Field Day? In January? Why… and how?

Winter Field Day has been a very popular amateur radio activity for years. It complements ARRL Field Day, occurring the last full weekend in June, and allows amateurs and amateur radio clubs to demonstrate contingency and emergency communications. It's also an opportunity to practice and improve on skills necessary to deliver impromptu radio services.

Winter Field Day answers the question, why not get this kind of "hurry-up" radio experience more than once a year? After all, many amateurs have other commitments in late June and regularly miss out on the field Day fun. And Winter Field Day lets ham operators potentially rack up lots of contacts… when it's cold.

Winter Field Day Goals

Amateurs and club members can choose from several Winter Filed Day operating goals, some of which are:

My "Go-Box." Have got everything?

- Perfecting the "go box" to take to a Red Cross emergency center, or evacuation shelter, or maybe out to a forest, to help with a lost child search
- Strengthening their confidence when operating in adverse weather—don't let sub-zero distract from getting QSOs
- Discovering all the gremlins that invade alternative power equipment when the temperature is in single digits
- Practice — putting QSOs in the log under imperfect conditions when others depend on your speed and accuracy

This year, SVARC members, new ones and old timers, took advantage of Winter Field Day's high traffic and fast pace to get more familiar with the club's completely updated HF station at the SVARC Club acreage and building. Winter Field Day was conducted inside—it's plenty warm—using commercial power and the existing, Club Station, radios, antennas, and control systems. Winter Field Day would, in short, be a training session and a general practice run for anticipated club events later in 2026.

The HF station is one of the most complete and state-of-the-art available to a US club with general emphasis.

There are three permanent operating positions, with capacity for two more, for a total of five. An Elecraft K3s radio occupies the first position with a Flex 6000 series radio at each of the second and third positions. Any two of these three radios can be on the air, on different bands, at the same time.

The club's acreage supports five HF antennas—four wire antennas and one multi-band rotatable beam. There is also a six meter Yagi antenna, also rotatable.

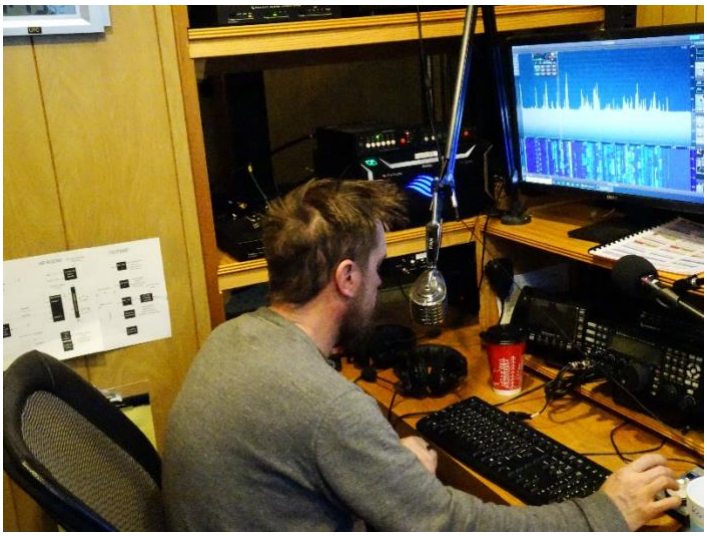
Almost all of this HF (and six meter) "stuff" is completely remote controlled. Anyone with a laptop and an internet connection can bring up the Flex Radios, select transmitting antennas, tune the antennas and operate sideband and digital modes—from their bedroom, in their pajamas, if they wish. It's Club policy not to ask.

So here is a quick look at the Shenandoah Valley Amateur Radio Club (SVARC) club station W4RKC Winter Field Day 2026.

Warm it up…

Integrate the “contest” logging software with the two Flex Radios

20 meters and 40 meters… Running both at 100 watts… pulling in Winter Field Day contacts.



20 meters, or is it 40?

40 meters, or is it 20?

Next operator… *doing great*.

Hey! Can he run a frequency with that Flex Radio?

You bet!!

High speed CW on the Flex controlled with the Maestro control unit.

Anyone for a little Morse?

Now you're ~~talking~~ pounding brass!