

HOBBYIST OR TERRORIST?

Admiring trains has been a refuge for generations of men. Now it can get you a visit from the police
By [AMANDA RIPLEY/PHILADELPHIA](#)

Every lunch hour, computer programmer John Almeida leaves his cubicle at an insurance company outside Philadelphia and chases trains. He sets up four video cameras on tripods beside the tracks and waits, listening to his scanner. "I come out every day because history happens every day," he says. Almeida, a father of three, is a railfan — a hobbyist who watches trains with the fastidiousness of a lab researcher. Over the past 15 years, he has shot hundreds of hours of video and tens of thousands of pictures. Call it what you will, it is hard to think of a more benign hobby.

So it is all the more jarring when Almeida gets mistaken for a terrorist — which happens about once a month, sometimes more. Since 9/11, he says, he has been followed by an Amtrak helicopter, questioned by police and rail workers and described to 911 dispatch as a "suspicious Middle Eastern male." Almeida is of Irish Catholic descent.

Many hobbies, when considered closely, make no sense (spoon collecting, anyone?). But then there is railfanning, which even its disciples are hard put to explain. There are about 175,000 U.S. railfans, almost all men, estimates Kevin Keefe of *Trains* magazine. They have clubs, websites and vacation excursions. They are, like all hobbyists, consumed by the cataloging of minutiae. "They're just attracted to trains," says John Bromley, spokesman for Union Pacific Railroad, who admits halfway through our conversation that he too is a railfan.

But the postindustrial age has been tough on railfans. First the majestic steam locomotives disappeared. Then juries started giving huge awards to people hurt on the tracks, and railroads grew hostile toward trespassers. Now comes terrorism. Railroads upped security after 9/11, but since the March bombing of four trains in Madrid, commuters have been more worried. "Anyone seen taking photographs is going to be questioned," laments Richard Maloney, spokesman for SEPTA,

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Philadelphia's public-transit authority. "The wide-open spaces and the freedom we have enjoyed to meander almost anywhere is gone." Urban train buffs report being surrounded by police cars and customs agents. A Haverford College student of South Asian descent was detained last year by SEPTA police after he photographed a station — homework for an urban-history class, as it turned out.

Most railfans find ways to adapt. Some substitute business-casual attire for the usual Slayer T shirt to appear less threatening. Others carry the Diesel Spotters Guide — or their kids — to establish their innocence. As for Almeida, "I make a lot more eye contact," he says. Then he offers his card, which lists his railfan-club affiliations. He estimates that he has given out 500 cards since 9/11. Usually, the matter is quickly resolved. "I have a little A.C.L.U. in me," he admits. "So I say, 'Why can't I stay?' But the cop is the one with the gun."

Railfans have never been well understood. Rail employees call them trolley jollies, or foamers — for those who foam at the mouth at the sight of trains. Worst of all are FLMS: fans living with mothers. Almeida is aware of the snickering. But the history of the trains — not to mention the sheer thrill of a massive contraption hurtling down the tracks — is stronger than peer pressure. Earlier this spring, Almeida, 42, spent five hours in the cold, hoping to videotape the Ringling Bros. circus train, which never came. While waiting, he lovingly pointed out the faded markings of long-defunct railroads on passing trains. "Railroads built this country, and people seem to forget that," he said, raindrops coating his oversize glasses. Almeida tries to find humor in the new age of scrutiny. Says Bob Weiler, a fellow railfan: "John's got four cameras. No terrorist would do that." "Unless," says Almeida, "I was brilliant."

Hearing a horn in the distance, the men abandon their graham-cracker snacks and scurry off to man the cameras. A hush falls over the fans as a trash train, hauling a wall of Dumpsters to New York City, rumbles by. Almeida smiles and afterward offers his

best defense yet: "I could find better things to do. It's just that, uh, I'm doing this."

Air Force Radios Jam Garage Door Openers

EGLIN AIR FORCE BASE, Fla. (AP) - A new military radio system is jamming remote-control garage doors in communities near this Florida Panhandle base.

During testing last week of the \$5.5 million two-way radio system at Eglin, homeowners in Niceville, Valparaiso and the Crestview area reported that their garage door openers failed to work.

Air Force officials said Tuesday the contractor, Motorola Inc. ([MOT](#)), will try to minimize the problem. Technicians will run the system at slightly different frequencies from those used by garage door openers when another test is conducted Friday through Monday.

"I want my garage door opener to work, too," said Col. Russell F. Miller, commander of the 96th Communication Group.

Lauren Van Wazer, a spokeswoman for the Federal Communication Commission, said if the Air Force has been running the system within its licensed frequencies - the Air Force said it has - then users of garage door openers may have to change theirs.

A similar radio system has been requested for Pensacola Naval Air Station and other nearby installations, according to a Navy spokesman.

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<http://home.comcast.net/~benandchrisie/medhelos.htm>

Civilian air medical programs have become an integral part of EMS operations in this country. Being able to give emergency room level treatment within the "golden hour" has saved the lives of

countless individuals across the country. A large portion of the northeastern U.S. appears to be blessed with a near plethora of medical helicopters, especially in the more densely populated areas. This web site contains frequency information and unit ID for each service (where available). Helicopter base locations are listed on the right for each program. Please remember that the designators listed on the right side of the table are not necessarily helicopter specific; they may be base location/crew specific. Listening in on the action can be fun, but please use this information responsibly.

COMMON NATIONWIDE ITINERANT FREQUENCIES

<http://www.bcar.us/Frequency%20Reference.htm>

A list common nation-wide frequencies that may be encountered.

NY FM RADIO & RDS

RDS (Radio Data System) made its U.S. debut about 7 years ago. RDS equipped radios display the station ID and often program information.

Though the popularity of RDS never caught on in the U.S., it continues to flourish in Europe. Curiously, several New York City stations have starting using it. Charlie, N2NOV compiled a list of the greater NY metro area stations along with known RDS data. The list accompanies this month's Urban DX'er.

Recently, "HD" or High Definition radio was introduced. HD radio uses the IBOC system. In the New York area WOR-710 is probably the most widely heard station transmitting the IBOC format.

BROOKLYN SHORIM SECURITY PATROLS

A reader recently forwarded us this information about neighborhood patrols. The information was posted by "Radio Reporter" on Jim Fordyce's web site. Sources tell us that "Radio Reporter" is the infamous and controversial "Bruce" who checks into our net from time to time!

Boro Park Shomrim Patrol 462.4875(R) 172 DPL for chit chat, 464 DPL for emergency

Crown Heights Shomrim Patrol 462.3625(R)156.7 for Williamsburg

Boro Park 452.9125(R)172 DPL

Flatbush 461.0875(R) 612 DPL

Also listed: 463.1125(R) 151.4, 464.200(R) 151.4/
103.5, 462.3875(R), 462.2875(R)? 461.750(R)
103.5

5 Ave BID 463.650(R) 723

34th ST Partnershp461.150(R) 141.3 Bryant
Park

48th ST BID 461.750(R) 445

Times Sq BID464.475(R) 445

47 & Bway 464.775(R) 162/025

Assoc for Better NY 478.7625(R) 103.5 Doormen
/ Sec above 59th St , 471.7375(R) 141.3 Doormen /
Sec below 59th St, 471.5875(R) 343 Downtown
Alliance- Wall St area, 477.6625(R) 151.4

NOTE FROM THE EDITOR...

Please accept my apology for the delay in sending out this issue of The Urban DX'er. Occasionally my work schedule becomes a bit demanding and some personal activities such as my interest in the radio hobby has to take a back seat. In these cases we usually combine two months into one issue. The summer months usually show a decline in net participation and the amount of e-mail we receive.

We welcome your comments, suggestions, and contributions (articles and photos) for future issues.

Thanks, Bob, WA2SQQ

Urban DX'er would like to thank all those who contributed to this month's issue!

Charlie - N2NOV; "R" from Bridgeport, CT; N1MLZ.

Information is the oxygen of the modern age. It seeps through the walls topped by barbed wire, it wafts across the electrified borders." - Ronald Reagan

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Freq	Callsign	RDS Readout	Same Owner	Owner Name	Community	IBOC
88.1	WXBA			BRENTWOOD UNION FREE SCHOOL DISTRICT	BRENTWOOD, NY	
88.3	WBGO	JAZZ 88		NEWARK PUBLIC RADIO INC.	NEWARK, NJ	SOON
88.3	WLIU			LONG ISLAND UNIVERSITY PUBLIC RADIO NETWORK	SOUTHAMPTON, NY	
88.5	WKWZ			SYOSSET CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT	SYOSSET, NY	
88.5	WNJP			NEW JERSEY PUBLIC BROADCASTING AUTH.	SUSSEX, NJ	
88.5	WPOB			PLAINVIEW-OLD BETHPAGE CENT SCH DIST	PLAINVIEW, NY	
88.7	WNYK			NYACK COLLEGE	NYACK, NY	
88.7	WPSC			WILLIAM PATERSON COLLEGE OF N. J.	WAYNE, NJ	
88.7	WRHU			HOFSTRA UNIVERSITY	HEMPSTEAD, NY	
88.7	WRHV			WMHT EDUCATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS	POUGHKEEPSIE, NY	
88.7	WRSU			BD. OF GOVERNORS OF RUTGERS	NEW BRUNSWICK, NJ	
88.9	WFRS	WFRS, "The Sound of the New Life"	4	FAMILY STATIONS, INC.	SMITHTOWN, NY	
88.9	WSIA	WSIA		THE COLLEGE OF STATEN ISLAND	STATEN ISLAND, NY	
89.1	WFDU			FAIRLEIGH DICKINSON UNIVERSITY	TEANECK, NJ	
89.1	WNYU			NEW YORK UNIVERSITY	NEW YORK, NY	
89.5	W208AU			BEST MEDIA INC	MASSAPEQUA, NY	
89.5	WSOU			SETON HALL UNIVERSITY	SOUTH ORANGE, NJ	
89.9	WKCR			TRUSTEES OF COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY IN NEW YORK	NEW YORK, NY	
90.1	WUSB			STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK	STONY BROOK, NY	
90.3	WDFH	WDFH		WESTCHESTER COUNCIL FOR PUBLIC B/CNG	OSSINING, NY	
90.3	WHCR			CITY COLLEGE OF NEW YORK	NEW YORK, NY	
90.3	WHPC			NASSAU COMMUNITY COLLEGE	GARDEN CITY, NY	
90.3	WKNJ			KEAN UNIVERSITY	UNION TOWNSHIP, NJ	
90.3	WMSC			MONTCLAIR STATE UNIVERSITY	UPPER MONTCLAIR, NJ	
90.3	WRPR			RAMAPO COLLEGE OF NEW JERSEY	MAHWAH, NJ	
90.3	WVPH			PISCATAWAY HIGH SCHOOL	PISCATAWAY, NJ	
90.5	WJSV			MORRIS SCHOOL DISTRICT	MORRISTOWN, NJ	
90.7	W214BF			MARS HILL BROADCASTING CO., INC.	RIVERHEAD, NY	
90.7	WFUV			FORDHAM UNIVERSITY	NEW YORK, NY	SOON
90.9	WKRB			KINGSBOROUGH COMMUNITY COLLEGE	BROOKLYN, NY	
91.1	WFMU			AURICLE COMMUNICATIONS	EAST ORANGE, NJ	
91.1	WHVP			SOUND OF LIFE, INC.	HUDSON, NY	
91.3	WRLI			CONNECTICUT PUBLIC BROADCASTING, INC	SOUTHAMPTON, NY	
91.3	WVKR			VASSAR COLLEGE	POUGHKEEPSIE, NY	
91.5	WNYE			NEW YORK CITY BOARD OF EDUCATION	NEW YORK, NY	
91.9	WSHR			SACHEM CENTRAL SCH DIST HOLBROOK	LAKE RONKONKOMA, NY	
92.1	WLNG			MAIN STREET BROADCASTING CO., INC.	SAG HARBOR, NY	
92.1	WRNQ		1	CLEAR CHANNEL BROADCASTING LICENSES, INC.	POUGHKEEPSIE, NY	
92.3	WXRK	WXRK	2	INFINITY BROADCASTING EAST INC.	NEW YORK, NY	
92.7	WZAA			UNIVISION RADIO LICENSE CORPORATION	GARDEN CITY, NY	
92.9	WEHM		7	AAA ENTERTAINMENT LICENSING LLC	SOUTHAMPTON, NY	
93.1	WPAT			WPAT LICENSING, INC.	PATERSON, NJ	
93.5	WRTN			HUDSON-WESTCHESTER RADIO, INC.	NEW ROCHELLE, NY	
93.5	WZCR		1	CLEAR CHANNEL BROADCASTING LICENSES, INC.	HUDSON, NY	
93.9	WNYC			WNYC RADIO	NEW YORK, NY	YES
94.3	WMJC		3	IW LIMITED LIABILITY COMPANY	SMITHTOWN, NY	
94.5	W233AI			MONROE BOARD OF EDUCATION	SAG HARBOR, NY	
94.7	WFME	WFME	4	FAMILY STATIONS, INC.	NEWARK, NJ	
95.3	WHFM		9	CXR HOLDINGS, INC.	SOUTHAMPTON, NY	

95.5	WPLJ			WPLJ-FM RADIO, INC.	NEW YORK, NY	
96.1	WLVG		3	IW LIMITED LIABILITY COMPANY	CENTER MORICHES, NY	
96.1	WPKF		1	CLEAR CHANNEL BROADCASTING LICENSES, INC.	POUGHKEEPSIE, NY	
96.3	WQXR	963WQXR		THE NEW YORK TIMES ELECTRONIC MEDIA COMPANY	NEW YORK, NY	
96.7	WHBE		7	AAA ENTERTAINMENT LICENSING LLC	EAST HAMPTON, NY	
97.1	WQHT	HOT 97 (plus program info)	5	EMMIS LICENSE CORPORATION OF NEW YORK	NEW YORK, NY	
97.5	WALK		6	AMFM RADIO LICENSES, L.L.C.	PATCHOGUE, NY	
97.9	WSKQ			WSKQ LICENSING, INC.	NEW YORK, NY	
98.3	WKJY			LONG ISLAND BROADCASTING, INC.	HEMPSTEAD, NY	
98.3	WMGQ	WMGQ-FM	11	THE SENTINEL PUBLISHING CO.	NEW BRUNSWICK, NJ	SOON
98.5	WBON		10	JARAD BROADCASTING COMPANY OF WESTHAMPTON, INC.	WESTHAMPTON, NY	
98.7	WRKS	98.7 KISS (plus program info)	5	EMMIS RADIO LICENSE CORPORATION OF NEW YORK	NEW YORK, NY	
99.1	WAWZ			PILLAR OF FIRE	ZAREPHATH, NJ	
99.5	WBAI			PACIFICA FOUNDATION, INC.	NEW YORK, NY	
100.3	WAPP-LP			AQUILA BROADCASTING CORP.	WESTHAMPTON, NY	
100.3	WHTZ		6	AMFM RADIO LICENSES, L.L.C.	NEWARK, NJ	
100.7	WHUD		12	6 JOHNSON ROAD LICENSES, INC.	PEEKSKILL, NY	
101.1	WCBS		2	INFINITY BROADCASTING EAST INC.	NEW YORK, NY	
101.5	WPDH	WPDH	8	CUMULUS LICENSING LLC	POUGHKEEPSIE, NY	
101.9	WQCD	CD101.9 (plus program info)	5	EMMIS RADIO LICENSE CORPORATION	NEW YORK, NY	
102.3	WBAB	WBAB, "BAB Rocks LI"	9	CXR HOLDINGS, INC.	BABYLON, NY	
102.5	WBAZ		7	AAA ENTERTAINMENT LICENSING LLC	BRIDGEHAMPTON, NY	
102.7	WNEW	MIX 102.7	2	INFINITY BROADCASTING EAST INC.	NEW YORK, NY	YES
103.1	W276AQ			BRIDGELIGHT, LLC	FORT LEE, NJ	
103.1	WBZO			MID-ISLAND BROADCASTING LIMITED PARTNERSHIP	BAY SHORE, NY	
103.5	WKTU		6	AMFM RADIO LICENSES, L.L.C.	LAKE SUCCESS, NY	
103.7	WNNJ		1	CLEAR CHANNEL BROADCASTING LICENSES, INC.	NEWTON, NJ	
103.9	WFAS	WFAS-FM	8	CUMULUS LICENSING LLC	WHITE PLAINS, NY	
103.9	WRCN		3	IW LIMITED LIABILITY COMPANY	RIVERHEAD, NY	
104.3	WAXQ		6	AMFM NEW YORK LICENSES, LLC	NEW YORK, NY	
104.7	WMOS			CITADEL BROADCASTING COMPANY	MONTAUK, NY	
104.7	WSPK		12	6 JOHNSON ROAD LICENSES, INC.	POUGHKEEPSIE, NY	
105.1	WWPR	POWER 105	6	AMFM RADIO LICENSES, L.L.C.	NEW YORK, NY	
105.5	WDHA		11	THE SENTINEL PUBLISHING CO.	DOVER, NJ	YES
105.7	W289AD			SACRED HEART UNIVERSITY, INC.	SELDEN, NY	
105.9	WCAA			WADO-AM LICENSE CORP. ("WADO")	NEWARK, NJ	SOON
106.1	WBLI	106.1 BLI	9	CXR HOLDINGS, INC.	PATCHOGUE, NY	
106.3	W292CM			JOHN KATONAH	POUGHKEEPSIE, NY	
106.3	WFAF		8	CUMULUS LICENSING LLC	MOUNT KISCO, NY	
106.7	WLTW	LITE-FM	6	AMFM NEW YORK LICENSES, LLC	NEW YORK, NY	
107.1	WLIR		10	JARAD BROADCASTING COMPANY OF HAMPTON BAYS, LLC	HAMPTON BAYS, NY	
107.1	WWZY			PRESS COMMUNICATIONS, LLC	LONG BRANCH, NJ	
107.1	WXPX			NASSAU BROADCASTING HOLDINGS, INC.	BRIARCLIFF MANOR, NY	
107.5	WBLS			ICBC BROADCAST HOLDINGS-NY, INC.	NEW YORK, NY	

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