

The Monitor



June 2004

Upcoming Events

TSRC Meeting	June 12, 2004, 9:00am EBAs, Hanover, NH
Field Day	June 25-27, 2004, 9:00am KUA, Meriden, NH
Prouty	July 10, 2004 Hanover, NH
TSRC Meeting	July 17, 2004, 9:00am EBAs, Hanover, NH

Please note the change in the July meeting date!

TSRC Email Listserver

Are You Signed Up For The TSRC Email Listserver? If you aren't you might miss out on things that are happening in the club. All activities, club and committee meetings are posted to the list, along with personal notes about help needed, stuff for sale, gripes, and more. Membership on the list is not automatic - you have to request it. About once a year I have to remind everyone of this fact. If you are not receiving TSRC emails and announcements and wish to, please send your name and primary email address to me at dbcolter@rcn.com.

73,
Dave Colter WA1ZCN - "List Mom"

Minor FCC amateur rule changes effective June 1

The FCC says minor amendments to various Amateur Radio rules become effective June 1. The regulatory changes, which the FCC made on its own motion rather than in reaction to any petitions, appeared May 5 in the Federal Register.

"This document makes minor amendments to various rule sections to clarify or eliminate duplicative language or conform them with other rule sections," the FCC said.

Among other changes, the most significant involved revising the wording of Section 97.307(d), which defines spurious emissions. The updated language imposes a slightly higher standard on newer

transmitters or amplifiers of any power level. Starting June 1, the rule will provide that:

* the mean power of any spurious emission from HF transmitters or external RF power amplifiers installed after January 1, 2003, must be at least 43 dB below the mean power of the fundamental emission.

* the mean power of any spurious emission from HF transmitters or external RF power amplifiers installed on or before January 1, 2003, must not exceed 50 mW and must be at least 40 dB below the mean power of the fundamental emission. If the mean power output of such as transmitter is less than 5 W, the attenuation must be at least 30 dB.

Still exempt from the provisions of Section 97.307(d) are transmitters built before April 15, 1977, or those first marketed before January 1, 1978.

The FCC also has redefined what constitutes an Amateur Radio operator to reflect the advent of the Universal Licensing System (ULS) electronic licensee database. Under the revised Section 97.3(a)(1) an amateur operator is "a person named in an amateur operator/primary license station grant on the ULS consolidated licensee database to be the control operator of an amateur station." The current rule defines an amateur operator as "a person holding a written authorization to be the control operator of an amateur station."

Another change eliminates Technician or Technician with Element 1 credit licensees from the classes of operators permitted to prepare Element 1 (5 WPM Morse) and Element 2 (Technician written) examinations.

The Commission ordered the rule changes within the context of a larger, wide-ranging Notice of Proposed Rule Making (NPRM) in WT Docket 04-140. That NPRM addresses several Amateur Radio-related petitions and proposes revisions to operating privileges. The FCC continues to seek comments on these proposals. Comments are due by Tuesday, June 15, and reply comments by Wednesday, June 30. Among other changes, the FCC has recommended adopting the ARRL's "Novice reformatting" plan.

Disclaimer

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What Are We Training For?

by Mitch W1SJ - Vermont Technical Coordinator

I'm often amazed that emergency planners have the playbook written for any emergency or disaster. The one thing that is eminently predictable about a disaster is its unpredictability. Before 2001, nobody was planning for jets to hit tall buildings. The next big disaster will likely be something we haven't even conceived. As amateur radio operators, our job is simple. We supply communications wherever and whenever needed. We don't know when or where or even if power will be available. We just supply the communications. We are the experts in that.

Amateur radio planning for disasters has been virtually non-existent in Vermont. There have been no widespread disasters in Vermont since the 1927 flood. As radio was in its infancy then, and portable stations were scarce and limited at best, there wasn't much of an amateur radio response. Since then, there have been numerous local incidents and annual bouts of miserable winter weather, but that's it. This, of course, is very fortunate, but it has lulled us into a false sense of security. Amateur radio emergency organizations in the West deal with very big and very real disasters like earthquakes, tornados, forest fires and mud slides and most are very capable of providing a quick response. We should be capable too. Not only are floods possible, but so are large fires, damaging earthquakes and even terrorist action.

It is conceivable that in a large scale disaster there would be, for possibly long periods of time, no power, no phone or computer network and limited ability to travel. Operating conditions could be spartan at best in makeshift shelters or tents with limited food and long operating hours. Operators would certainly have to take care of their own needs and those of their families at some point. Tempers would likely be short. Above all, the trained emergency operator would have to be a self-starter and be able to get the job done in spite of the hardships. This is the real thing and it's a far cry from the Walkathons and Fun Runs we are used to serving.

Over the years, the typical Vermont amateur radio emergency communications scenario is something in which the Red Cross is involved in a relief effort and calls upon amateur radio to provide communications. Logistically, this is often easy to set up for, once personnel are alerted and are on the scene. There is nothing wrong with any of this, but amateur operators and leaders are not being trained for large scale emergencies. That is where we should be spending the bulk of our training time since these situations are certainly the most challenging.

The call up for a disaster is most difficult. First, officials must reach amateur radio leadership. The first problem is establishing who will be contacting whom. In a small emergency, law enforcement and rescue organizations manage the scene. Sadly, amateur radio emergency organizations have very little relationship with police departments and rescue organizations. It is something which needs to be diligently worked on by amateur radio leaders. Next, who are the amateur radio leaders? Is it the ARRL Section Manager, or the Section Emergency Coordinator, or the District Coordinators, or the Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service (RACES) or is it local radio club presidents. This has been a source of confusion for years and it is crucial that amateur radio speak with one voice during a situation. Finally, in a widespread emergency, we have to assume that power, phone and computer networks will be disrupted. How do the served agencies reach amateur radio, or do we just go ahead and assemble at some predetermined spot. There are lots of sticky questions here which no one person can give a direct answer. This will take much planning and development of relationships. Amateur radio emergency response requires a lot of politics.

So far, not a single radio transmission has been made! Before the equipment is even installed, the team, management and structure need to be in place. While these things can be put together on the fly in a situation, it is certainly not the most efficient way to go. Building a team is crucial. We all fully appreciate that there are many divergent skills here. The management people are good at managing and politics, but not necessarily good operators. The operators are

great at what they do, but not necessarily good at negotiating the relationship with the various agencies. A third group is the technical people – the folks who design and build the stations and figure out how to get the impossible done. This caldron of mixed skills has to be finely tuned so that the entire job gets done efficiently.

Homework:

1. There are a plethora of public service events in May and continuing through the summer, including Marathons, road races, walkathons, bike rides and parades. Make sure you volunteer to serve in at least one of them. Organizers are always looking for volunteers. Contact your District Emergency Coordinator to find out details.

2. Field Day is June 26-27th. Be sure to get involved with a Field Day group somewhere. There is no better to learn the details of setting up a communications system than Field Day. Be sure to share your thoughts on these events via E-mail or on the RANV reflector.

How to get Training

by Mitch W1SJ - Vermont Technical Coordinator

How does one become a good operator in preparation for an emergency situation? The answer is quite simple - lots of practice! You certainly don't get good at this by just reading about it in a book! However, getting quality practice is difficult. As mentioned before, emergencies don't occur at predictable intervals. A good start on your training is to volunteer to operate in public service events. Such activities will teach you to prepare for the assignment, learn to have backup equipment, learn net protocol and get some on-air experience during situations. Unfortunately, the amount of practice one can get from these events is rather limited. Some operators may get only a few transmissions in during an event because not much is going on at their station. Others may get a lot more. However, doing these types of events year after year and experiencing different assignments will eventually build valuable experience.

To build the skills to be a good operator requires more than the few public service events held each year. I've found that there is an excellent way to build operator skills in a short time - Contesting. All amateur radio contests require three important abilities: listening, sending and logging. And these are the very three things which are also important in emergency communications. After all, our job is to collect information, send it, receive information and transcribe it or pass it along to someone. All of this must be done quickly and accurately. If you seriously take part in an amateur radio contest, you will make hundreds and perhaps thousands of contacts. Every contact requires listening, sending and logging. If you mess up while performing any of these skills, the logged information will be wrong and the contest sponsor will remove the contact. With today's electronic logging, it is a simple matter to quickly determine incorrectly copied information.

Not only will you build your listening, sending and logging skills, you will also build operating stamina. The reality of emergency operating can involve many hours of operating with little to no relief. Can you operate for hours with little sleep and remain coherent and alert? Contesters do this routinely. To seriously do a contest, you must invest many hours of sitting in the chair, operating. The one difference between contesting and emergency operating is that in an emergency, one needs to also interface with people in real time throughout the event while contesting is often done alone.

Another skill a contester trains for is instinctively knowing what to do when things go wrong. In a 24-hour contest, the chances are very high

that something will not go your way. Equipment failures, bad propagation, interference, even power failures plague all operations. It takes tremendous self-control to squelch the normal emotions and take all logical steps to stay on the air and continue to make contacts. Emergencies and disasters are fraught with the same types of problems which must be dealt with.

Nothing seems to raise the collective emotions of operators more than contesting. Contesters have a unique love of this part of the hobby, oftentimes bordering on fanaticism. Non-contesters often have an intense hatred of contests and contesters, oftentimes bordering on fanaticism. The feelings come from a combination of territorial fighting and lack of understanding of what contesters are trying to accomplish (no, we are not trying to jam your frequency...). If you are one of the contest haters, you need to put those feelings aside and embrace contesting as a tool to make you better as an operator. This is a golden opportunity - don't walk away from it because you had a bad experience years ago.

It is easy to operate in a contest. You don't need to preregister or send in an entry fee. You do have to do some homework ahead of time. Your homework will be to research the contest rules and specifics - what days, times, modes and frequencies. Knowing these, you then make a goal to operate a specified number of hours and/or make a specified number of contacts. Making a goal is crucial. It signifies that you intend to commit to doing the contest and to not just playing around. Not everyone can operate the 24 or 48 hours of most contests, but you can certainly make a goal to operate whatever number of hours your lifestyle allows. Just remember, the more you operate, the better you get. Making a goal of the number of QSO's gives you a standard by which you can measure yourself when the contest is done. It is important that you evaluate your efforts and detail ways to improve your efforts. Don't just cop out and say that you need a better station. Certainly, you can improve your skills and do better with the station you've got.

Attitude is very important. It is imperative that you do not get discouraged. Contesting is very difficult for the newcomer. You must be able to speak coherently and project your voice. You must be able to copy detailed information under less than ideal conditions with weak signals and interference. Often, you have to log this information and operate radios, tuners, amps and rotors simultaneously. All the time, you have to keep your wits about you and be sure to choose the correct frequency to be on at any given time. There is a lot of multitasking which you have to do. You are not born with this ability. You learn and practice. Keep a positive outlook and be ready at all times to learn from your mistakes. You will make many of those.

Homework: Operate in a contest! If you read this article in time, plan to operate in both the VHF QSO Party on June 12-13th and Field Day on June 26-27th. The VHF contest is a great place for Technicians to gain skills. If you can, grab a 6 and 2 meter SSB radio and yagi antennas and head for the highest mountain you can get to. If you don't have the equipment, hook up with someone who does and try a multiop. If you miss the June contest, you get another shot on September 10-11th.

No amateur operator should miss Field Day. It is the culmination of emergency operation from the setup of stations under emergency conditions right down to making the contacts. Get involved in as many aspects of Field Day as you can with your local club. Field Day is a 24-hour event and stations need to be on all night. Your help is needed!

If you miss the above contests, another contest you might try is the IARU Contest on July 10-11th. This is a DX contest held during the usually slack summer conditions and big antennas are certainly desirable. However, many contacts can still be made with a dipole and 100 watts. There will likely be a higher level of frustration trying to work the DX stations with a small station, but you will learn the valuable lessons of patience and persistence - skills all good operators must also have.

Enjoy some summer operating. I'll see you in the contest!

FCC extends reply comment deadline in BPL proceeding

The FCC has extended the deadline to file reply comments (comments on filed comments) in its broadband over power line (BPL) Notice of Proposed Rule Making (NPRM), ET Docket 04-37, to Tuesday, June 22. The FCC acted this week on a request from the National Antenna Consortium and the Amherst Alliance (NAC/Amherst) for a much longer filing deadline extension. The organizations said the June 1 reply comment deadline FCC would not allow stakeholders adequate time to prepare comments that address the full two-part National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) Phase 2 BPL study. The FCC said the NTIA has indicated that it soon will submit comments and a technical appendix that will include key findings of the Phase 2 report, which is due for release later this year.

NAC/Amherst had sought to have the FCC postpone the filing comment deadline until either September 1 or two months after the public release of the NTIA's Phase 2 study--whichever was later. The FCC said, however, that the additional three weeks should be "ample time" to respond to the anticipated NTIA submission, provided it's filed reasonably close to the anticipated May 28 date.

Noting that its Part 15 rules already permit Access BPL systems and that its February BPL NPRM places additional requirements on BPL systems over and above current Part 15 requirements, the FCC asserted that any further delay would diminish the Commission's ability to protect licensed users now occupying the HF spectrum. A further extension, the FCC added, also would "needlessly increase regulatory uncertainty" about BPL.

The FCC turned down a request that the FCC reissue in substantially greater detail the provisions of its proposed BPL rules concerning interference prevention and mitigation and the enforcement of standards.

The FCC does not routinely grant such time extensions, and it denied earlier petitions, including filings from the ARRL and NAC/Amherst, to extend the initial May 3 comment filing deadline.

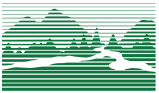
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Don't forget to check the TSRC Home Page!
Make it your default start page!
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