CONTEST ORIENTATION

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GENERAL NOTICE

IN CASE OF EMERGENCY, EXIT THE WAY WE CAME IN.

ADDITIONAL EXITS ARE IN THE BASEMENT, SIDE AND BACK OF MEETING HALL.

MUSTER OUTSIDE, WEST FENCE.

WASHROOMS ARE DOWNSTAIRS.

THIS IS A WORKSHOP, ASK QUESTIONS ANY TIME.

LEARN BY PARTICIPATING.

WHAT'S YOUR CONTEST EXPERIENCE?

CONTEST ORIENTATION

What is a contest and why might I want to be in one?

What goes on during a contest?

Overview of logging software.

How to operate in a contest.

Try out typical contest exchanges off-air.

What about interference?

WHAT IS A CONTEST AND WHY WOULD I BE IN ONE?

- A contest is a competition to collect points for awards, self-improvement or just fun!
- Make lots of quick contacts and see how many per hour, day or single sitting.
- Pick up continents, countries, states, provinces, sections, counties or grid squares for awards like WAS (Worked All States).
- Collect QSL cards or contact credits for operating awards like WAS , WAC, DXCC, etc.
- Test new antennas, propagation on different bands, hours of operation.
- Participate in club events – ARRL Field Day, Winter Field Day, club station contests.
- Emergency training exercises, passing short accurate messages over longer times.
- **Gain on air operating experience.**

KNOW YOUR Q CODES AND PHONETICS

- Q Codes are shortcuts for common expressions.
- Many can be either a question or a statement eg
- QSL –acknowledge
  - QSL? – do you acknowledge?
  - QSL! – I acknowledge!
- Commonly used – QRZ, QSL, QRM, QSB

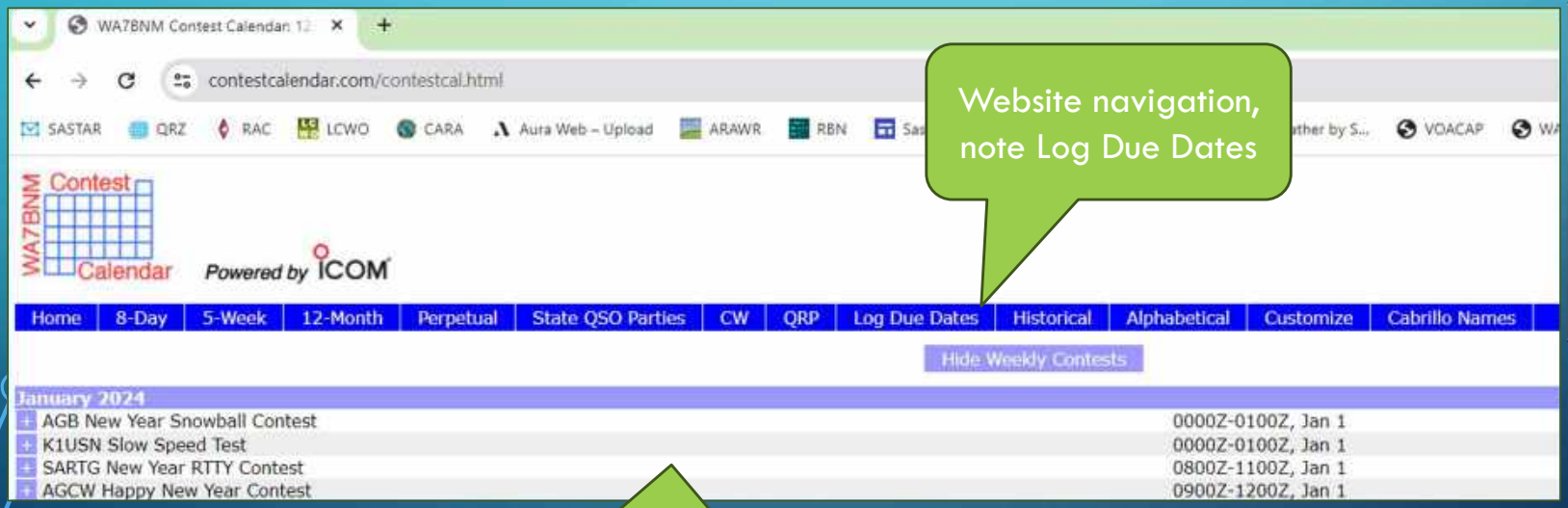
WHAT HAPPENS DURING A CONTEST?

- An on-air contact between stations is called a QSO (cue-ess-oh or cue-so).
- During a contest, you can call CQ (looking for other stations) or you can reply to CQ.
- A valid QSO requires your callsign, date, time, frequency, mode, other station's callsign, signal report (RST) and contest exchange.
- A contest exchange is determined by the organizers and is usually your state or province.
- Some contest exchanges are serial numbers – your first QSO is number 1, the second is 2, etc.

RST – by convention, signal strength is always 59 for voice and 599 for CW, regardless of the actual signal strength.

HOW DO I FIND A CONTEST?

- There is nearly always a contest on-air.
- WA7BNM posts a contest calendar - https://www.contestcalendar.com
- The Carolinas QSO Party will be an on-air practice session, information below.



WHAT IS A CONTEST EXCHANGE AND WHERE DO I FIND IT?

- Find the contest rules and look for the exchange section eg:

South Carolina QSO Party,

Exchange:	SC: RS(T) + County non-SC: RS(T) + (state/province/"DX")

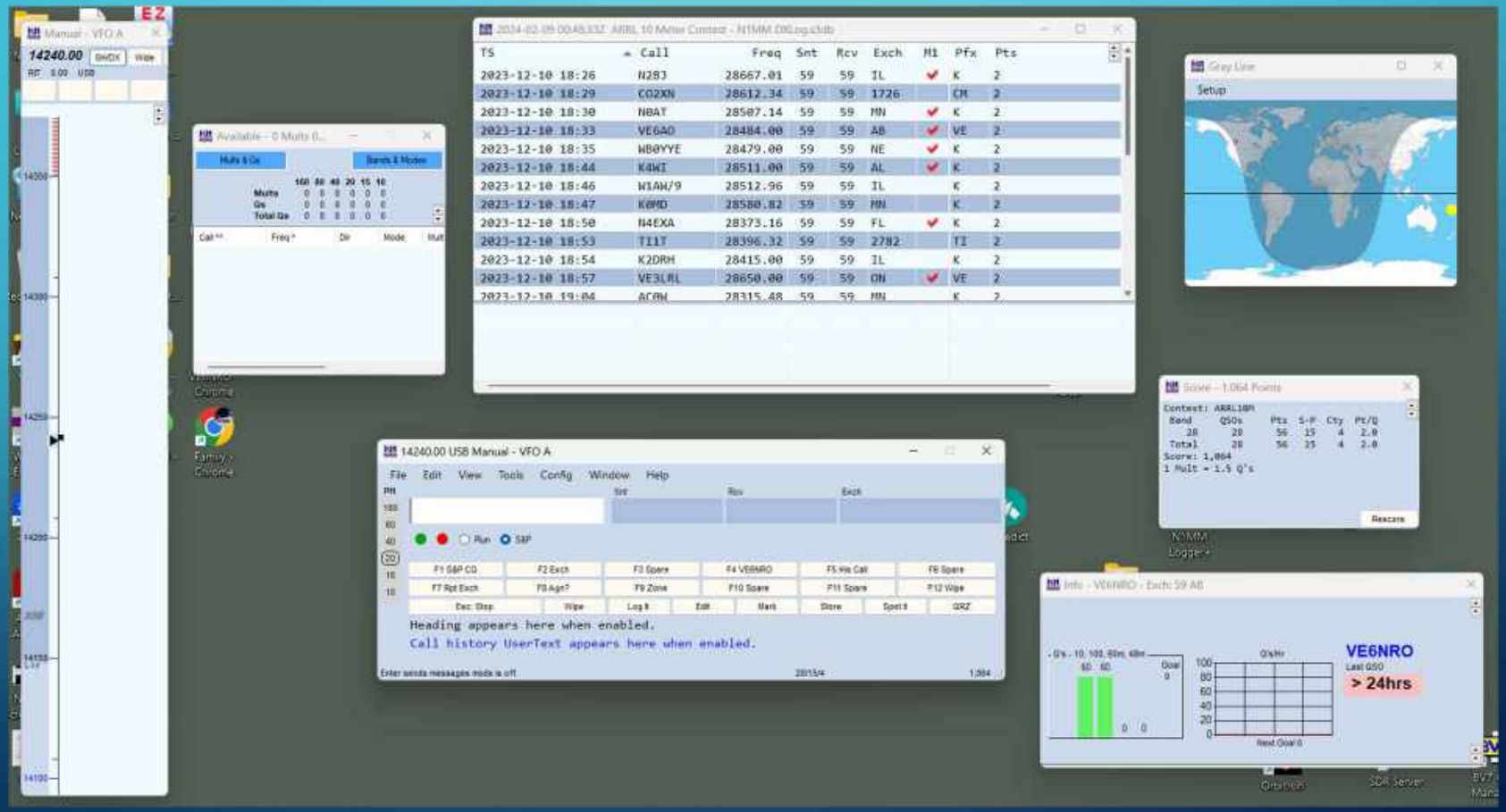
- Typically signal report and some other information like serial number of contacts made, province, name, age, CQ zone, etc.
- What is your personal exchange data?
- Find your grid square, ARRL section , CQ and ITU zones. Document and display it.

CONTEST LOGGING SOFTWARE

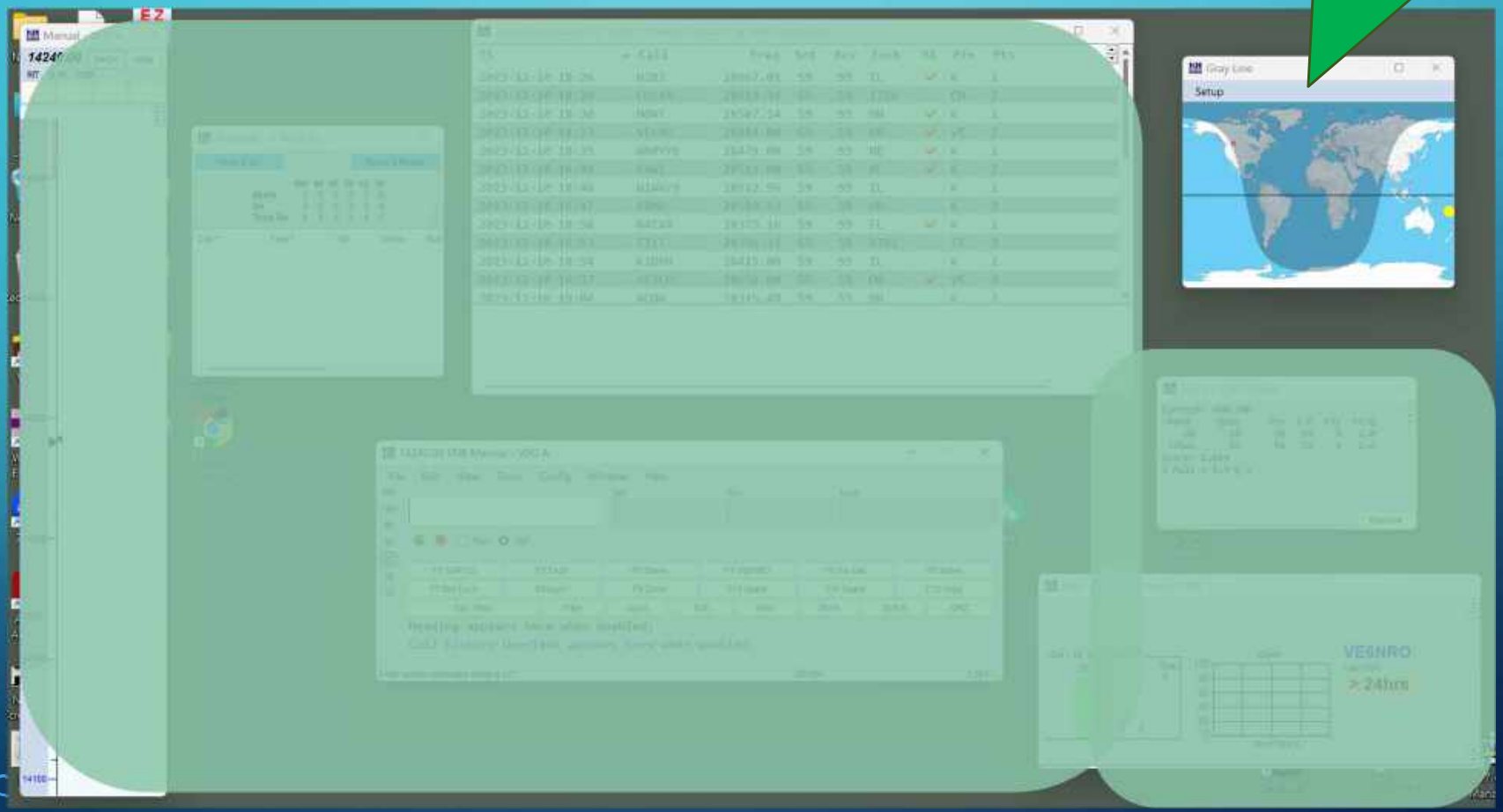
- Historically, logs were written by hand and checked manually.
- Contest logging software records QSO information and displays analytics on the go.
- Requires a computer and cable to connect transceiver (radio) and computer.
- Software is configured for the specific contest and records date, time and frequency of the QSO when you enter the other station's callsign and exchange.
- We use N1MM+, many others are available, listed here:

  https://www.dxzone.com/catalog/Software/Contesting/

N1MM+ OVERVIEW, AN EXAMPLE

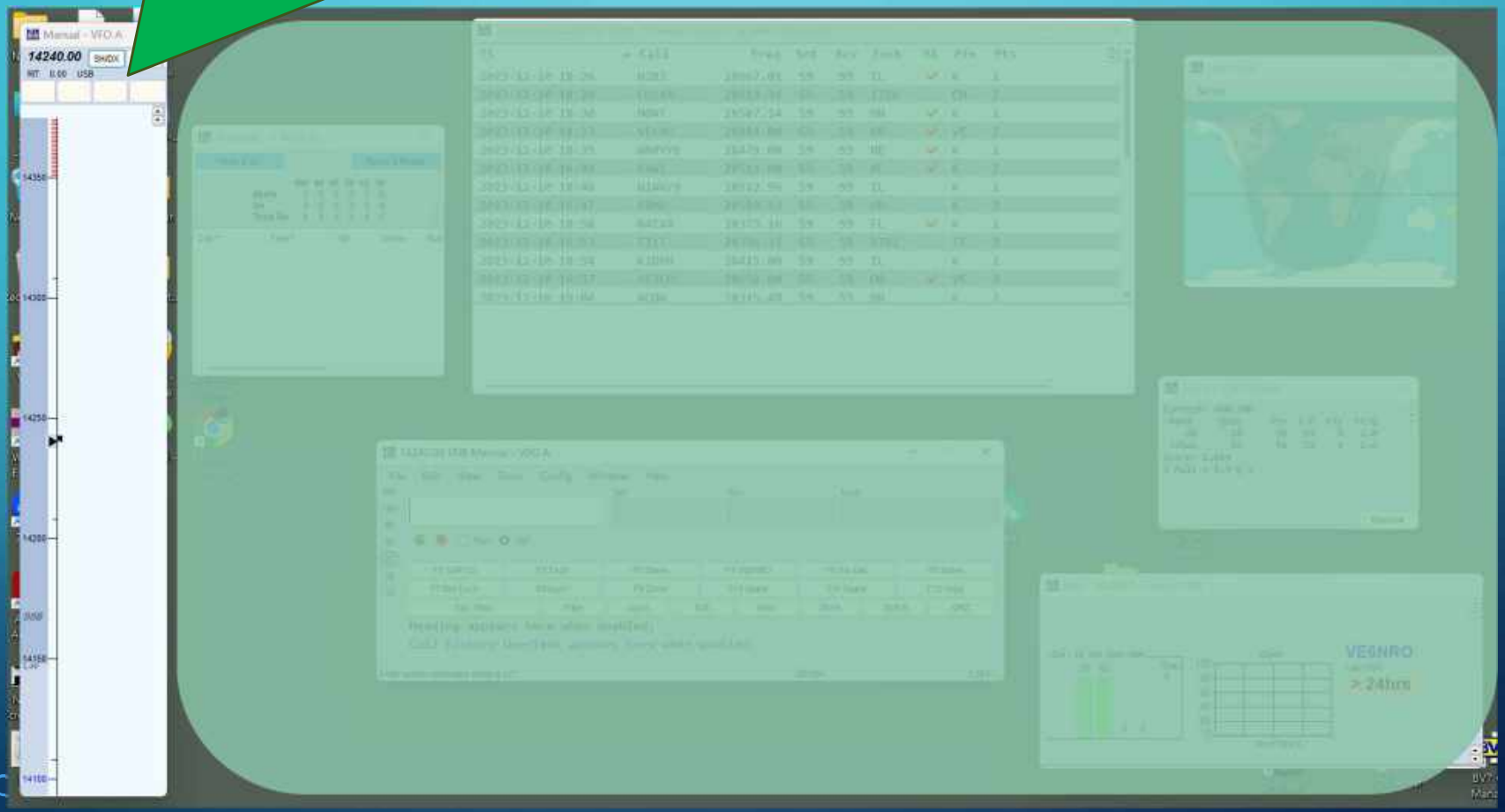


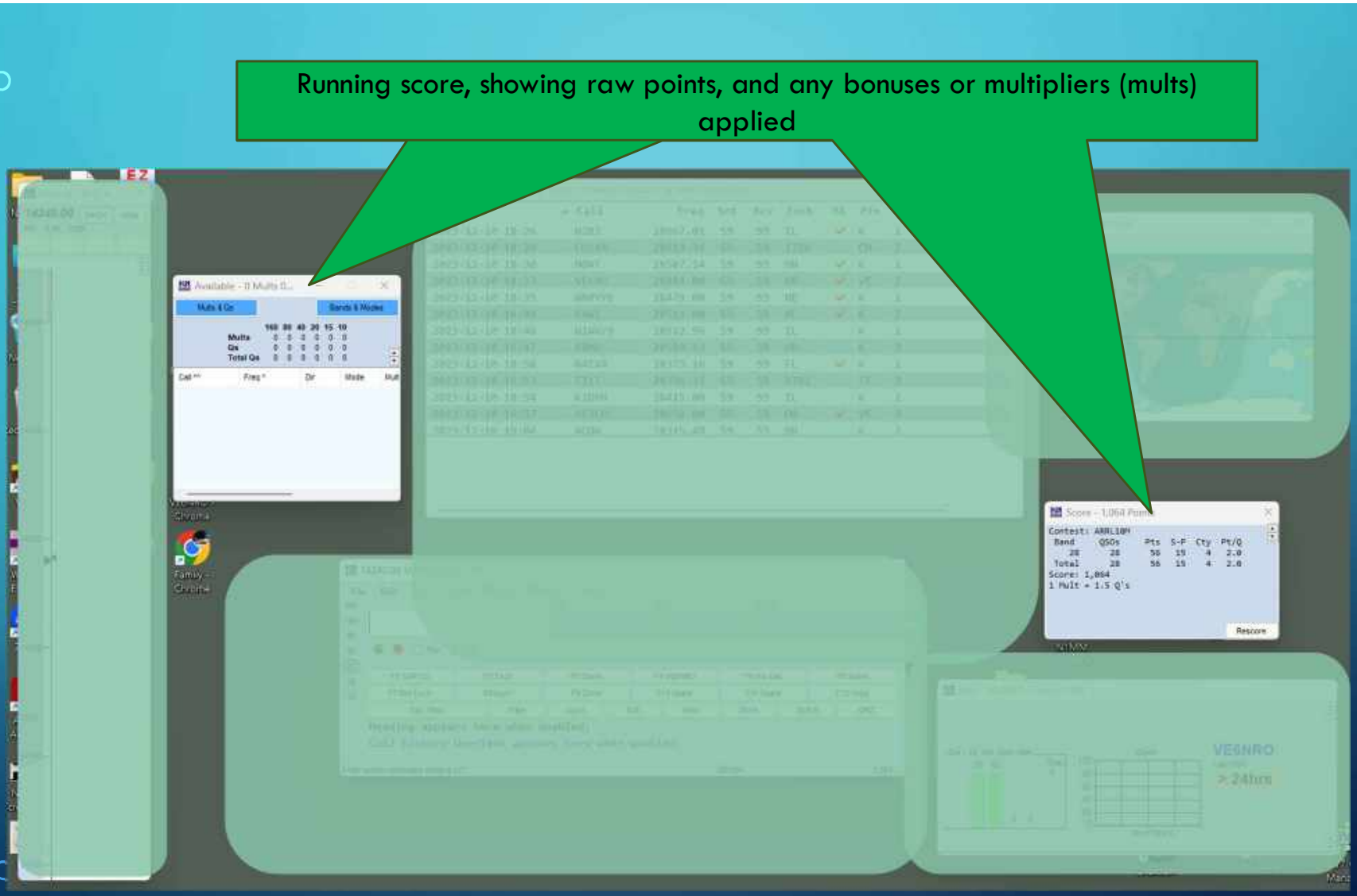
Day/Night MAP & Gray Line

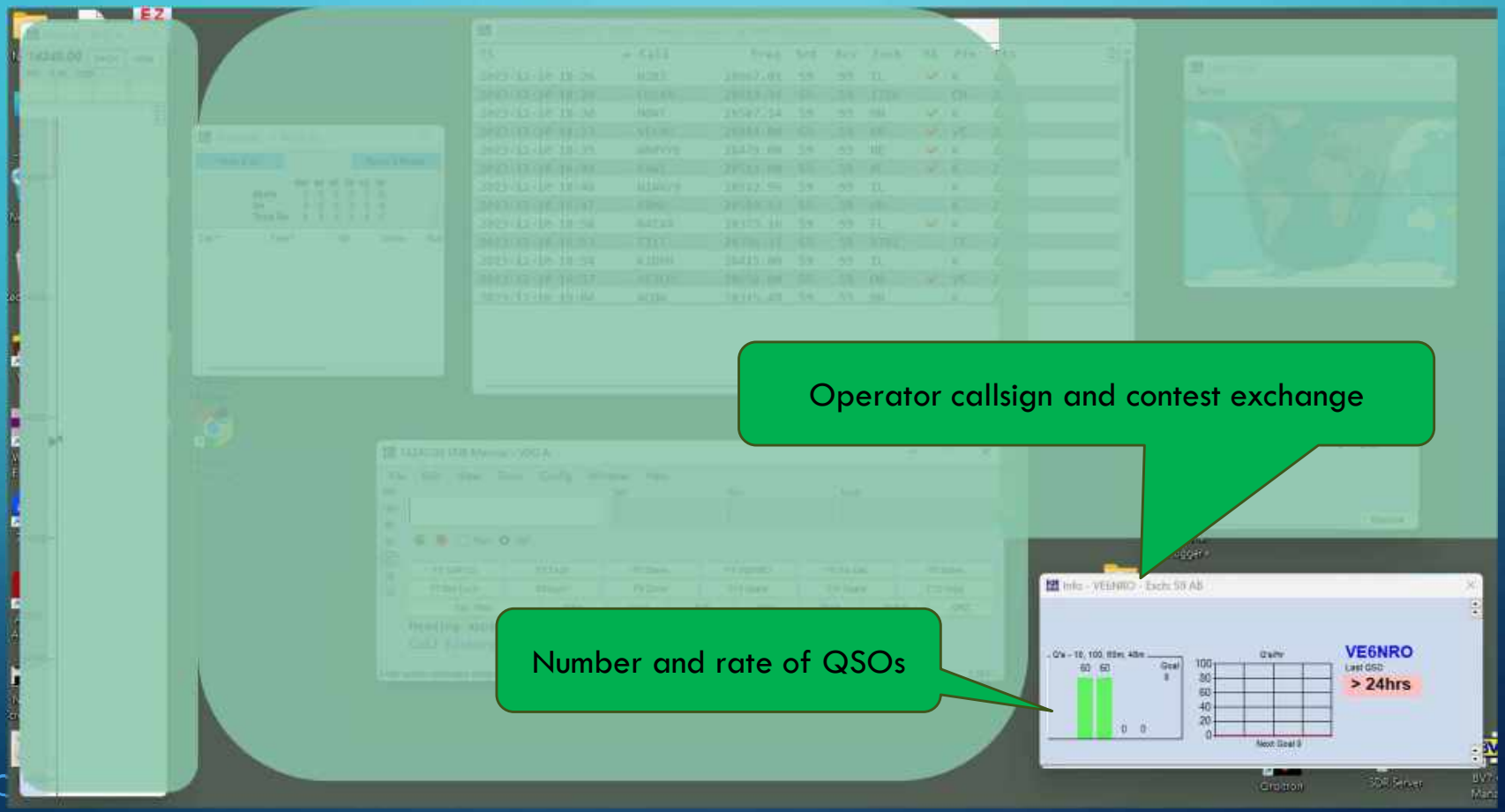


FREQUENCY/BAND MAP OF RADIO; DISPLAYS CURRENT FREQUENCY; CLICKING ON A FREQUENCY HERE WILL QSY TO THAT FREQUENCY ON THE RADIO

QSY – change frequency/move to xxx MHz




Running score, showing raw points, and any bonuses or multipliers (mults) applied


Operator callsign and contest exchange
Number and rate of QSOs
VE6NRO
> 24hrs

Contest name, frequency, database (file) name
Type other station callsign RST and exchange in these boxes
QSOs entered; Red checks indicate Multipliers applied
Function keys can be programmed to carry out specific actions

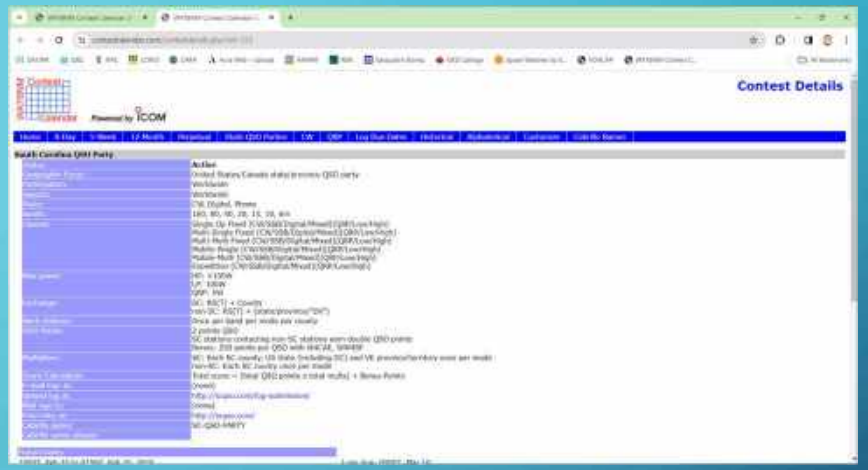
AFTER THE CONTEST

- You do **NOT** have to submit your contest logs to the organizer . If you do:
- Check the contest rules for submission dates and file formats.
- Ensure the proper format. Files submitted are usually Cabrillo format, sometimes ADI (Amateur Data Interchange); most programs generate both.
- File are either uploaded on contest website or sent by email.

RUN VS. SEARCH & POUNCE (S&P)

- Run – find a clear frequency, call CQ and start logging QSOs!
  - Advantage – can work many more stations, much faster since more stations S&P vs. Run.
- S&P - turn the dial, looking for stations calling CQ and reply.
  - Advantage – can fill in other station's callsign and exchange while waiting.
  - If you cannot hold a frequency or maintain a good run, can still work stations.
- Most contesters prefer Run and use S&P to find special callsigns and multipliers.

ON-AIR CONTEST TRAINING
CAROLINAS QSO PARTY
FEBRUARY 24, 25
AT VE6AO STATION



Stations inside South Carolina provide 59 + county

e.g. N0AB 59 Alpha November – for Anderson county

Stations outside South Carolina provide 59 + state, province or DX if outside North America

e.g. W7ABC 59 WY

CALLING CQ – "SEEK YOU", LOOKING FOR QSOS, ANY TIME, NOT JUST IN A CONTEST

CONTEST QSO PRACTICE

Your turn!

Remember to log your QSO – other station's callsign, signal report and exchange.

Use phonetics.

Don't be rushed, it's more important to get the information than to be fast. Speed will develop.

MULTIPLE SIMULTANEOUS REPLIES AKA PILEUPS

- Multiple replies to your CQ? No problem.
- If you couldn't make anything out, just say QRZ?
- If you heard part of a callsign, say that eg "ending in Bravo Charlie?"
- Keep the run going, manage the pileups and try to maintain your spot.

CHALLENGES

- Remember, amateur radio frequencies are for everyone to use, no one “owns” a spot, be courteous but expect courtesy as well.
- Someone may ask you to move or they may simply work over top.
- Not everyone follows the same phonetic alphabet, be flexible.
- Sometimes best to acknowledge a super loud station in a pileup so you can move on.
- Definitely ask for space if they’re interfering with a QSO eg
  - You have a pileup and hear a quiet station N7something but others keep calling over top:
  - “November Seven only please”
- The number of courteous operators (usually) exceeds the LIDS.

REGISTER ON THE CARA PAGE UNDER EVENTS CALENDAR TO OPERATE AT VE6AO FOR THE CQ WPX SSB CONTEST, MARCH 29, 30, 31

Contest exchange:

RS + consecutive serial number

Eg N7AB 59 057

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION

- Questions?
- This presentation will be uploaded to the CARA web page
- Register for the VE6AO Station Orientation and Practice Contest Feb 24/25.
- Register for the VE6AO CQ WPX SSB Contest March 29/30/31.
- Get on the air contest weekends and have fun!