDITIONS SNAPSHOT (JULY 2026)

Parameter	Status	What It Means for You
Solar Flux Index (SFI)	~100 (Active)	Good HF propagation on upper bands (10m–20m)
K-Index	Quiet (0–2)	Stable conditions — get on the air now!
Best Daytime Bands	20m, 17m, 15m	Domestic and DX contacts throughout the day
Best Evening/Night Bands	40m, 80m	Regional contacts, local nets, rag-chewing
Summer Surprise Bands	6m, 10m	Monitor for sporadic-E openings

 **Safety Tip**

Disconnect your antennas during summer thunderstorms. Lightning poses a serious and potentially fatal risk to antenna systems. When storms are forecast — or even nearby — disconnect your coax from your radios, use a proper lightning arrestor, and ground your station. No contact is worth the risk. Stay safe out there!

Challenge for July: Try a band or mode you've never operated before. Whether it's your first FT8 contact, your first 6-meter QSO, or your first satellite pass, summer 2026 is the perfect time to expand your operating horizons. Report back at the July 19 meeting!

COMMUNITY & EMCOMM UPDATE

YARG & Pierce County ARES

Amateur radio's most important public service role is **emergency communications (EmComm)** — and YARG is proud to support that mission alongside **Pierce County ARES** (Amateur Radio Emergency Service). ARES volunteers provide backup communications for public safety agencies, hospitals, and served agencies when conventional communications infrastructure fails during disasters and emergencies.

If you're interested in serving your community through amateur radio emergency communications, we encourage you to connect with **Pierce County ARES**. Visit yelmamateurradiogroup.org or email to learn how to get involved — a great way to put your license to work for the community.

🌟 Inspiring News: YOTA Americas Camp 2026

The future of amateur radio is bright — and we have proof. The **Youngsters on the Air (YOTA) Americas Camp 2026**, held June 14–19 in Huntsville, Alabama, brought together **35 young ham radio operators from 17 states and 3 countries** for a week of learning, operating, and inspiration.

Highlights from the camp included:

- **Live contact with the International Space Station (ISS)** — camp participants spoke directly with astronaut **Chris Williams, KJ5GEW**, via amateur radio. Imagine being a young ham and making your first ISS contact!
- **High-altitude balloon launch** — the camp's balloon soared to an incredible **93,500 feet** above the Earth, carrying amateur radio equipment and demonstrating the incredible reach of our hobby.
- Mentorship, friendships, and memories that will keep these young operators inspired for decades to come.

"Amateur radio reaches from the backyard to the edge of space — and every young ham who gets licensed carries that potential."

Introduce a Young Person to Amateur Radio!

Do you have kids, grandkids, neighbors, or students in your life who might enjoy the technical challenge and adventure of amateur radio? **YARG offers licensing classes** for beginners (Technician) as well as for those ready to upgrade to General or higher. Getting licensed is easier than ever, and the hobby offers something for everyone — from electronics to emergency service to making friends around the world.

Contact us at or visit yelmamateurradiogroup.org to learn about upcoming licensing class opportunities.

ON THE AIR THIS MONTH — PROPAGATION CORNER

Here's your quick-reference operating guide for July 2026. Whether you have 15 minutes or a full afternoon, there's always a great band to be on:

Time of Day	Recommended Bands	What to Expect
Morning (6 AM – Noon)	20m (14 MHz), 17m (18 MHz)	Excellent domestic and DX contacts to Europe and beyond. Call CQ or answer stations on the SSB calling frequencies.
Afternoon (Noon – 6 PM)	6m (50 MHz), 10m (28 MHz), 15m (21 MHz)	Watch for sporadic-E openings on 6m and 10m. 15m holds up well for DX throughout the afternoon at solar cycle peak.
Evening / Night (6 PM – Midnight)	40m (7 MHz), 80m (3.5 MHz)	Regional contacts, Pacific Northwest nets, and casual rag-chewing (informal conversations). Great for getting to know other local hams.
All Times	Any band — FT8/FT4 digital	When voice propagation seems marginal, digital modes shine. FT8 can close a contact that voice simply cannot. Try WSJT-X on 20m, 40m, or any open band.

REAL-TIME PROPAGATION RESOURCES

- **DXMaps.com** — Real-time map of DX contacts and band openings by mode and band
- **PSKReporter.info** — Shows where your digital signals are being heard around the world
- **NOAA Space Weather** (spaceweather.noaa.gov) — Solar flux, K-index, and geomagnetic storm warnings
- **DX Summit** (dxsummit.fi) — Live DX cluster spots from operators worldwide

LICENSING CORNER

Are you reading this newsletter as an unlicensed visitor — perhaps a family member of a YARG ham, or someone curious about the hobby? Or maybe you're a licensed Technician who's been thinking about upgrading? **This section is for you.**

The Three License Classes

License Class	Privileges	Exam
Technician (Entry Level)	Full VHF/UHF privileges + limited HF. Great for local communications, repeaters, satellites, and emergency communications. The gateway license!	35-question exam; no Morse code required
General	Unlocks most HF bands for worldwide communication. The "ticket to the world." Highly recommended upgrade for all Technicians!	35-question exam; Technician required first
Amateur Extra (Top Class)	All amateur radio privileges. Full access to all bands and sub-bands. The pinnacle of amateur licensing.	50-question exam; General required first

Study Resources

- **ARRL.org** — Official study materials, license manuals, and VE exam session locator
- **HamStudy.org** — Free online flashcards and practice exams (highly recommended!)
- **Ham Radio Prep** (hamradioprep.com) — Structured online courses for all license classes

UNTIL NEXT MONTH — 73!

July is a month of celebrations — Independence Day fireworks, summer barbecues, long Pacific Northwest evenings — and for us, it's also a month to celebrate what makes this hobby so remarkable. We are a community of curious, generous, technically minded people who share a passion for communication, preparedness, and the simple joy of making a connection across distance.

Whether you're a brand-new Technician just discovering the magic of your first repeater contact, or an Extra-class operator with decades of DX chasing under your belt, **you belong here**. YARG is your club, your community, and your home base on the air.

Stay curious. Stay active. Keep your antenna pointed at the sky and your log book open. And please — **welcome every new ham you meet** with the same warmth and generosity that was shown to you when you were starting out.

We'll see you at the **July 18 meeting, 9:30 AM, Yelm Emanuel Lutheran Church**. Coffee will be on, stories will be shared, and we can't wait to hear from all of you.

Until next month — 73 and good DX from the YARG team!

The Key Click is published monthly by the Yelm Amateur Radio Group.

Member submissions, event notices, and letters to the editor are always welcome.

Send to:

N7YLM | YELM AMATEUR RADIO GROUP

yelmamateurradiogroup.org |

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