

Official Rules and Regulations Concerning ARRL Hamfests and Conventions

The American Radio Relay League (ARRL) governs the organization and conduct of conventions and hamfests, integral gatherings for individuals passionate about amateur radio. Revised as of January 2026, these rules delineate the framework under which such events are authorized, ensuring compliance and the promotion of the League's interests.



National Conventions

In exceptional circumstances, the Board of Directors may authorize the assembly of a National Convention, which invites amateur radio enthusiasts spanning the entire ARRL operational footprint. The process involves:

- Assignment of a Board member to collaborate with staff for the evaluation of applications.
- Approval of the program by the Executive Committee.

Overview of ARRL Division / Section / State Conventions

ARRL hamfests and conventions serve as a platform for amateur radio enthusiasts to connect, learn, and share knowledge. These gatherings can be sanctioned at various levels—Section, State, or Division—and can also be categorized as Operating-Specialty conventions. Here, "Operating-specialty" refers to specific technical or operational activities pertinent to subsets of the ARRL membership.

Key Requirements for Sanctioning

Before a convention can be branded as ARRL-sanctioned, specific protocols must be followed:

1. Application Submission: Organizers must submit an application detailing:

- Venue and date of the event
- Territorial scope and target audience
- Sponsoring clubs or associations
- Any club requesting a convention must be an ARRL Affiliated Club
- Names and addresses of the event's officers

2. Approval Process:

- The application is evaluated by ARRL's Convention Program Manager, who then seeks approval from the respective Division Director.
- Once the application is submitted, it undergoes an evaluation by the Conventions Program Manager. This phase is critical, as it not only assesses the feasibility of the event but also ensures alignment with ARRL's mission and objectives.

- After careful review, the corresponding Section Manager and Division Director are consulted, providing additional layers of oversight. Upon review by the Section Manager and approval by the Division Director, the Chairman of the hamfest will receive notification regarding the approval status of the event. This process ensures that all sanctioned events maintain a standard of quality and professionalism that reflects the values of the ARRL.

3. **Limitations:**

Not more than one convention is permitted annually in a given area at each level. For state conventions straddling two ARRL divisions, authorization must be obtained from both Directors.

4. **Convention Features:**

ARRL-sanctioned conventions are required to adhere to the following regulations:

- An ARRL forum or meeting should be included in the program.
- Provision for an ARRL display booth or table at no cost to ARRL in a prominently visible location.
- The ARRL diamond logo must be prominently featured in all promotional materials.

5. **In reciprocation, ARRL commits to providing:**

- A speaker from the headquarters staff or League officers at no charge. (subject to CEO authorization)
- Editorial support for promotion in *QST*, ARRL's official magazine.
- Advertising at reduced rates compared to commercial listings.
- Awards or prizes for participants up to one hundred- and fifty-dollars maximum value.

The ARRL's official rules and regulations, established to govern hamfests and conventions, reflect the League's commitment to fostering community and enriching the amateur radio experience. By outlining comprehensive procedures for organization and approval, the ARRL ensures that all sanctioned events maintain high standards of quality and relevance to its members.

Guidelines for ARRL Hamfests: Ensuring a Successful Event

ARRL-sanctioned hamfests are vital gatherings for amateur radio enthusiasts, providing an opportunity for learning, networking, and buying or selling amateur radio equipment. However, organizing a successful hamfest involves adhering to specific guidelines set forth by the American Radio Relay League (ARRL). The following guidelines are designed to ensure a smooth application and event execution process.

1. **Application Submission:**

Applicants must submit the same detailed information for what is required for conventions. Key elements of the application encompass the proposed date and location, an outline of event activities, expected attendance, do you plan on having space for vendors and/or flea market area. An accurate and thorough submission not only facilitates a smoother approval process but also provides insights into the event's organization.

2. Approval Process:

Once the application is submitted, it undergoes an evaluation by the Conventions Program Manager. This phase is critical, as it not only assesses the feasibility of the event but also ensures alignment with ARRL's mission and objectives.

After careful review, the corresponding Section Manager and Division Director are consulted, providing additional layers of oversight. Upon review by the Section Manager and approval by the Division Director, the Chairman of the hamfest will receive notification regarding the approval status of the event. This process ensures that all sanctioned events maintain a standard of quality and professionalism that reflects the values of the ARRL.

3. Event Structure:

- Provision for an ARRL display booth or table at no cost to ARRL in a prominently visible location.
- If formal presentations are scheduled, time for an ARRL meeting must be allocated upon request.
- Any club requesting ARRL sanctioning must be an ARRL Affiliated Club.

Indoor Hamfests

Indoor hamfests usually take place in convention centers, community halls, or similar venues. Their structured environment provides various advantages that appeal to both participants and organizers.

1. **Climate Control:** Indoor hamfests benefit from regulated temperatures, ensuring a comfortable experience for attendees regardless of external weather conditions.
2. **Structured Program:** Indoor events often feature organized schedules, including workshops, guest speakers, and forums. Attendees have the opportunity to participate in discussions, enhancing their knowledge and skills.
3. **Less Distraction:** The confined nature of indoor settings minimizes distractions, allowing participants to focus on the exhibits, presentations, and networking opportunities.
4. **Safety and Accessibility:** Interiors are typically accessible for individuals with disabilities and come equipped with security measures. This creates a sense of safety, particularly for families or first-time attendees.
5. **Awards and Recognitions:** Indoor hamfests often host competitions and award ceremonies, recognizing excellence in various categories within the amateur radio community.

6. Support from ARRL Headquarters:

- Editorial support for promotion in *QST*'s Convention and Hamfest Calendar
- Provision for advertising in *QST* at preferable rates.
- Optional awards or prizes up to \$100 maximum value.

- If you have an ARRL V.E. session during the event you will receive an additional \$50 prize coupon certificate.

Given these factors, indoor hamfests tend to attract larger crowds and generate a higher level of engagement among participants.

Outdoor Tailgate / TrunkFests / Hybrid events

In contrast, Tailgate / TrunkFests and hybrids are held either in completely open-air spaces, such as parking lots or fairgrounds with little to no area where a forum could be held free of any inclement weather, or along with an indoor area which would allow for meetings. They embody a more casual and laid-back atmosphere but come with distinct limitations.

1. Limited Structured Activities:

Unlike their indoor counterparts, Tailgate/TrunkFests and hybrid events many times lack formal programming. This limitation can result in missed educational opportunities and fewer organized competitions or awards.

2. Weather Dependency:

One of the more immediate challenges posed by the outdoor setting is the weather. Participants and attendees alike must adapt to whatever Mother Nature has in store for them that day. The scorching sun may be joyous for some, but it can quickly become uncomfortable and potentially harmful without proper precautions like a covered venue would provide. Conversely, unanticipated rain showers can disrupt the vibrant atmosphere, forcing attendees to hastily retreat to a safer location.

3. Location:

Tailgate / TrunkFests /Hybrids are often held in settings of parks, perhaps with a Gazebo or other small, covered area, stadium parking lots, or similar outdoor spaces. The charm of these gatherings comes with unique challenges, primarily due to their exposure to the natural elements and the uncontrolled noise around them.

4. Resources:

Tailgate / TrunkFests / Hybrids are primarily focused on minimization. They allow individuals to drive to a location, pop open their vehicle trunks and display a variety of goods for sale or trade. This open-air marketplace serves as an easy way to display equipment and merchandise for sale or trade. However, being outdoors brings significant limitations that can impact the overall experience.

5. Noise:

Another complexity of having outdoor events is noise. With discussions unfolding in a lively atmosphere complemented by music, laughter, and the hum of people interacting, sound can easily become a barrier to any meaningful communication.

In such environments, forum presenters would find it challenging to articulate their messages or engage fully with their audience due to the noise pollution surrounding them. This distraction hampers the opportunities for deeper discussions, limiting the exchange of knowledge and experiences crucial to community building.

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- Editorial support for promotion in *QST*'s Convention and Hamfest Calendar
- Provision for advertising in *QST* at preferable rates.
- Optional awards or prizes up to \$50 maximum value.
- If you have an ARRL V.E. session during the event you will receive an additional \$50 prize coupon certificate.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Q: How do I find out if an event is officially ARRL-sanctioned?

A: ARRL-sanctioned events will prominently display the ARRL diamond logo in their promotional materials, websites, and on-site signage. You can also check *QST* or the ARRL website at <https://arrl.org/> for a calendar of upcoming events.

Q: What kind of events qualify as "Operating-Specialty" conventions?

A: These are conventions focused on specific technical or operational aspects of amateur radio. Examples might include conventions dedicated to digital modes, emergency communications, or contesting.

Q: Can a non-ARRL affiliated club host a sanctioned convention or hamfest?

A: No. Any club requesting ARRL sanctioning must be an ARRL Affiliated Club.

Q: What are the benefits of having an ARRL sanctioned event?

A: Benefits include access to ARRL speakers, promotional support in *QST* magazine, reduced advertising rates, the ability to award ARRL prizes, and the prestige associated with the ARRL name.

Q: How far in advance should organizers start planning an ARRL-sanctioned event?

A: It's advisable to start planning several months, if not a year, in advance. This allows ample time for application processing, venue booking, program development, and promotion.

Q: How can I learn more about the application process for ARRL sanctioning?

A: Visit the official ARRL website and search for "hamfest" or "convention sanctioning." There, you'll find the most current instructions, forms, and contact information.

Addendum:

01/15/26 – Version 1.8 – page 3 Guideline for ARRL Hamfests: Ensuring a Successful Event – paragraph 3 – bullet 3 – Deleted the following... “and will only be sanctioned for a maximum of two hamfests/swaps in any given calendar year, and they must be at least four months apart.