



Photo by JENNIFER PRUSS

Students participating in a class on St. John, take the exam to receive ham radio licences from the Federal Communications Commission.

St. John Residents get ham radio licenses ahead of 2018 hurricane season

By **ANDREA MILAM**
Special to The Daily News

ST. JOHN — When Hurricane Irma destroyed cellphone towers and took down land line and internet service on St. John, it left only a single reliable mode of communication: ham radio.

Only two licensed ham radio operators were on-island following the storm, meaning tasks such as coordinating the delivery and offloading of supplies brought in by helicopter and providing a link between the agencies working on rescue efforts fell to these two men.

Jennifer Pruss, whose husband Larry Pruss was one of those two licensed operators, recognized the value licensed ham operators can bring in the wake of a disaster, and she set out to build up the network on St. John.

“One of the things that became clear was had we had ham radio operators distributed throughout the island in a better arrangement, we would have an invaluable network of communication,” Pruss said. “It was a technology that clearly worked.”

In January, Pruss began advertising a ham radio class, and by February, 32 people had signed up. Classes then began with the goal of

helping island residents earn their licenses from the Federal Communications Commission.

Most of those in the class were working toward their Technician Class license, considered an entry-level designation, while some studied for the General Class license.

“There’s already an amateur ham radio group on St. John that meets once a month as more of a social gathering,” said Pruss. “We were looking to build a younger population involving local agencies who could form a network for communications on the island when all else fails.”

Jennifer Pruss purchased the books students needed to study for the exam, and St. John Rescue, recognizing the value of a larger network of ham radio operators, granted her request for reimbursement.

After three months of meetings at St. John Rescue’s headquarters every other week to cover the material, students took the test on May 6 — with 16 people earning a Technician Class licenses and two earning a General Class licenses.

The students were a diverse group, with a member as young as 12; residents from Virgin Gorda, Tortola, and St. Thomas; and representatives from St. John Rescue,

Virgin Islands Fire Service, the St. John Animal Care Center, Coral Bay Community Council and Virgin Islands National Park. Radios were purchased for each new licensee with funds from a grant.

“I was inspired to take this class by not being able to communicate with my family after Irma,” said St. John artist Elaine Estern, who earned her Technician Class license. “I am always on-island during hurricane season, so I will be here for any and all who may want to communicate with family members. I hope to be proficient enough to be able to really help if needed.”

Estern’s father was a ham radio operator with the U.S. Navy during World War II, when a knowledge of Morse Code was required for licensing. The digital radios that each student earned will connect island residents with the continental U.S., and even offer the ability to send emails.

“After Irma, I was able to send emails over the radio which required no internet whatsoever,” said Larry Pruss. “The radio can be powered with a car battery.”

Jennifer Pruss said she expects to start up another round of classes in early August. For more information, call St. John Rescue at **340-693-7377**.

Deaths

Doris Burton

Relatives and friends are advised of the passing of Doris Burton who passed away on May 15, 2018, at age 87.

Relatives and friends are respectfully invited to attend a funeral service that will be held on Wednesday, May 30, at Christ Church Methodist (Market Square). Viewing will begin at 8:30 a.m. with service immediately following at 10.

Interment is set for Western Cemetery No. 3.

Doris is survived by sons Auckland “Tom” Abraham, Edwin Lake, Wade Burton and Ellsworth Burton; daughters Carolyn V. Brown and Judith Burton; adopted daughter Gweneth Joshua; special daughter-in-law Cassetta Burton; special cousin Reynald Charles; sisters Charlotte “Edna” Blyden, Rosamund “Irose” Burton, Irma Burton and Iola “Madge” Burton; brother Reuben “Con” Burton; nieces Brenda, Cynthia, Verlyn, and Adosha Francis; Maxine Blyden Holmes; Lauretta Jarvis, Goldine Knight, Adele Smith, Beatrice Bur-



Doris Burton

ton, Monica “Carol” Roberts, Monica Rohana Johannes, Carmella Smith, Stephanie Jackson and Paula Watkins.

She is survived as well by nephews Selassie Francis, Nixon “Ken” Roberts, Joseph Blyden Sr., Alston “Neilon,” Oreal, Aubrey and Charles Burton; Louis Jackson, Romeo, Floyd and Dexter Burton and Dan Burton; special friends Ruth Anthony, Valberg Reovan, Chris, Rosanna Baker, Elmeda Michael, Ms. Gwenie Smith, Mathias Grant, Martin Liverpool, Hayley Douglas, Elaine Webster, Gloria “Grandma Glenn,” and Denfield Martin; grandchildren Elroy, Kasia, Markis, Omari Abraham; Karanja Lake, Terrel and Tiffany Burton-Stone; Jerelle Burton, Jakara Williams, Danae and D’Andre Reynolds, Denita Martin, K. Moraa and Danielle Williams; great-grandchildren Kinafa, Omari Jr., Devine, Ishmael, Isaiah, Idris, Iman, Jordan, Elroy Jr., Quardijah, Rayhel, Tiquan, Abraham; Kemaia Browne, Jayden T. R., Ja’keylen Burton; Sunjerai and Harlem Lake and great-great grandchild Gabriel Kellum.

Arrangements are under the care of Hurley Funeral Home and Cremation Center of St. Thomas, St. John and St. Croix.

For online directions and condolences please visit us at www.hurley-davisfuneralhome.com.

V.I. Weather Outlook

Today

Variably cloudy, scattered showers
Rain: 30 percent chance
Temperature: Highs up to 89
Wind: East at 15 to 20 mph

Tonight

Variably cloudy, scattered showers
Rain: 50 percent chance
Temperature: Lows down to 80
Wind: East at 15 to 20 mph

Wednesday

Variably cloudy, scattered showers
Rain: 40 percent chance
Temperature: Highs up to 87
Wind: East at 15 mph

Wednesday night

Variably cloudy, scattered showers
Rain: 50 percent chance
Temperature: Lows down to 80
Wind: East at 15 mph

Thursday

Partly cloudy, isolated showers

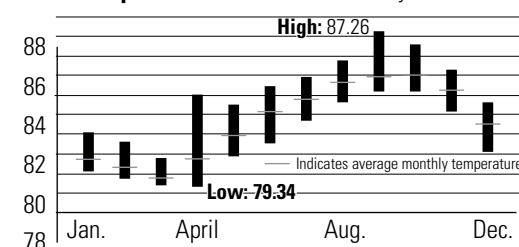
Rain: 20 percent chance
Temperature: Highs up to 88

Sea conditions

Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico waters

Surface high pressure, centered across the northeast Atlantic and extending to the central and west Atlantic, will continue to promote a moderate to fresh easterly wind flow across regional waters through Wednesday.

Water temperature At St. John Caricoos buoy



Winds

East at 15 to 20 knots.

Wave heights

Seas of 3 to 5 feet with occasional seas up to 6 feet.

Dominant period

7 seconds.

— CARICOOS and National Weather Service

Sun

Rise at 5:43 a.m. Set at 6:51 p.m.

Full moon

Set at 5:47 a.m. Rise at 7:02 p.m.