

Contact:  
Bob Bastone, WC3O  
[radiofreebob@gmail.com](mailto:radiofreebob@gmail.com)  
(724) 448-5774

Contact:  
Bob Mente, NU3Q  
[alleggheny@wpa-arrrl.org](mailto:alleggheny@wpa-arrrl.org)  
(412) 736-7385

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – OCTOBER 22, 2020**

### **“HAMS” TAKE TO THE AIR TO CELEBRATE THE BIRTH OF COMMERCIAL RADIO**

November 2, 2020 marks the centennial of station KDKA going on the air for the first time. Their first broadcast, considered by many to be the birth of commercial broadcast radio, was to report the election results of the Harding-Cox presidential race. KDKA has been on the air continuously ever since. To celebrate this historic milestone, Pittsburgh area amateur radio operators, also known as hams, will take to the airwaves with a series of special event stations. Their goal is to contact as many other ham radio operators across the United States and around the world. They will be celebrating the centennial of KDKA for the entire month of November.

KDKA originally began operations as an amateur radio station, call sign 8XK, in 1916. During World War I, amateur radio operations were ordered to be suspended because of national security concerns. After the war, the operators reorganized the station as a commercial AM radio station. The first transmissions of KDKA were from a makeshift studio on a roof of the Westinghouse K Building in East Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, about 11 miles southeast of Pittsburgh.

Ham radio clubs participating in the centennial special event include the North Hills Amateur Radio Club in Pittsburgh, which is planning to operate from II-VI Incorporated located in Saxonburg, Pennsylvania, the former KDKA transmitter site from 1931 to 1939. One of the original tower piers still stands on the property to this day. Another operating location is being planned at the Westinghouse Lodge in Forest Hills, located about ten miles east in suburban Pittsburgh, which was the former KDKA transmitter site from 1923 to 1930. Other Pittsburgh area ham radio clubs planning operations include the Panther Amateur Radio Club in addition to a joint operation planned between the Steel City Amateur Radio Club and the Wireless Association of South Hills. Outside of Pittsburgh, other ham radio clubs planning operations are The Skyview Radio Society in New Kensington, Pennsylvania, which will operate from their clubhouse, in addition to the Butler County Amateur Radio Public Service Group in Butler, Pennsylvania, and the Washington Amateur Communications Radio Club in Washington, Pennsylvania. Individual radio amateurs will also be operating from their home stations. In addition, there is a small group of ham radio operators planning portable field operations from South Park in suburban Pittsburgh.

“More than one hundred years ago, many experimenters started delving into a new technology known as wireless, or radio,” said Bob Bastone, WC3O, Radio Officer for the Skyview Radio Society in New Kensington, Pennsylvania. Bastone explained that many of those early pioneers were radio amateurs. “One hundred plus years later, many amateur radio operators are still contributing to wireless technology while also serving their communities and enhancing international goodwill. Congratulations to KDKA Radio, also known in the early years as amateur radio stations 8XK, 8ZZ, and W8XK.”

Bastone said that the special event stations will exchange post cards, called QSL cards, with hams who confirm radio contacts with them. A commemorative QSL card has been produced with artwork designed by the graphic arts department at KDKA Radio. “We amateur radio operators look forward to contacting thousands of other hams around the world to celebrate this huge milestone in the commercial broadcasting industry,” said Bastone.

The KDKA special event stations will be set up at several locations during November, inviting the public to come visit while observing the required social distancing protocols. “The special event stations will also help demonstrate ham radio to our communities while our volunteers practice operating skills and station readiness,” said Robert Mente, NU3Q, Emergency Coordinator for the Allegheny County Amateur Radio Emergency Service (ARES). He and his fellow volunteers log many hours each year providing public service and practicing their emergency communications capability. The group provides communication services for The Pittsburgh Marathon, Race for the Cure, the Pittsburgh Vintage Grand Prix, the Great Race, and the American Diabetes Tour de Cure in addition to providing communication support for the American Red Cross and the Pittsburgh National Weather Service office. “The fastest way to turn a crisis into a total disaster is to lose communications,” said Mente.

The official KDKA centennial celebration website is <https://www.radio.com/kdkaradio/kdka-radio-100th-anniversary> and the website maintained by the special event station committee is <http://www.kdka100.org>.

We wish to thank II-VI (pronounced two-six) for the use of their corporate facilities in Saxonburg, PA, on the very site where KDKA used to broadcast from for most of the 1930s. II-VI is a global leader in engineered materials and optoelectronic components. For nearly 50 years, they have manufactured innovative products for applications in the industrial, communications, aerospace & defense, life sciences, semiconductor capital equipment, automotive, and consumer markets. Learn more at [ii-vi.com](http://ii-vi.com).

ARRL, the national association for Amateur Radio® in the US, has information on becoming a ham radio operator: [www.arrl.org/what-is-ham-radio](http://www.arrl.org/what-is-ham-radio).

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