

Strays – Special event stations

One day, while dialing around on HF, you might have encountered a CQ from somebody announcing the [Indianapolis Motor Speedway](#) or [Route 66](#) or even [USS Iowa](#). After listening to the pileups and the many operators eager to make contact with them, you might have wondered what they were and what's so attractive about making contacts with them.

An SES (Special Event Station) is a temporary operating station that commemorates a particular event of historical importance or general interest, or celebrates a unique landmark. The purpose of such a station is to draw attention to the event or bring awareness to a cause. Participants contact these stations for a fun and unique operating opportunity, and are often rewarded with a special commemorative QSL card. The events can be local, statewide, national, global, or even universal in invitation scope.



How to participate

Contacting in a Special Event Station is fairly easy, but often requires you to hold a General Class amateur license, and have an HF transceiver available. Most SES stations set up on HF (often 20 meters and 40 meters) for world-wide coverage, to reach as many operators as possible. Most SES stations originate in the US, allowing most Americans to contact them using modest antennas and transceivers operating at 100 watts or less.

Many of them have websites listing operating times and frequencies, plus rules on how to obtain a commemorative QSL card, if they distribute one. Listen for them at the appropriate time and wait for the calling station to say **CQ** or **QRZ** or ask for check-ins. Throw out your call sign, and once they acknowledge



you, exchange contact (name, call sign, location) info with the operator, and you'll be in their log. It's often wise to listen how others exchange with the SES, to help you know how to communicate with them.

How to create an SES of your own

As a licensed operator, you are fully empowered to establish an SES of your own. Unlike during a contest, an SES can operate on any amateur band, even a repeater, provided the repeater owner or trustee grants permission for such an operation. If you anticipate a large enough popular interest, or possible donations, you might consider [setting up a non-profit organization](#) to handle its logistics, such as a website, operating equipment, station location, and postal mailing of QSL cards.

Many American SES stations use a 1x1 call sign for its operating purposes, which [you can apply for](#). During operation, you can announce its call sign instead of your own, provided [you announce your own once per hour](#) (Part 97.119.d) You can read more about Special Event Stations on [ARRL](#) and [OnAllBands](#).

