

## ARRL Incoming QSL Bureau

(from [http://arrl-greatlakes.org/8th\\_bureau.htm](http://arrl-greatlakes.org/8th_bureau.htm) )

General QSL Bureau Information - The 8th call area bureau operates as part of the ARRL's volunteer QSL bureau system. As such, the operating expenses are paid by the league's members, although the bureau service is open to all US hams whether ARRL members or not. If you are not a league member, and use the incoming bureau, won't you consider joining today?

The bureau is 100% volunteer staffed. Each bureau worker forgoes their time to provide a service to you and we want to provide the best service possible within the bounds of reasonableness and fiscal responsibility. If you will follow the guidelines listed here, you will receive better service and our volunteers will have time to enjoy other aspects of our hobby, etc.

The 8th district central bureau is located at the Voice of America Museum in West Chester where it is one of the permanent displays. It is a work in progress, but if you have a chance to visit the VOA museum, be sure to look for the bureau. We do not encourage "just stopping by to pick up your cards" as there is no one there to release them to you. In addition, the only cards at the central bureau will be those that have not been forwarded to the individual letter managers. The best time to visit would be when the West Chester Amateur Radio Association (<http://www.wc8voa.org/> ) has their regular meeting, if you want a more detailed bureau visit. Specifically, the Bureau Address is: 8th Area QSL Bureau / P.O. Box 307 / West Chester, Ohio 45071-0307. The Bureau Manager is John (Jack) Shirley, N8DX (n8dx@arrl.net )

### Do Not Send Your Outgoing QSL Cards to Us

We cannot process them; they will be sent back to you in your bureau envelopes. Outgoing cards should be sent to ARRL HQ. This includes cards for non-8th area US stations from any source, including any you may pick up from DX stations or bureaus on your out of US travels. You cannot use the ARRL bureau system to send cards to other U.S. stations within the 48 contiguous states--for contacts between U.S. stations. Any cards sent for U.S.-to-U.S. contacts will also be sent back to you using your bureau SASE. You may use the ARRL bureau system for DX stations who have a U.S. manager, such as VK0IR cards via W8XXX, or XE3/K8XXX via K8XYZ. If you send cards via the bureau to a manager, make sure you list the full call of the manager, not just via "W8 bureau." There is no way we can know who handle or manages cards for every DX station around the world.

### Please Be Patient

QSL cards are rarely received by the bureau for contacts less than four months old. Most cards are for contacts made between a year and two years prior. Some cards come through the system as much as five years or more after the QSO. Some foreign bureaus send out cards only a few times a year. Most come by boat, which is very slow mail, indeed. There was a survey done of all cards received over a two-month period. Of those cards that had "TNX QSL" checked, less than 5% were for contacts within a year of the QSO. This means if the station you

worked waited for your card before returning one, the minimum turn-around will be a year or more. Many DXers who are relatively new to DXing tend to work "big gun" or loud stations. These stations work many U.S. stations, and in most cases, wait for your card before sending you one. Those DX stations who answer your CQ are much more likely to send their cards first, rather than those whose CQ you answer.

#### Keep Envelopes on File with the Bureau

If you work DX at all, you should expect to receive bureau cards, especially if you work any DX contest. Do not forget that most SWL's send via the bureau as well. Unclaimed cards are the bureau's biggest problem. Send NON-clasp-fastening, end-opening envelopes, between 5X7 and 6X9 inches in size. Unless you receive lots and lots of bureau cards DO NOT send more than three or four SASE (self-addressed stamped envelopes) at a time. DO NOT use envelopes smaller or larger than 5X7 or 6X9. Smaller envelopes won't hold some of the larger DX cards; larger envelopes won't fit in our files, are more likely to come apart in the mail process AND with current postage rates, cost more to use. Non-standard and padded envelopes may be returned to you empty. Padded envelopes are larger than 1/4 inch and incur a higher fee just like envelope larger than 6 x 9. Several of the letter managers are moving to or have implemented a cash basis process for their letters. This has been done because of the frequent postage rate changes and the futility of trying to keep appropriate postage on the envelopes.

Most of our Managers have email access. If you have an email address, PLEASE INCLUDE IT whenever you write to the bureau or your Letter Manager. Make sure to include your email address when you send SASEs to the bureau or to your Manager as well. This will help us to communicate with you much more quickly than by conventional snail mail. If your email address changes, make sure you notify your Manager of the change.

Please DO NOT SEND USED ENVELOPES to the bureau. We will \*NOT\* attempt to use used envelopes. More than one trip through the postal system greatly increases the chance the envelope will come apart in the postal system, with the loss of your cards.

When you prepare envelopes for us, NEATLY print your call, in BLOCK LETTERS, in the upper left corner, in the place where a normal return address goes. Some people do such a poor job of writing their calls we need to look up the suspected call in the Callbook and match the name/address to make sure of the call. Certain letters can be especially troublesome -- like V and U, for instance. Take the time to make a very pointed V and a round or square bottom U. Keep this in mind when filling out cards to send via any bureau. It is a real headache for bureau workers trying to decide who the card really goes to; we don't want to guess which letter you really mean. Address each envelope to yourself in the center of the envelope. Remember, these are your cards. If we can't read your call or the postman can't read your address, you won't get them. If you have a change of address, send us address labels to cover your old address. Many people write so large, there is no room to write a change of address on their SASE.

If sending envelopes with stamps, affix enough postage to cover at least one ounce. currently, the post office is selling a "forever" stamp good for one unit of postage.

We do clear out all cards once a year. No matter how much postage on your SASE, and how few cards you have, once a year we will send you what you have. When postal rates go up, you should send extra stamps to cover the cost increase. Most people never think to send

us extra postage when the rates go up.

NEVER put more than one call on an envelope. We cannot cross-reference upgrades, vanity calls, and family calls. Some of the Letter Managers live many miles apart. There is no way to share an envelope between two Letter Managers. If you send an envelope with SASEs for more than one call, make sure you include a note saying you have done so. We don't take the time to look at each SASE you send us. If there is no note pointing out the fact you've sent SASE for multiple call, we simply pass them on to the Letter Manager for the first SASE we see. You may include a self-addressed postcard which we will return, letting you know your SASEs have arrived safely.

PLEASE NOTE: If you expect to receive cards under more than one call sign, please keep separate SASEs at all the Letters or 2Bureaus where you expect cards to be received. We will not "forward" cards for one call to another letter manager within our bureau or to another bureau unless you provide the SASE. It is/was your call and your QSO, if you want the cards, provide the SASE.

Again, the normal mailing cycle for the bureau is about every four to six weeks. If you don't worry about us wasting your postage, put "mail every cycle" on the bottom of each SASE and we will send you what you have each time, without the need to fill your SASE to the value of postage you've placed on it. If you are a big gun contester, DX-peditioner, or manager of a very active DX station, and get a pound or more a month, you may request your Letter Manager to box your cards to save on postage. Don't send money for this via the bureau. This MUST be between you and your Letter Manager, with the check made out in his name. If he doesn't want to take the time to do it, and requests you just send him SASE, that's the way it will be. The volunteer Letter Managers have enough of a job, and it's up to them if they want to do more. Any money for this extra service must be between you and your Letter Manager, not the bureau.

On the other hand, if you do not want to receive bureau cards, please advise your letter manager that you do not want them. If you are the manager for a DX station, including your own DX operations, and do not want bureau cards for those operations, but do want bureau cards for your US to DX contacts, we will not return the DX cards to the originator. We will destroy them. Also, be advised, if you elect to pursue this scenario, we will not be responsible for destroying cards you wanted to receive and were accidentally destroyed. Remember, we are all volunteers and every special request takes volunteer time.

The Standard Operating Guidelines for ARRL QSL Bureaus states: "QSL cards on file which are unclaimed for a period longer than 90 days may be destroyed by the Bureau Manager (or Letter Manager) without further authority." PLEASE NOTE: Individual Letter Managers may elect to hold unclaimed QSL Cards for a longer period, at their discretion. Once we have made reasonable attempts to contact you that you have cards at the bureau and have received no correspondence (SASE) from you and destroyed your cards, we will make a note in our files and \*NOT\* contact you again. We will continue to destroy your cards on a continuing basis until we receive instructions to the contrary. You may consider this extreme but consider again that the biggest problem we have is unclaimed cards and the effort our volunteer letter managers expend trying to get them to the intended recipients. Before we destroy the cards, the following has occurred: A card has been sent, not at your expense, to your address of record, according to the FCC data base. (If that address is incorrect, you are not complying with the

FCC regulations and are operating illegally!) In addition to the card, an email has been attempted using the address, <your-call>@arrl.net and/or any address in the various on-line callbooks.

1x1 calls: A new headache for the bureau are the new 1X1 calls being issued. You may do a good job of trying to tell each QSO to send the cards via N8???, but you can be sure some cards are going to come into the bureau with just the call N8?. There is no way for us to know who these cards go to if you don't supply SASE for these 1X1 special calls. It appears it is even more of a headache, since the same 1X1 calls will be re-issued to other special event stations, time-after-time. Make sure you list the time frame of the special event 1X1 on your SASE, so we will know who gets what cards. You had the 'FUN' of using the 1x1, you should follow through with the SASE.

### Bureau Operating Procedures

The mail is picked up at the PO Box on a regular basis, approximately once per week. There may be as little as five pounds to as much as 200 pounds in a week. You can visualize this by thinking of a stack of QSL cards ranging from 9 inches high, to over 29 feet high, each week.

At the central bureau we sort the cards into 27 piles - one for each letter of the alphabet according to the first letter of the suffix and one for mis sorts from the other bureau, cards sent to the 8th area bureau that should go to the 9th area bureau, for example.

The cards are then conveyed to the individual Letter Managers. Some managers will personally pick the cards up from the central bureau every few weeks. Most are mailed via USPS or UPS every four to eight weeks, depending on volume. If you send a request for information to your Letter Manager via the Bureau address, it may have just missed the last pickup, requiring another six weeks to make it to your Letter Manager. It will save you time to check directly with your Letter Manager if you just want to check on the status of your cards and SASE.

Good cooperation between the DXer and the bureau is important to ensure a smooth flow of cards. Remember that the people who work at the bureau are all volunteers. At the peak of the last cycle, we handled over two tons of cards a year. In the trough of the cycle relatively few cards are received. We are on the downslide now. For that reason and with the implementation of Log Book of the World, you should expect card volume to begin to drop off. With that in mind, please pay close attention to the above information, and the following DO'S and DON'TS.

DO keep self-addressed 5X7 or 6X9 envelopes on file with your call in the upper left corner. Affix at least one ounce of postage to each. After checking the Letter Manager list above, you may send your SASE directly to your Letter Manager.

DO put your Call Sign on the outside of all envelopes containing SASEs or requests for information, sent to the Bureau or your Letter Manager. This will keep your envelope from having to be opened by Bureau Staff to determine where it should be forwarded.

DO keep envelopes at all Letters and Bureaus where you expect to receive Cards. If you have had a call sign change, we have no way of forwarding your old cards to your new Letter Manager, so please have an SASE waiting at both the old and new call sign Letter Managers Bureau.

DO include your E-Mail address with all correspondence to the Bureau or your Letter Manager.

DO send the bureau enough postage to cover the SASE on file and enough to cover postal rate increases.

DO respond quickly to any bureau request for more SASE or additional postage. Remember, unclaimed cards are the bureau's single biggest problem.

DO include an SASE with any information request to the bureau.

DO notify the bureau in writing if you don't want your cards.

DON'T expect DX cards to arrive for at least a year after contact. Overseas delivery is very slow. Most cards are over a year old when received by the Bureau.

DON'T send your outgoing cards to this bureau.