

## ***How do I?***

### ***An occasional series***

#### ***This week: Sending QSL Cards Via the Bureau***

Elsewhere in the ***How Do I...*** series we have described the process of making sure your Inbound QSL Bureau has envelopes and knows how to find you.

Today we are going to make a happy ham by sending a QSL card via the bureau.

For starters, let's mention that a QSL card is proof of having made a radio contact.

Many radio clubs at the size and scope of a "National Association" provide a QSL Card Sending and Receiving service. Some charge a fee for using these services. Others include use of the service as part of the standard membership fee.

Germany has a relatively small number of amateur radio operators. The national association is the DARC. In Germany, all local clubs are DARC affiliated. If the non-resident membership fee, stripped of most membership privileges, is 99 Euros a year, or \$107.62 at today's rate, I don't think you can really complain about the cost of ARRL membership!

One of the advantages of being a German amateur is that by joining your local club and DARC, you have access to their QSL distribution network. As I understand it, whether you want to send a QSL card across town, or across the planet, you simply take it to a club meeting. The QSL representative collects your card and forwards it as appropriate.

Inbound cards travel a reverse path. Germans seem to enjoy sending and receiving QSL cards. It is probably not a coincidence that a majority of the DX cards I have received are from Germany.

Japan still has a network of local amateur radio equipment retailers. While JARA, the Japanese Amateur Radio Association, is very large and very innovative (D-Star originated with them), in Japan the local radio stores also handle QSL cards.

In the United States, QSL card processing is sort of a split system. The Inbound cards are routed to Incoming QSL Bureau Sponsors. The Sponsor for the Third Call Area is the National Capitol DX Association (NCDXA). QSL cards for any US call sign that has a number 3 in it are directed to the National Capitol DX Association. It doesn't matter where the owner of that call sign actually lives... If the number is 3, his or her cards go to the Third Call Area QSL Bureau.

Under the NCDXA umbrella, the first step involves a high-level sortation of the inbound cards. Inbound QSL cards are sorted and skimmed off according to the first letter following the "3" in the call sign. For example, one club member may handle all the cards for the letter I, as in AF3I. Another club member may handle all the cards for the letter P, as in KB3PQT and

N3PRO. And yet another club member may handle all the cards for the letter F, as in N3FWE and KC3FFI.

If you have envelopes on file with the Third Call Area QSL Bureau, you will periodically receive the QSL cards they have for you. You do not need to know the name or address of the person who sorts your letter of the alphabet. Likewise, you do not have to be an ARRL member to use this service.

Outbound QSL cards are handled through the ARRL offices in Newington, CT. You must be an ARRL member to use this service.

To use the outbound service, begin by going to the ARRL website. [Outgoing QSL Service \(arrl.org\)](http://arrl.org)

Print the submission form. If you will use it often, it may be worth the time to use the software of your choice to convert it to a fillable PDF file.

Calculate the fee and package your cards per the ARRL instructions. Include the submission form and a check or money order for shipment to the ARRL Outgoing QSL Service.

The fee is based on the number of cards sent.

**\$2 for 10 or fewer cards in one envelope.  
\$3 for 11-20 cards in one envelope,  
or 75 cents per ounce, for packages with 21 or more cards.**

As long as you send 10 or more cards, the fee is quite reasonable.

## **Appendix A:**

You may want to know how to send your envelopes to the Third Call Area QSL Bureau

You could visit the Third Call Sign Area QSL Bureau website and read their instructions.

<https://www.ncdxa.org/qs1.shtml>

Or you could read my instructions (below).

### **Buy some 6 inch by 9 inch envelopes.**

Get the kind that DO NOT HAVE A METAL CLASP. Metal clasps trigger a postage surcharge.

If you rarely work DX consider sending two envelopes.

If you routinely work DX consider sending three envelopes

If you are Big DXer consider sending four or more envelopes.

Write your own Call Sign (and nothing else) where the RETURN ADDRESS usually is placed,

Write your own mailing address in the TO: area of the envelope. When filled, you almost certainly want this envelope to be sent to your home address.

### **Buy some FOREVER STAMPS.**

The QSL Bureau Sorter will seal and mail your envelope when it contains enough cards to “use up” the amount of postage you affixed. One ounce worth of postage will cover about 5 cards. Two ounces worth of postage will cover about 14 cards. Do not go above two ounces because the over-stuffed envelope will trigger a:”bulge” rule and the postage price goes up.

If you are **Postage Savvy** you know that additional ounces can use a different stamp that costs less than the stamp that covers the price of the first ounce.

If you just want to get the job done stick two stamps on the envelope

Do not seal these envelopes.

**Buy one bigger envelope.** Let’s say 9 inches by 12 inches.

Write the Third Call Area QSL Bureau Address in the TO: area of this envelope

**W3 QSL Bureau  
National Capitol DX Association  
P. O. Box 190  
Glenelg, MD 21737-0190**

Write your own Return Address where the RETURN ADDRESS normally goes.

Stuff all the 6 x 9 Self-Addressed Stamped Envelopes you prepared in a previous step inside this bigger envelope. Avoid making bulges. Postage goes up if the envelope is thicker than ¼ inch.

Seal the bigger envelope.

**Take the stuffed bigger envelope to the Post Office.**

Let them weigh it and tell you the price for mailing.

Pay the nice man or lady.

**Have a nice day.**

### **Appendix B:**

You may want to know how to send your outbound QSL cards to the ARRL Outbound QSL Bureau

If you are not a member of the ARRL then you are not eligible to use this service. Please consider becoming a member.

If you are a member of the ARRL then please continue

Let me direct you to the ARRL Outgoing QSL Bureau webpage.

<http://www.arrl.org/outgoing-qsl-service>

They have more rules than Carter has pills.

Please read the rules yourself.

#####