

THE PLATTSMOUTH AMATEUR RADIO CLUB

Communicator

September 2026

ARES Simulated Emergency Test

Cass County ARES will be conducting a Simulated Emergency Test Saturday, October 10th from about 9 to noon. If interested in participating, contact James Nelson, W0JRN — W0JRN@outlook.com, or Scott Schreiber — scott.n8vcl@gmail.com.

Canada's First OSCAR

(ARnewsline 8/14/26) MARMOTSat, a CubeSat built by students and researchers at the University of Victoria's Centre for Aerospace Research in British Columbia, was launched in early July. It is now known as Canada OSCAR 128. OSCAR is an acronym for Orbiting Satellite Carrying Amateur Radio. Its mission is to study the ionosphere to gain deeper knowledge of how people's actions affect climate change. It will take measurements using transionospheric sounding.

The OSCAR designation is a significant one. It comes as AMSAT Canada takes its place as an AMSAT affiliate and begins inviting members to help grow the organization. AMSAT Canada was incorporated as a nonprofit in late 2023 and is the 28th affiliate of the Radio Amateur Satellite Corporation. More details can be found on its official website: <https://www.amsat-ca.org>

Building the Pebble HF: Cheap and Easy HF Portable

By: Scott, N8VCL

The day has finally come. In April I signed up for the pre-order/waitlist for a QRP kit called the Pebble HF — a 20 meter all-mode transceiver kit. After three months of waiting, the "golden ticket" arrived in my email box and it was my turn to purchase! I went right away and placed an order for one of the radio kits, along with the matching antenna, the Just OK 20 Meter Vertical. What follows is the honest version of how that went: what was easy, what wasn't, and what I'd tell you before you order your own.

Why the Pebble HF

The kit cost \$50, it fits in the palm of my hand, can run off a battery pack typically used for recharging your phone. I had seen a promo video on YouTube, you all know I watch too much YouTube. Being able to put a small handful of



things in a bag and go to a park and operate appealed to me. Like field-day without the lifting.

Another part of the appeal was the scope of the project itself. This isn't a kit that demands years of experience or knowledge before you start — but it's also not a toy. You come away from it having actually built a working HF transceiver with your own hands. It's the kind of project that is within reach for everyone, from the engineer and the new guy who's never picked up a solder iron.

Assembling the Radio

The build instructions for the Pebble HF live in a file on the maker's website, and I have no complaints here — they were clear, well organized, and included decent photos for the steps where it actually mattered.

The kit only asks you to wind two toroids: one with seven turns, the other with nine. If you've never wound a toroid before, this is about as gentle an introduction as you'll get — quick, low-stakes, and honestly kind of satisfying once you've got the wire seated evenly. Everything else is through-hole soldering of a handful of components; all the surface-mount parts arrive already placed on the board from the factory, so you're not squinting at a magnifier trying to hand-solder anything microscopic. Well, I squint at a magnifier, but I have weird vision. I also have a little shake in the hand, so if I can get these 14 parts in place, anyone can.

That said, "straightforward" doesn't mean "mindless." Two things earned my full attention:

- **Board orientation.** More than once I had to stop and double check I was working the correct side of the board before placing a component. It's the kind of mistake that's easy to make and annoying to undo if you've melted solder on the spot, so build in the habit of confirming orientation before every part goes in, not just the

2026 PAID MEMBERSHIP

PAID MEMBERSHIPS are in **BOLD**

ABØER..... Tom Stiefel [E]
 AGØL Steve Loyd [E]
 AIØN..... Chuck Engberg* [E]
 KBØFSI..... Pat McCollum [T]
 KBØLF Fred Eriksen [E]
 KBØOGO Roger Behrns* [E]
 KCØHYD John Titsworth [G]
 KCØHYE Shirley Titsworth [T]
 KDØDLY..... Paul Chiarello [T]
 KEØPFQ Justin Fader [G]
 KEØXQ Bill McCollum [E]
 KEØTR..... Paul Stanek [A]
 KFØFHH..... Erik Jamison [T]
 KFØRMO..... Paul Duran [G]
 KFØRMZ Stanley Winterstien [T]
 KFØVCA..... Dale Mortensen [T]
 KGØKR..... Beth Engberg* [E]
 KIØPY Kevin Faris [E]
 N5SEZ..... Ray McNally[E]
 NØLZH..... John Harrington [G]
 N8VCL..... Scott Schreiber [E]
 WØDBW Derek Winterstien [G]
 WØJRN Jim Nelson [E]
 WR5I..... John Bergman [E]

*Charter Members #New Ham

Note: Thanks to all who have paid their dues and those who have given additional donations. All donations are greatly appreciated. Please let me know of any corrections.

Meetings are 8am the last Saturday of most months at Mom's Café in Plattsmouth.

Tuesday night get-togethers at Plattsmouth Burger King at 6 PM or so.

**PLATTSMOUTH AMATEUR
RADIO CLUB**
KBØSMX
P.A.R.C. Officers
President

KBØOGO.....Roger Behrns
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N8VCL..... Scott Schreiber

Secretary

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Treasurer

KIØPY Kevin Faris

Newsletter Editor

KBØOGO.....Roger Behrns
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(402) 234-6775

Repeaters:

443.45⁺ is located in downtown Omaha

443.225⁺ is located in Murray.

147.48 Simplex is also in Murray.

Web Site

www.kb0smx.com

Maintained by Derek (WØDBW)

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**MINUTES of
the
MEETING**

The July meeting was held at Mom's Café on July 25, 2026. The meeting was called to order by President Roger Behrns at 8:23 am. Those in attendance were Roger (KBØOGO), Kevin (KIØPY), John (KCØHYD), Shirley (KCØHYE), Chuck (AIØN), Derek (WØDBW), Jim (WØJRN), Gary (WDØCFC), Scott (N8VCL), and John (WR5I).

The Minutes of the May meeting were approved on a motion by John and seconded by Gary.

The Treasurer reported receiving dues and donations of \$35 and expenses of 68.41 for a new battery and charger for the repeater. This leaves \$547.55 in the General Fund and \$316.59 in the Repeater Fund for a total of \$864.14. The report was accepted on a motion by John and second by Gary.

There will be an ARES Omaha Area Simulated Emergency Exercise on October 10.

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:34 on a motion by Derek and second by Jim.


PLATTSMOUTH ARC MEMBERSHIP REGISTRATION FORM

Name		Call Sign		Class	
Address		City	State	Zip	
E-Mail		Phone #			
Spouse Name		Call Sign		Class	
Membership Type ☐ Primary(\$15) ☐ Spouse (\$5) ☐ Student (\$5) ☐ New Ham	● Additional donations are gratefully accepted. ● New Hams are free during the year they receive their first license. ● Please give this form and dues to the club treasurer or any club officer.		Donation for: ☐ Repeater fund ☐ Insurance ☐ Other _____ ☐ General	Amount: ☐ I prefer my donation to be anonymous.	
Any additional e-mail or cell phone #s?					

Meeting Calendar

8am, Sat August 29
8am, Sat September 26
8am, Sat October 31
at Mom's Café.

tricky ones.

- **The display pins.** These needed real focus to make sure enough solder actually flowed into the joint. It's an easy spot for a cold joint to hide, and a cold joint on a display connector is exactly the kind of thing that causes a confusing "it's not working" moment later, rather than an obvious one.

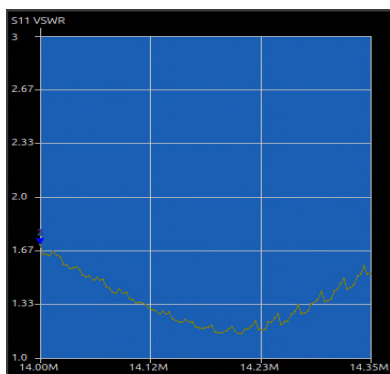
Start to finish — toroids, soldering, all of it — the whole build took just 90 minutes, and I was taking it easy. If you've built a kit or two before, or if this is your first, give yourself a relaxed afternoon, don't rush, and you will surprise yourself how quickly you get done.

Assembling the Antenna: The Missing Video

The radio kit came with QR codes linking to assembly instructions for both the transceiver and the antenna. The radio's link worked great. The antenna's link pointed to a video that's no longer online.

So the Just OK 20 Meter Vertical became a bit of a puzzle. I ended up piecing the assembly together from photos on the maker's website, test-fitting parts, backing up, and trying again — a couple of times — before I was confident I had it right. Nothing about the antenna itself is unreasonably complicated; I just wanted to make sure I was going about it the best way. Start the coil wrap at the top or the bottom? make jumpers for the ground connection or figure out how to make the ground tab and the terminal post work together without it? After some dry-fitting and removing, and a little thought, I had it all assembled. Here's a VNA sweep of 20 meters:

Below 1.7 from edge to edge is pretty good! But good SWR doesn't automatically mean "efficient and effective antenna." I need to take it out in the field and test it.



Smoke Test and First Power-Up

Kit assembled I grabbed an Anker PowerCore 15600mAh battery bank and held my breath as I plugged it in...GREEN LIGHT! Yay. The final step is to adjust the contrast, now I had green light and text on the screen. No smoke smell or burning sounds. Phew! That's always a tense moment. So I put it in its little case, attached the knob and re-connected to the battery pack. Dummy load testing showed signal on my FT-710 in the shack. CW was great. Not sure about SSB tho. Will have to do on-air testing.

On the Air

I plugged in my headphones to hear the familiar sound,

500Hz band-pass of CW signals all at once! I went into the menu system and narrowed it down to 200Hz. Much better. Started tuning up the band and came across a POTA station calling CQ. I (and a few others) answered him. Imagine my excitement when he responded "N8VCL, GA SCOTT 559 IN NEW HAMPSHIRE"!! We exchanged 559 signal reports across the 1,275 mile distance with ONE WATT. I couldn't believe it. I was sure to tell him he was the first contact on a freshly built Pebble. He congratulated me and said he wanted to get one too. New Hampshire. I was stunned.

What I'd Tell a First-Timer

- The radio build itself is genuinely approachable — don't let "kit building" sound more intimidating than it is if this is your first one.
- Take your time and double-check board orientation before every placement, not just the ones that look tricky.
- If you're building the antenna too, don't count on the QR code links working. Have the hamradioduo.com website pulled up before you start, just in case.
- Flux, a **sturdy** set of "helping hands," and good light are essential.

Try It Yourself

If this sounds like something you'd want to build, I'm happy to talk through what I learned before you order your own. They are currently shipping in small lots as they come available. It was 3 months from sign-up to mailbox for mine. A couple hours, a soldering iron, and a working HF rig by the end of the evening is a pretty good way to spend a day. You can do it!

This final picture is everything needed to go out and work the world. 1 watt on USB-C, or 5 watts on 7-14V, so you may want a bigger battery, but this is fanny-pack portable! I haven't weighed it all to see how heavy it's not. Heh. Parts shown are: (Left top to bottom) tuning coil, telescoping antenna, tripod, ground radial, mouse (for size). (Center) Radio, earbuds. (Right) Anker Power Core 15600. 73, de N8VCL, Scott

