

# “About Contesting”

Presented by:

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07/13/09

# Amateur Radio = 100's of Hobbies!

## *Reasons for being in Amateur Radio:*

- Exploring / Mastering Technology
- **Operating**
- Clubs
- Building Stuff
- “Antenna Farming”
- Antiques – “Boat Anchors”
- Public Service (like ARES/RACES)
- Social Outlet
- Collecting Things (QSL Cards, Operating Awards)
- Somebody made me get my ticket

# Amateur Radio = 100's of Hobbies!

## Operating (just a few of the ways)

- Local VHF Repeaters (“Rag-Chewing”)
- Casual Contacts on HF (“Rag-Chewing”)
- Traffic Nets (Like NWTN)
- Emergency Communications (EmComm)
- Public Service Events (Like Iron Man)
- DX-ing
- ***Contesting, a form of “RadioSport”***

# Contesting – A High Level Tour

## What is an Amateur Radio Contest?

- An on-the-air “Competition” – (Score-keeping)
- Every Contest has Unique Rules (simple to complex)
- Every Contest is Sponsored by an Organization
- Most contests are on weekends
- Various time frames (3 hr “sprints”, 24 hr typical, some 2 days)
- Talk to as many other contestants as possible (only once!)
- Many Contest Locations (at home, mobile, public place, etc.)
- Single Operator / Multi Operator / “Multi-Multi”
- Single Band / Mode to Multi Band / Mode
- Simple to Extreme

# Contesting – A High Level Tour

## Extreme Contesting

Amateur RadioSport *Direction Finding* (ARDF)

Amateur RadioSport High-Speed *Code Competition*

World RadioSport *Team Competition* (WRTC)

Annual Competition (50 teams)

Different Country Each Year

Identical Radio Stations

Like an Athletic Competition



KL9A, KU0DM, K0DXC

# **Contesting – A High Level Tour**

## **Less Extreme Examples**

Contest Club (Like North California Contest Club / NCCC)

“DX” Clubs (Like Spokane DX Association / SDXA)

Some Clubs Focus on some given Contest for an entire year

Some Clubs exist to Sponsor a single Contest

# **Contesting – A High Level Tour**

## **Some Historically Important Contesters**

Archduke of Austria (OE3AH)

King of Spain (EA1A)

King of Jordan (JY1)

# Contesting – A High Level Tour

## Variations on Contesting

County Hunting

State “QSO Parties”

Achievement Awards (WAS, WAC, DXCC)

DXing

DXpeditions



# Contesting – A High Level Tour



Bob Vallio, W6RGG

Scarborough Reef DXpedition

# Contesting – A High Level Tour

## When are the Contests?

- **Almost every weekend**
- **Check These Sources:**

*WA7BNM's Contest Calendar*

[www.hornucopia.com/contestcal/index.html](http://www.hornucopia.com/contestcal/index.html)

Extensive Contest Listing and Links to their Rules

*ARRL Website*

[www.arrl.org](http://www.arrl.org)

*“ARRL Letter”, “ARRL Contest Update”* (via e-mail)

free to ARRL Members

# Contesting – A High Level Tour

## Contest Examples (from WA7BNM calendar)

*(August, 2009)*

European HF Championship	0000Z-2359Z, Aug 1
TARA Grid Dip Shindig	0000Z-2400Z, Aug 1
10-10 Int. Summer Contest, SSB	0001Z, Aug 1 to 2359Z, Aug 2
North American QSO Party, CW	1800Z, Aug 1 to 0600Z, Aug 2
ARRL UHF Contest	1800Z, Aug 1 to 1800Z, Aug 2
SARL HF Phone Contest	1300Z-1630Z, Aug 2
WAE DX Contest, CW	0000Z, Aug 8 to 2359Z, Aug 9
SARTG WW RTTY Contest	0000Z, Aug 15 to 1600Z, Aug 16
ARRL 10 GHz and Up Contest	0600 Local, Aug 15 to 2400 Local, Aug 16

***Plus 7 More...***

# Contesting – A High Level Tour

## Contest Examples

*A very Special “Non-Contest”*

## Amateur Radio Field Day

Always the 4<sup>th</sup> Full weekend of June

- **The biggest Amateur Radio Operating Event of the year**  
(an estimated 20,000 hams participate in the US and Canada)
- **An entry point for future Hams**  
(about 5% of ham operators were introduced to the hobby thru Field Day)

# Contesting – A High Level Tour

## Event Example

### **54<sup>th</sup> Annual Pacific Northwest DX Convention**

August 7-8-9, in Spokane

- Go to <http://www.sdxa.org> for info

# Contesting – A High Level Tour

## Why Participate in a Contest? (in no special order)

- To Test my station (rig, antenna, human comforts)
- To Challenge myself (skill, physical / mental conditioning)
- To Experience the Adventure / Excitement / Joy of Operating in a busy environment
- To Do Something far different than “Normal”
- To Gain Experience with (deeper understanding of) my Amateur Radio Station
- To Simulate an Emergency Communication situation
- To Exercise my Competitive Spirit
- To Have Fun!

# Contesting – A High Level Tour

## Competitive Spirit

- “Virtual Earth”
- Virtual person, virtual job, virtual life
- Virtual Amateur Radio (but no virtual FCC)
- Virtual Contests

# Contesting – A High Level Tour

## How Much Contesting for me?

- It's ***AMATEUR* Radio** (Not Commercial Radio)
- Get involved according to interest level, time, resources
- Do enough to make it a challenge
- But not too much!



## **Contesting – A High Level Tour**

**When Do I Prepare for a Contest?**

**PLAN-AHEAD**

# **Contesting – A High Level Tour**

Preparing for a Contest – What's to be done?

## **FAR in Advance (1 year ahead)**

- In what contest(s) would I like to compete?
- Prepare list of the date(s) involved
- Check long range schedule (weddings, vacations, etc.)
- Get “Clearance” (repeat as needed)
- Start Psyching Up – “I think I can”

# Contesting – A High Level Tour

Preparing for a Contest – What's to be done?

## **WELL in Advance (6 months ahead)**

- Review the contest rules – understand what's required
- Decide on level of participation (i.e., one or multi-operators)
- Recruit additional operators if needed
- If station not at home, get OK from site control authority
- Review station: What changes are needed / could be made before contest date?
- Practice Operating the rig!

# Contesting – A High Level Tour

Preparing for a Contest – What's to be done?

## **“A WAYS” in Advance (2 months ahead)**

- Review Contest Rules in detail. Especially note what are the “Exchange” and “Logging” requirements\*  
and see what other contests will be taking place  
during this same time period (from Contest Calendar)
- Make arrangements for time off from work, if needed.

# Contesting – A High Level Tour

Preparing for a Contest – What's to be done?

## **JUST AHEAD (1-2 weeks ahead)**

- Do a “dry run” – verify that all components of the station work correctly, and work with all other components.
- Prepare Operator Aids (“Op-Aids”)\* that might be needed
- Set expectations for performance of my station (from last year's log, or from Contest Sponsor's write-up on this contest from last year).
- Practice entering data into Log (from old QST magazine)
- Be aware of other contests scheduled for same date as my contest (“exchange” requirement)

# **Contesting – A High Level Tour**

Preparing for a Contest – What's to be done?

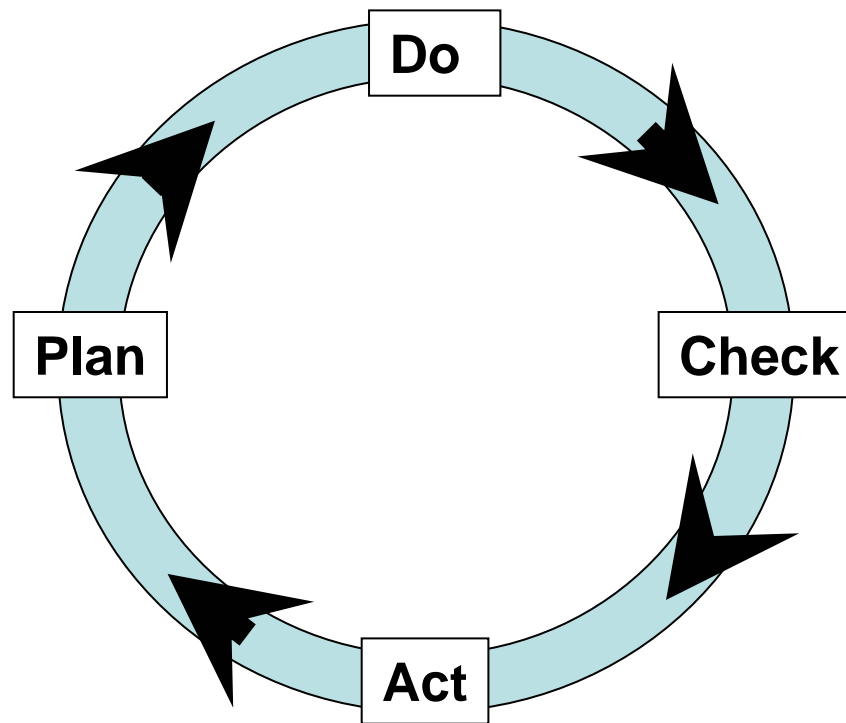
## **Day Before Contest**

- Set station and computer clock from official Time Tick.
- Make any Temporary Changes to contest station
- Conduct final testing of Rig and Logging Program
- Plan Strategy (Operating hours, rest periods, etc.)
- Make sure that Op-Aids, pencils, paper are ready
- Adjust sleeping hours?

# Contesting – A High Level Tour

Modeling a Situation, using the “Deming Wheel”

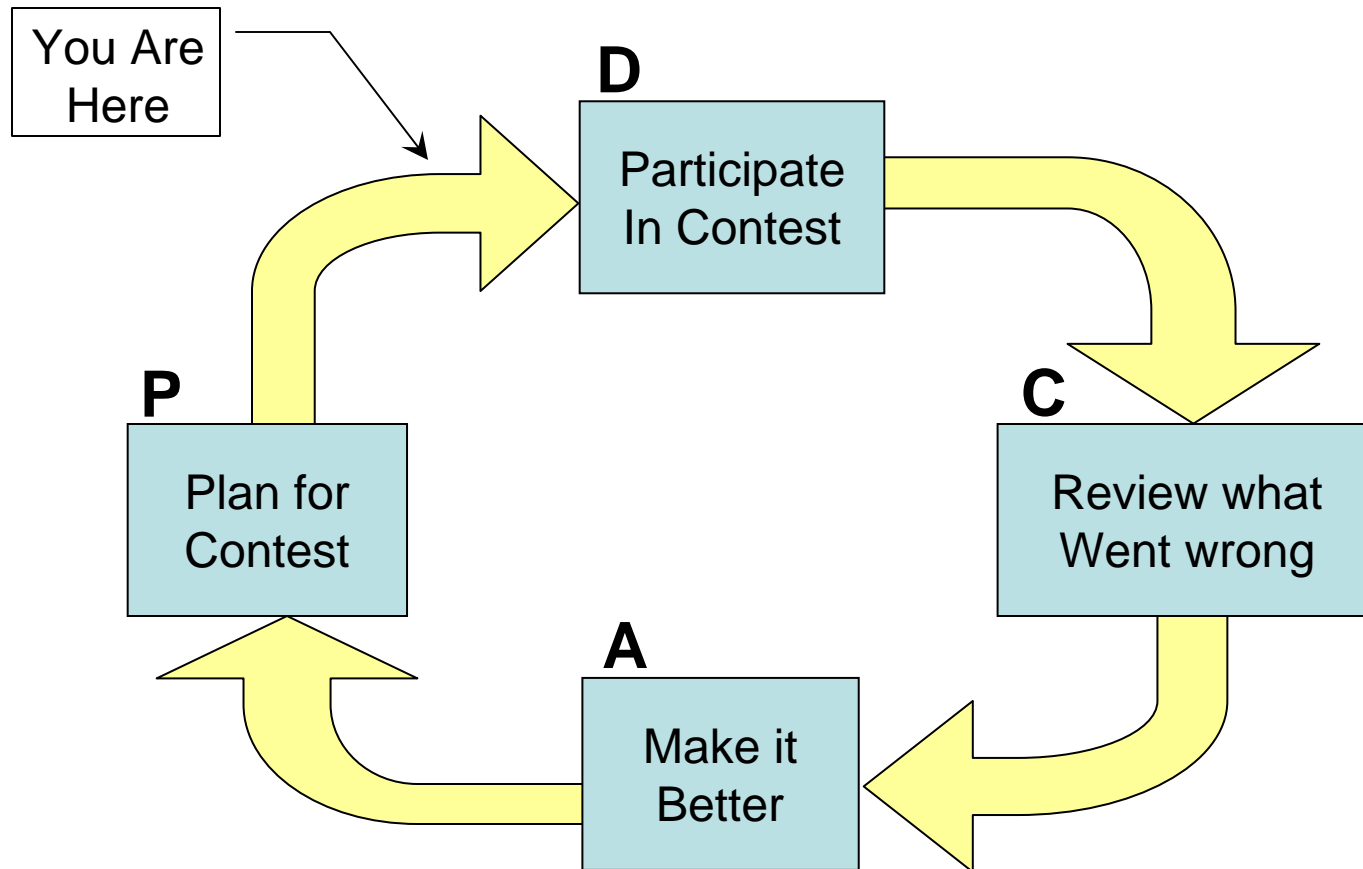
Plan, Do, Check, Act (P-D-C-A)



# Contesting – A High Level Tour

## A “Contest Model” using the “Deming Wheel”

P-D-C-A (Plan, Do, Check, Act)





# Contesting – A High Level Tour

During the Contest – What's to be done?

## Contest Day

- (Listen a Lot, Talk a Little)
- Decide on “Search & Pounce” or “Sit & Call” Strategy \*
- Listen for a while to hear the exchanges
- Execute the Game Plan !
- Keep an Excellent Log ! (Including Backups)
- Make notes on changes for next year
- Also keep tactical notes.. Stations I would like to contact later, unusual situations, etc.
- BIC (Butt In Chair) – Keep With It!

# Contesting – A High Level Tour

## During the Contest

### **Search & Pounce:**

- Search the band and “pounce” on those calling CQ

### **Sit & Call:**

- Find a Clear Spot, Call CQ, “run” the frequency

# Contesting – A High Level Tour

After the Contest – What's to be done?

## The Morning After

- Clean up the Station / Remove any Temporary changes
- Review the Log and Prepare for submission  
(wrong abbreviations, 1 for I, O for Ø, etc) (check paper notes)
- Submit the Log if possible (better quality when fresh)
- Review Station stats (# of QSO's, grids, states, regions, etc.)
- Catch up on sleep

# **Contesting – A High Level Tour**

After the Contest – What's to be done?

## **The Week After**

- Decide what changes will be made to station
- Decide whether I will participate in this contest next year
- Go back to the PLAN AHEAD slide

# Contesting – A High Level Tour

## Notes on “The Exchange”

Different for each contest, but may include the following:

- My Call sign K7ID
- Distant Station’s Readability/Strength 599
- My Location ID
- Station Description or Class 1A
- Serial Number of this QSO 39
- “Thanks for QSO” or “TU” TU

Note: Be prepared to send appropriate exchange for “That Other Contest” as well

# Contesting – A High Level Tour

## Notes on “Logging”

### The Log

- A Computer Program (many available), or manual
- Captures “Exchange” Info from stations contacted
- Time-stamps each QSO
- Computer Log Prevents Duplicate Contacts (Dupes)
- After contest, converts the log to a standard format (“Cabrillo” format) for submission by e-mail
- Preliminary evaluation by “autobot”

# Contesting – A High Level Tour

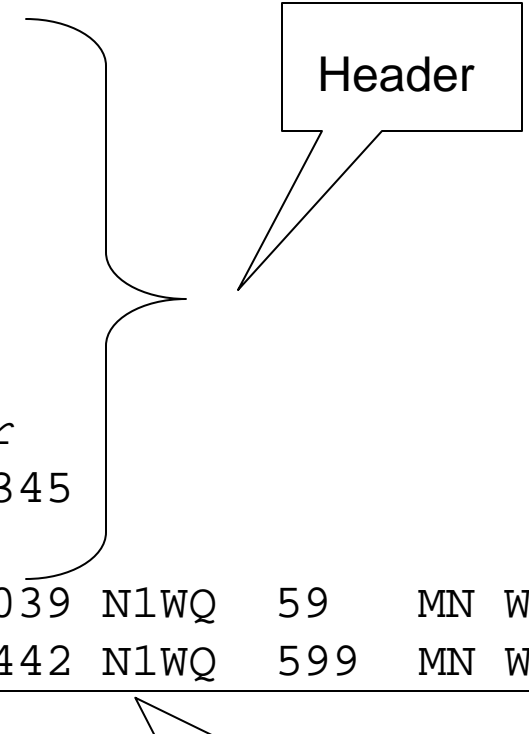
## Cabrillo Log Example:

START-OF-LOG: 2.0  
CREATED-BY: DXKEEPER 5.9.7  
CONTEST: IDAHO QSO PARTY  
CALLSIGN: N1WQ  
ARRL-SECTION: MN  
CATEGORY: CHECKLOG  
NAME: PAVEL VLADIMIROV  
ADDRESS: 4532 Saddlewood Dr  
ADDRESS: Minnetonka, MN 55345  
ADDRESS: USA

QSO: 14250 PH 2009-03-15 0039 N1WQ 59 MN WC7ID 57 ADA  
QSO: 3538 CW 2009-03-15 0442 N1WQ 599 MN W7GHT 599 ADA

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END-OF-LOG:



Header

QSO Data

# Contesting – A High Level Tour

After the Contest – Who's Doing What?

## What Happened to my Log?

- Contest Sponsor Evaluates all Logs
- Logs Loaded into Database for comparison (most contests)
- Winning Contestants receive awards
- Logs posted online or in magazine by Sponsor for all to see (Several Months later!)
- Individual Evaluation of your log is available (some contests)  
(QSO's not in other station log, incorrect call sign, incorrect exchange)



# Contesting – A High Level Tour

## Internet Logbook

### Logbook of the World (LOTW)

- All participants directly load to the LOTW database
- QSO's are automatically evaluated for authenticity
- LOTW is more for "DXing" than for Contesting

# Contesting – A High Level Tour

## Note on QSL Cards

- Some contest stations also working on “Awards”  
(like WAS, WAC, DXCC)
- You may receive QSL cards from these stations
- Please send them a QSL card in reply!

# **Contesting – A High Level Tour**

## Notes on Operator Aids (“Op-Aids”)

### **OP Aids might Include:**

Script with “The Exchange” listed out

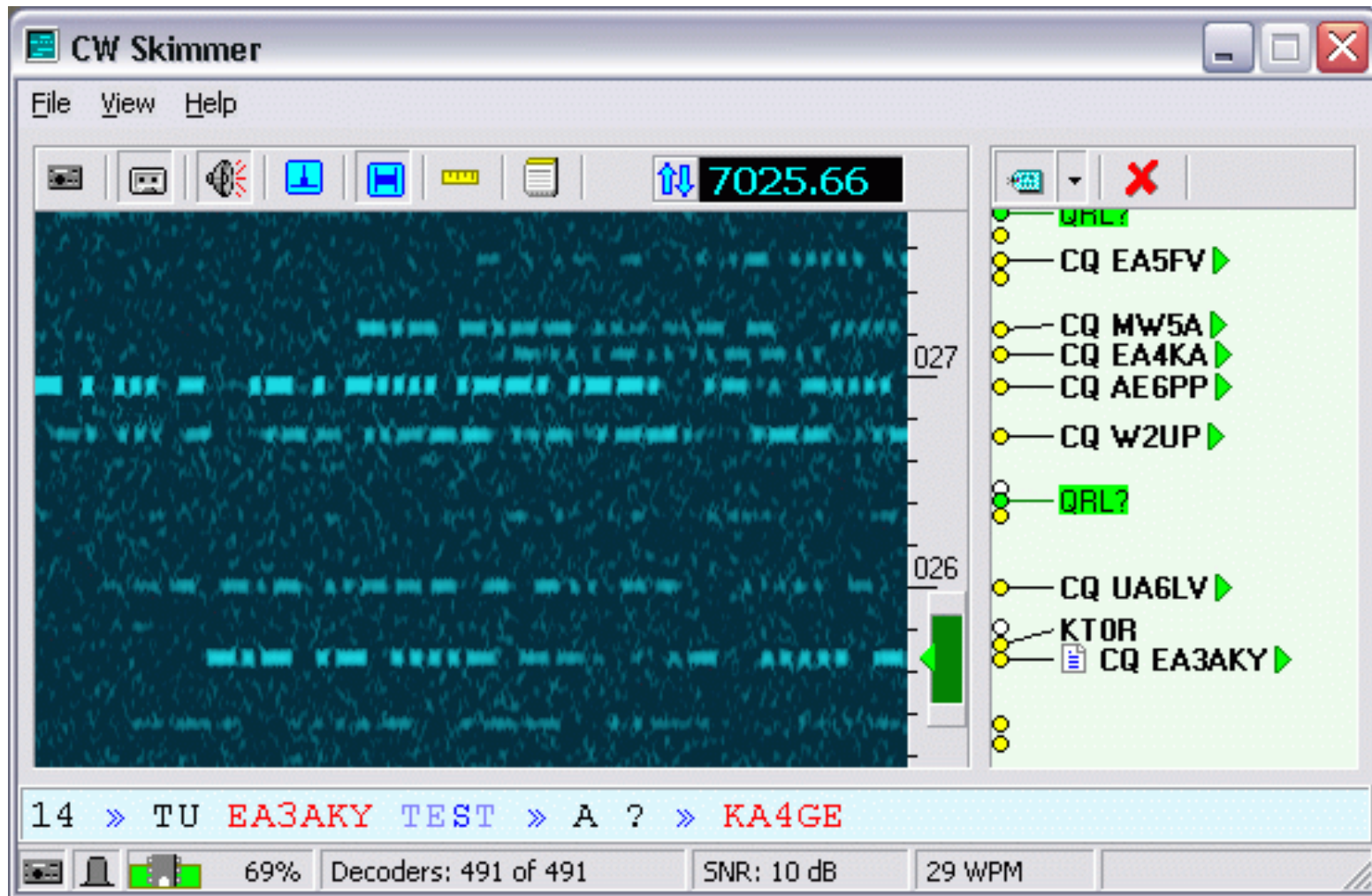
- Pencil and paper
- If using CW, store phrases in keyer
- Map of North America with Grid Squares
- List of ARRL Sections / Abbreviations
- Instructions for Logging Program
- Comfortable headphones
- Boom Microphone
- Foot Switch (VOX off!)

## Contesting – A High Level Tour

“Op-Aids” – *what’s fair, what’s not ?*

- stored phrases in keyer
- all valid call signs in logging program
- CW decoder (in some logging programs, also stand-alone)
- Software Defined Radios (SDR)
- CW Skimmer

# Contesting – A High Level Tour



Software Defined Radio (SDR) + CW Skimmer

# Contesting – A High Level Tour

## Special Situations

### **Multi – Operator Contests**

- Operator / Logger or single Op on duty?
- Who will operate on what shift ?
- All operators must be familiar with the station
- Much more complicated than one operator contest!
- Practicing ahead of time is advised

# Contesting – A High Level Tour

## Special Situations

### **Multi – Multi Contests (Operators, Stations)**

- How many stations will be operated?
- How to minimize interference between stations?
- Who will operate on what shift ?
- Operator / Logger or single Op on duty?
- All operators must be familiar with the station
- Who will handle station logistics?
- Really complicated! Considerable advance planning required

# Contesting – A High Level Tour

Final Note

IDAHO is a  
***prized QSO***  
for most contesters!

***ID, AK, DE, HI, MT, WY, ND, SD, RI, VT***

don't have many hams



# Contesting – Conclusion

Thanks for Viewing

The **Contesting** Presentation

And 73!

## **References to Material Shown in “Contesting” Presentation**

### **Sources of information about Amateur Radio Contests, and Rules**

[www.hornucopia.com/contestcal/index.html](http://www.hornucopia.com/contestcal/index.html)

[www.arrl.org](http://www.arrl.org)

ARRL Letter, ARRL Contest Update (free via e-mail to ARRL Members)

### **Information about Pacific Northwest DX Convention (August 7-8-9)**

[www.sdx.org](http://www.sdx.org)

### **Information about Logging Software**

<http://ac6v.com/logging.htm>

### **Information about Logbook Of The World (LOTW)**

[www.arrl.org/lotw](http://www.arrl.org/lotw)

### **Information about Amateur Radio Licensees in US, by State**

<http://ah0a.org/FCC/ARRL/2009/C.html>

### **Information about 2007 DXpedition to Scarborough Reef**

<http://www.scarboroughreef.com/srphotos.html>

### **Information about “CW Skimmer”**

<http://k9jy.com/blog/2008/03/04/cw-skimmer-a-monster-or-killer-tool/>

### **Information about a CW Keyers and Morse Code Readers**

<http://www.mfjenterprises.com/Product.php?productid=MFJ-452>

<http://www.mfjenterprises.com/Product.php?productid=MFJ-461>

(note: some logging programs have code readers and keyboard input)