

How do I?

An occasional series

This week: ...Check into the C.A.R.C. 2m simplex net?

New to the hobby? Returning to the wonderful world of amateur radio? Want to try something new? The Cumberland Amateur Radio Club (CARC) 2 meter net meets Sunday nights at 7 PM (1900 local or zulu time) on 146.490 simplex. It is a small and informal group. We try to keep to the net to 15-20 minutes in length. It is a place where we can use our two meter equipment, test new gear and troubleshoot problems..or just talk.

Many new amateur operators seem to have the idea that if you cannot see the person you want to talk to on two meters you need a repeater. Not so! Our small group stretches from the northern edges of Mechanicsburg and Enola, PA to Dillsburg, PA and we have regular check in from Westminster, MD, approximately 60 miles away. True, we need good conditions, and about 50 watts to make that work, but it can be done. Most of the regulars use 10, 20 or 25 watts depending on what the low to mid power setting on their radio is.

What kind of radio do I need? Just about any two meter radio will reach us. A handheld (HT) with a stock factory rubber duck may not work. You probably want an after market antenna from Smiley or Diamond or similar. If you happen to have a small Yagi like the Arrow brand of antennas designed for amateur satellite work, it should do well. Some sort of mobile antenna is probably best for an HT.



Diamond X30. Photo by the author



208H scanning the AAR railroad frequencies. Photo by the author

A mobile radio, whether in your car or in the shack may give better results. The Icom 208H (no longer in production/replaced by the 2300H is a dual band (2m/70 cm) mobile. It is a great radio and I have run the CARC 2m net with one using a MFJ 2 meter rollup J-pole antenna. It has made contacts approx 25 miles or so away. I have run the net using my dual band mobile in my car while parked and a mag-mount Diamond MR77 antenna. Yaesu makes several satisfactory radios: the FT2900R, FT7900R and FT8900R Kenwood offers the TM281A and TM-V1A among others.

Currently I use a 50 watt dual band radio with Diamond X50 base station antenna. Diamond makes solid, reliable antennas. Comet also has a line of equally good antennas and many other makes are available as well. Before the Diamond X50 I used the shorter X30. It was more than satisfactory but I had trouble hearing Carl, KB3KJP out of Westminster, MD so I moved up to the X50. If I was to acquire a new vertical antenna I think it would be a Diamond X300.

What else do I need? Power: HT batteries, or something to power the mobile rig. A simple 10 amp power supply works. You can also use the same 23, 25 or 30 amp power supply you may have for an HF transceiver. Coax: you need to connect your transceiver to the antenna. LMR240 or LM400 coax from a quality supplier is preferred. Keep cable runs as short as practical.

See ya on the air!