

# THE TARA NEWS

*Affiliate of the American Radio Relay League*

**Volume 16 © Issue 07 September 2005**

## **T.A.R.A. Repeater Hardline Fund Drive**

### **Aged Line in Dire Need of Replacement**

I've been holding off in writing to the membership of this club about our repeater troubles for quite awhile now. It was hoped by myself and the Board of Director's that we might be able to avoid this letter but as of today that just isn't possible. Okay here is the latest news.

We found out earlier this Spring that we had a bad hardline problem up at the tower site for our repeaters. In particular our 2 Meter -145.17 MHz has two defective areas. One at around the 150 foot mark and the other bad spot is near the 235 foot mark.

Presently we are using hardline that was more or less donated to TARA. This stuff is probably 20 years old! It is 7/8 inch and we can run full power on this type of hardline.

Okay, to replace this 250 foot run with new 7/8 inch hardline will cost **\*\*APPROX\*** - \$1,100 (That's getting it at **COST!**) for hardline and \$400.00 for the connectors and labor to install! Oh yes, plus there will be a shipping charge to get the hardline. The labor is for a 2 man installation but we're only going to be billed for the services of 1 man, thanks to a very good friend of TARA which, I'll be able to announce at another time.

At the same time we know that the hardline that supplies our 440 repeater is a bit better but the same old hardline holds true. Plus, in order to complete our ECHOLINK & IRLP project we need one additional run up to the tower. All together we need 2 runs of 150 foot each of hardline and connectors. We believe we can get by with 1/2 hardline for this job and the price is much less. We can purchase a whole spool of 300 foot of hardline here locally and get it for just under \$350.00. We will never get it that cheap again for "new" stuff! While we had the guys on the tower it would be a lot cheaper to have them do the complete project instead of breaking it up. And there is **NO SHIPPING** cost on this hardline.

We got to act on this quick for 2 reasons. The guys we have to do the tower work only have a few dates available and they're filling up quickly as the weather is changing. Plus, we need the hardline before this winter to seal up the connectors. Right now we have had water getting into the hardline. Our club treasury can't handle these purchases right now without going broke. So, I'm asking each of you if you could maybe help us raise the funds as soon as possible. I know we've done it before and I hoping we can do it now. Whatever you might be able to **DONATE** will be greatly appreciated!

**\$2,590.00 pledged as of 9/14/05**

Thank You!  
NY2U - "Mr.Bill"

*Thanks to all of Our  
Supporters who have Donated. So Far*



*More than a Club*



*We're a Family*



# Upcoming Public Service Events

## 24th Arsenal City Run

The 24th Arsenal City Run will be held in the City of Watervliet on Sunday September 25th. The Race will start at 10:00 AM and should finish around 12:30 PM.

I am looking for 8-10 volunteers.



## Pumpkin Patrol



We also have our Annual "Pumpkin Patrol" which will be coming up on Sunday, October 30th & Monday, October 31<sup>st</sup>. We are looking for many volunteers to help out on either on one or both nights and in different Counties this year. If you are interested or need more information, please call me anytime at 273-6594 or email me at

[KS20@N2TY.ORG](mailto:KS20@N2TY.ORG)

Thank you,  
Karen KS20

## TARA's Third Annual Chili and Chowder Fest



I want to invite each of you to come join us over in the Watervliet Hudson Shores Park on Saturday, September 17<sup>th</sup>, 12:00 PM for our 3rd Chili & Chowder Fest. This event will be held Rain or Shine!

We're going to need you folks to bring all of the different soups/chowders, chili, side dishes and anything else you might think the gang would enjoy tasting. TARA will have the gas grill and some hot dogs. If you'd like to bring something for the grill feel free to bring it along.

It would help us all if you'd let us know ahead of time, if you'll be attending the picnic. Also, let us know if you're going to bring any food items.

Thank You!  
Mr. Bill - NY2U



# ***Amateur Radio Awareness Day to Feature Emergency Power Operating Event***

NEWINGTON, CT, August 20, 2005--What makes Amateur Radio unique is the ability to communicate with one another anywhere in the world--and even in orbit--without having to rely on any outside infrastructure whatsoever. Hams can even do this without even being plugged into the wall socket. Experienced radio amateurs take this capability for granted, but the general public is far less aware of it. So, an Emergency Power Operating Event (EPOE) on Amateur Radio Awareness Day, Saturday, September 17, will highlight Amateur Radio's ability to communicate worldwide without commercial mains, the Internet or a cellular telephone system.

"What better way to mark Amateur Radio Awareness Day than by calling attention to this unique capability?" says ARRL CEO David Sumner, K1ZZ. "It is particularly appropriate since September is the [Department of Homeland Security's](#) National Preparedness Month." Amateur Radio Awareness Day activities typically focus on increasing public awareness. Past events have included public demonstrations, talks to community groups and getting local media coverage. According to DHS, National Preparedness Month is aimed at encouraging Americans to prepare for emergencies and to raise public awareness about the importance of being prepared. This Amateur Radio Awareness Day, September 17, the ARRL will sponsor a 15-hour Emergency Power Operating Event for stations operating off the grid. "It is not a contest," Sumner stresses. "It is simply a demonstration of what we amateurs can do without having to rely on the commercial mains, and what we *will* do whenever the need arises."

An announcement in September *QST* (page 49) spells out the details. The event kicks off at 1300 UTC on Saturday, September 17, and wraps up at 0400 UTC on September 18. The ARRL is inviting home stations to operate from generator or battery power. Portable and mobile stations also may participate. "We hope home stations operating on batteries or generators, mobiles, and possibly even some portables will participate," Sumner says, "although unlike Field Day, the emphasis is not on setting up a temporary station, but rather on operating your regular station on emergency power."

There is no set exchange; contacts may be casual, but operators are encouraged to share information on their emergency power sources in addition to the traditional signal report, name and location.

ARRL Maxim Memorial Station W1AW will be on the air for the event, running on emergency power from its 60-kW emergency backup diesel generator. W1AW Station Manager Joe Carcia, NJ1Q, says the whole point is to showcase that Amateur Radio is prepared during National Preparedness Month--"and any time, for that matter," he adds. A special QSL will be available to stations contacting W1AW while running from an emergency power source. Include a self-addressed, stamped envelope with all QSL card requests, and indicate on your card the emergency power source used. (Address cards to W1AW, 225 Main St, Newington, CT 06111.)

"I hope we can work stations operating on emergency power in all 50 states," says Sumner. "It should be a lot of fun, and we may even learn something!"

The League is encouraging participating radio amateurs or groups to invite local [Citizen Corps](#) leaders to see Amateur Radio installations in emergency power mode.

"The two events offer great opportunities for Amateur Radio to showcase its valued service to the nation," said ARRL Field and Educational Services Manager Rosalie White, K1STO. She urges ARRL-affiliated clubs and Field Organization volunteers to take advantage of the occasion to set up public demonstrations of Amateur Radio and to present or even demonstrate--under the banner of National Preparedness Month--the free services Amateur Radio provides to the community.

ARRL Club/Mentoring Program Manager Norm Fusaro, W3IZ, believes a public Emergency Power Operating Event offers a great opportunity to recruit prospective hams for licensing classes clubs that may be forming this fall.

<http://www.arrl.org/news/stories/2005/08/20/1/?nc=1>



# Federal Government Grant To "HAM AID"

## Will Support Katrina Response

The Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) <http://www.nationalservice.org/> will provide a \$100,000 grant supplement to ARRL to support Amateur Radio's emergency communication operators in states affected by Hurricane Katrina. The grant will help to fund "Ham Aid," a new League program to support Amateur Radio volunteers deployed in the field in disaster-stricken areas. ARRL Chief Development Officer Mary Hobart, K1MMH, expressed gratitude to CNCS for its generous response. Ham Aid, she said, offers a unique opportunity to support individual radio amateurs helping to bridge the communication gap Hurricane Katrina has caused.

"For the first time in ARRL history, we will be able to reimburse some of the expenses that hams incur in response to a disaster," she said. "We only wish that we could justify an expense reimbursement program like this every time Amateur Radio Emergency Service volunteers are called upon to help in a disaster or emergency, sometimes placing themselves in harm's way."

Hobart said it's only due to the scope of the unprecedented and tragic Katrina disaster that CNCS agreed to help support dedicated Amateur Radio volunteers. "But," she added, "we'd like to think of this grant as a token of appreciation and a recognition of Amateur Radio's value in past emergencies and disasters, such as 9/11." Hobart says ARRL's Ham Aid program already has received some substantial private donations. Those and the CNCS grant, she said, provide a way for the League to "support our Field Organization as never before."

The CNCS Ham Aid grant is effective for operations established and documented as of September 1, 2005, and the aid is earmarked for Hurricane Katrina deployments only at this point. Guidelines are being established that will permit volunteers who have been involved in bona fide field support operations on or after September 1 to apply for a reimbursement voucher on a per diem basis.

Grant funds may also sustain the Ham Aid program and help to rebuild the emergency communications capabilities in Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama to ensure that the Gulf Coast is prepared should disaster strike again.

The CNCS grant is an extension of ARRL's three year Homeland Security training grant, which has provided certification in emergency communication protocols to nearly 5500 Amateur Radio volunteer over the past three years.

"CNCS grants helped make it possible for the ARRL to train America's hams and make them the best all-volunteer emergency radio service ever seen," Hobart said. "Now they are making it possible for the hams to use that training."

# TWIAR Highlighting Media Hits on Katrina & Ham Radio Relief

[This Week in Amateur Radio](#) has dedicated a web page towards highlighting the numerous media articles that have been featured on how amateur radio is assisting with the relief efforts in the Gulf Coast regions following Hurricane Katrina. You can view the articles at: <http://www.twiar.org/katrina.html> If you have a news aggregator, you may reference the following RSS feed at: <http://twiar.org/katrina.xml>. The headline and a brief paragraph features the efforts of ham radio. They will link back to the originator of the news article, with appropriate credit given.

Many of the articles will be from local news agencies (television stations, newspapers, and radio stations) but there will also be some items from the ARRL and other ham radio outlets who are providing insight into the valuable asset amateur radio is providing to the hardest hit areas of the gulf coast.

Most of the items shown are from internet web searches. If you know of an article that was published and is not listed, please email the webmaster at [webmaster@twiar.org](mailto:webmaster@twiar.org) and give the URL and the agency's name that is featuring the story.

This will also be a great opportunity to highlight amateur radio in your community. Please have those assisting in the efforts contact the local media outlets in your area. News agencies, no matter how far near or far they may be from the affected area, would enjoy showing how people in their community are getting involved in the relief efforts.

These news items are provided as a resource for you to use to show who and where the stories are coming from. We hope you will find these articles of value.



# Paradise (Almost) Lost

**Allen G. Pitts**

**Walk through the streets of any American city and it becomes hard to see even the faintest remains of the free, open country that it was just a few generations ago. We may call it progress, but when people drive for miles just to find open room to breathe and explore freely, we've lost something precious. Our very souls yearn for an escape to a less confining existence where we can be creative and truly human again.**

**But once, for a few wondrous years, there *really* was a frontier, open and free. A new world where anyone with curiosity could go, explore, be free and fully human. It was a special time. Now the only remains of that glory are found in the scattering of a few national parks. While governments and corporations would develop even these few precious remnants in the name of some greater good, thankfully we have resisted those efforts thus far. For the most part, they remain as they were, open for anyone to come, explore, and taste the wonder of freedom.**

**There once also was a parallel new world in another realm. Ever since the 1840's, after the telegraph was introduced, various inventors and crackpots sought to send signals freely through the water or air without connecting wires. And just as quickly, there have been those monopolies that sought to control or usurp any such freedom.**

**Today, with much of the fresh wonder of radio long gone, and the airwaves choking with anesthetizing Muzak on the one hand and vituperative talk radio on the other, it may be difficult to appreciate the ham who takes to the air for fun, or out of curiosity, or to test their technical mettle. But realizing there is a new, invisible dimension out there --the electro-magnetic spectrum--that can provide contact with others far away, and that opens up a dark yet crackling part of the universe to the human imagination--puts people, however temporarily, in further awe of the cosmos of which we are part. And this wonder, this joy of discovery before the commercial forces came in --all this we can, and should, envy.**

**The Amateur Radio bands, like national parks, are the last remaining vestiges of what was once an incredibly large, open electro-magnetic spectrum where the common man can still go, explore, tinker and play. Now only a few small slivers of frequencies are left where people like you and I can freely explore the wonders of radio.**

**Both hams' transgressions and their heroism on the air have raised a key question, namely who "owns" the spectrum and who decides who gets what. For the amateurs have always operated outside of and often in opposition to commercialism. Once they regarded their portion of the spectrum as a reservation on which they were trapped. Now they argue that it is much like national park lands, a commercial-free zone that must be preserved for them and future generations of adventurers. At a time when greater chunks of the spectrum are being auctioned off for use by cellular phone companies, polluted by BPL and other corporate uses, they are the only voice crying to keep the notion alive that some of the air waves, like the land itself, are a common property resource in which everyone has a stake.**

**Some parts of above paraphrased with her permission from Dr. Susan J Douglas' book**

## FCC Morse Code Decision Would not Affect CW Sub-bands or Privileges

Any FCC decision to eliminate the 5 WPM Morse code requirement for HF access would have no impact on either the current HF CW subbands or on the CW privileges of Amateur Radio licensees.

"There seems to be a lot of confusion on these points, judging by the questions I've been getting," said John Hennessee, N1KB, of the ARRL Regulatory Information Branch. He emphasizes that the proceeding does not put forward or recommend any changes in CW allocations or privileges.

The FCC is currently accepting comments on its Notice of Proposed Rule Making and Order (NPRM&O) in WT Docket 05-235, released July 19, which proposes to do away with the 5 WPM Morse code requirement for all license classes.

Hennessee further notes that the FCC also has not proposed to extend HF privileges to current Technician licensees who have not passed a Morse code examination. The Commission's NPRM&O suggests that in a no-Morse-requirement regime, such Technician licensees would be able to gain HF access by taking the Element 3 General class written examination.

To file on-line comments on the FCC NPRM&O in WT Docket 05-235 or to view others' comments in the proceeding, visit the ECFS site <http://www.fcc.gov/cgb/ecfs> and click on "Submit a Filing" or "Search for Filed Comments."

In either case, type "05-235" in the "Proceeding" field, being careful to include the hyphen but not the quotation marks. Directions for filing comments, which can be in the form of an attached document, are on the ECFS site. Click on "Getting Started" to learn more.

As of week's end, more than 1700 comments had already been filed. The FCC has not yet established a closing date for comments in this proceeding, and it's not likely to release a Report and Order in WT Docket 05-235 until early next year.

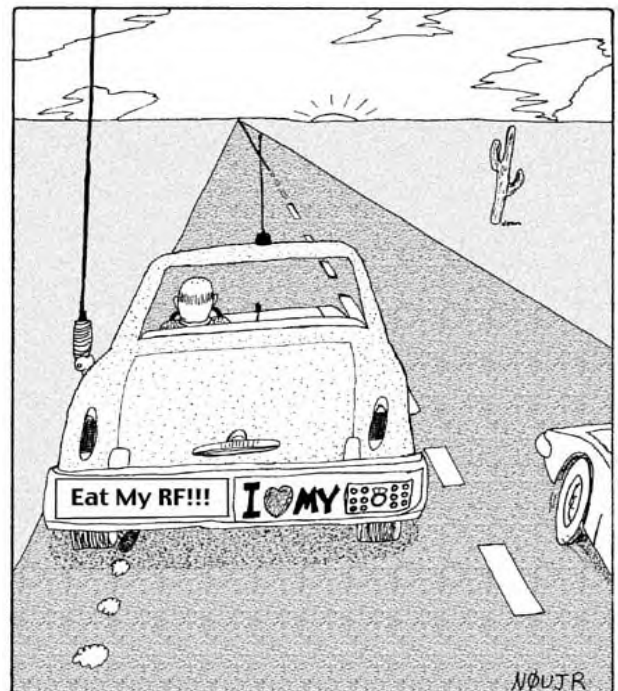
In a separate--and unrelated--Notice of Proposed Rule Making (NPRM) in WT Docket 04-140, the FCC agreed with an ARRL proposal to reallocate the current Novice/Tech Plus CW subbands to create additional room on certain phone sub-bands. If the FCC goes ahead with that proposal, Novice and Tech Plus licensees would have CW privileges in the current General class CW bands

## ARRL Urges Employers To Be Flexible In Leave Time for Volunteers

The ARRL is calling on employers of Amateur Radio operators who volunteer to assist in the Hurricane Katrina relief effort to be able to take off from work without penalty. ARRL President Jim Haynie, W5JBP, says volunteers need some kind of assurance that they won't be jeopardizing their jobs if they step forward to assist along the US Gulf Coast, where they could be deployed for a week or longer. He said the League is urging employers that have not already done so to take the opportunity to recognize the significance of the emergency and the importance of what Amateur Radio volunteers are doing to help alleviate suffering in the disaster zone.

"What we're asking employers to do is to have some compassion for the people in the disaster area," he said. "If they've got an employee who has the training and skills of an Amateur Radio operator, please allow that person to take some time off to contribute to this relief effort."

Haynie further suggested that employers might contemplate offering their employees who serve as Amateur Radio volunteers in the Hurricane Katrina response either paid leave or compensatory time. "An employer can consider this one way to make a contribution to the Hurricane Katrina relief effort--if not monetary at least by letting those workers who are Amateur Radio volunteers to contribute their time and talents in the field."



QCWA members with an attitude...



# Tech Talk

Off frequency- Yaesu VX-1

## Problem

My VX-1 is off frequency. If you have it set to, let's say 146.940, it will not key the repeater. You can hear the repeater key up when others talk, but they are very distorted. Retuning to 146.930 clears up the receive and then you can also key up the repeater. It's also off in the uhf band by about the same amount. What can I do to correct this problem?

## Cure and Repair

I realize this message is very old, but there is a known problem with the VX-1 display and the actual frequency being off 10-15kc. You have to open the radio, alas. There is a very small chip capacitor which comes loose on one end. It seems that there is very little clearance between the back of the speaker magnet and the pc board behind it. If the radio is "squeezed" or too much pressure is put on the front of the radio, the speaker magnet dislodges the cap. You can solder (if you are cool with surface mount components) the lead back and using great care not to heat the magnet, use a Dremel tool to shave a little off the magnet. I had a link the description a couple of years ago but it is dead now. I did the mod to my VX-1 and it has been fine since.

# Higher Amateur Radio Vanity Call Sign

## Application Fee Now In Effect

The application fee for an Amateur Radio vanity call sign rose to \$21.90 effective for applications received on or after Tuesday, August 23. The FCC's Wireless Telecommunications Bureau released a new Fee Filing Guide this week, and WTB personnel have confirmed that the new vanity fee is in effect.

In a Report and Order and Order On Reconsideration (R&O) in the assessment and collection of regulatory fees for fiscal years 2004 and 2005 released July 7, the FCC raised the vanity application fee for FY 2005 from \$20.80 to \$21.90 for the 10-year license term. The FCC said it had adjusted FY 2004 "payment units" for each service to better reflect expected FY 2005 payment liabilities. The fee went up from \$16.30 to \$20.80 a year ago.

A reevaluation in the number of anticipated vanity call sign applications--or "payment units"--accounts for this latest fee hike. The FCC says it anticipates 7600 vanity applications--up only slightly from a year earlier.

More information on vanity call signs is available on the ARRL Website, <http://www.arrl.org/arrlvec/vanity.html>

# The Fine Art of Trimming Your Antenna

**GRAFTON, NY** – On a hot afternoon in the Grafton mountains, Barney Decker - KB2KDY sets out to perform one of the most tedious tasks known to an amateur radio operator. It is the task, which sends chills down your spine and weakens your knees. Yes, this is a task, which requires the steady hands of a brain surgeon or the nerves or steel of a dismantler of bombs. Few men tread where Barney goes during the "Dog days of Summer" but, Barney journeys out the door of his shack with his shears in hand and prepares to perform the most dreaded task in amateur radio.....

## TRIMMING GRASS AROUND YOUR GROUND RADIALS



# International Lighthouse Weekend

## Radio operators make urgent call **The Star-Ledger**

**Hams around world spotlight lighthouses**  
**Sunday, August 21, 2005**

**BY SABA ALI Star-Ledger Staff, Newark, N.J.**

"Cq ... cq ... cq ... international lighthouse weekend, WR2DX at the Sea Girt Lighthouse in Sea Girt, New Jersey. Cq ... cq ... waiting for a reply," was the urgent message sent by radio waves from the Shore to the world. No reply.

Again. "Cq ... cq ... cq..." Still no reply.

A minute later, under the crackle of the ham radio came a voice.

"This is Matt, from Michigan," the voice said. "What is your location?"

Yesterday morning, the lighthouse in the Monmouth County seashore town of Sea Girt was one of 370 lighthouses in 51 countries sending out and receiving messages over ham radios.

The white porch reverberated with activity as a group of men jumped to catch chatter from across the continent coming in over the two ham radio stations.

Once again, the red brick lighthouse, now a museum honoring its own life-saving past, operated as a signal beacon during the seventh annual International Lighthouse Lightship Weekend.

Amateur ham radio operators stationed at lighthouses all over the world flashed messages to one another, with the Sea Girt Lighthouse, the Neptune Amateur Radio Club and the New Jersey chapter of the North America DX Association participating for the first time.

The two ham radios operated on separate amateur radio bands using the same WR2DX call sign.

The purpose of the event was threefold -- to raise public awareness about the need to preserve lighthouses, to increase the number of amateur ham radio enthusiasts and to create international goodwill.

"I've been a ham for many years," said Frank "W2XYZ" Wroblewski. The 57-year-old electrical technician, who is retired from the military, said he first got interested when he heard the chatter coming over his short wave radio.

"At first, I didn't know what these people were who were talking, asking questions," Wroblewski said. The "W2XYZ" is Wroblewski's individual call sign.

Every operator is required to have a number-letter combination by the Federal Communications Commission for identification. Like many other ham radio operators, it was that curiosity about the voice at the other end that led Wroblewski to get his FCC license.

Now Wroblewski has talked with people from as far away as the Seychelles Islands off the coast of Kenya and as local as his group of ham radio buddies who keep him company during his 7 a.m. drive to work.

"Both of them (lighthouses and ham radios) are about communicating," said Bill Dunn, president of the Sea Girt Lighthouse Citizens Committee. With lots of coastline and treacherous shoals, New Jersey found a need in years past to build 20 lighthouses to warn and guide sailors. "It's a part of our history that was in danger of being lost," Dunn said. "Events like this help to preserve the history. People learned a little bit about our lighthouse. The operators would say 'We are transmitting from the Sea Girt Lighthouse, built in 1896' and give a little bit of this history."

The lighthouse, on Ocean Avenue and Beacon Boulevard, was the last live-in lighthouse built in the United States, according to the Sea Girt Borough Web site. The beacon stands 60 feet tall and is surrounded by a two-story house now used as a museum. When operating, the beacon's light could be seen 15 miles away.

Dunn said they were able to make contact with someone in Slovenia, but what was even more inspiring to him was the conversation the operator had with a counterpart on Fire Island off of Long Island.

The Lighthouse on Fire Island, Sea Girt Lighthouse and Ambrose Lightship were set up with a radio fog system in 1921 that allowed ships to locate their positions by bouncing signals off lighthouses in a process called triangulation.

"We reminded the operator at the other end that they had this connection," Dunn said. Now both the Fire Island ham radio operator and the person from Slovenia might both use the Internet to learn more about Sea Girt.

While some say technology is wiping out the need for ham radios, others such as Mike "KC2Q" DiPersio, NDXA president, say the number of operators is slowly but surely increasing.

Two operators at a time will man the ham radios as the event, open to the public, continues today from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

**W**



# Ham radio operators provide vital link after storm

By DAVID HARRISON

The Roanoke Times

September 1, 2005 ROANOKE, Va. -- Gary Hendrick sat on a stool in his garage in Craig County and fiddled with the knobs and buttons of his ham radio. He was frustrated because the signals were weakening in the late afternoon.

Then an urgent voice sliced through the static, clear as a bell.

"I have a diabetic, 80 years old, out of food and water for the last 24 hours," it said.

An elderly woman from Bush, La., was stranded in her home after Hurricane Katrina and desperate for food and insulin. Somebody sent the message out over the air. Other voices picked up the call and it was relayed all across America until, with luck, it would reach a local rescue squad.

With cellphones, land lines and e-mail knocked out by the storm, amateur radio operators have become the only link to the outside for some people stranded by high water. Radio operators have become like shortwave carrier pigeons alerting rescuers to stranded victims and reassuring families about loved ones cut off from communication.

In a way it's sweet revenge for what Hendrick calls the "lost art" of ham radio. With younger generations gravitating toward newer technologies, it takes a disaster to remind people that no amount of destruction will knock out basic radio traffic.

As soon as the water started rising in Louisiana and Mississippi this week, people like Hendrick started a days-long vigil relaying messages into the ether. On Wednesday afternoon, Hendrick tried to send messages but the radio signals were so poor no one could hear him.

"Kilowatt Bravo 4 India Papa Radio. Can I get a relay into net control?" he repeated into his microphone to no avail.

It was such a beautiful late summer afternoon in Hendrick's garage at the end of a rural dirt road in Craig County that it was hard to imagine that somewhere just a few states away time was running out for a hungry diabetic woman.

"It's frustrating. It really is," Hendrick said with exasperation as he got up from his stool. "The traffic on here is so heavy and there are so many calls coming from all over the country."

Whenever disaster strikes, ham radio operators organize into networks with a control operator directing radio traffic, said David Dabay, technical director for the Virginia chapter of the American Radio Relay League. They get in touch with radio operators from the affected areas and relay messages to the outside world. Sometimes public safety agencies use radio frequencies usually reserved for amateurs when their own frequencies become overloaded.

Ordinarily radio enthusiasts, who tend to be late middle-aged men, chat about their equipment, the weather or whatever is on their minds, Hendrick said. But they're also trained to respond quickly should they find themselves in an emergency. They know how to hook up their radios when the power fails; they keep emergency kits handy; some have four-wheel-drive vehicles they can use to get patients to hospitals. Every year, usually in June, they gather to train in a simulated emergency, an event known as Field Day.

"It's recognized by both the Red Cross and the Salvation Army," said Dabay, of Roanoke. "There's a really strong community of involvement and generally they have the respect and reputation to not get in the way of law enforcement."

"There's a partnership there and actually in our building in downtown Roanoke we have a room designated for the radio guys, we call them," said Amy Whittaker, spokesperson for the Roanoke Valley chapter of the Red Cross. Sometimes the radio operators join rescue workers in disaster drills, she added.

After an exasperating afternoon Wednesday, Hendrick was finally able to get on the air. He heard of a family in Charlotte, N.C., trying to get news of a daughter, a student at Tulane University in New Orleans who hasn't been heard from in days. He repeated the information into his microphone addressing it to anybody who could hear him.

"We may get an answer, we may not," he said.

Information from: The Roanoke Times, <http://www.roanoketimes.com>

# Protect Your Radio Investment

## How To Keep Your Radio Equipment Clean And Ready For Action

*By Joseph Pasquini, N2NOU*

**From the May 2005 Edition of "Scanning USA" magazine**

<http://www.scanningusa.com>

**Reprinted with permission**

### Introduction

As with any electronic device that sees a lot of use, the buttons, controls and case of any radio are bound to become a little bit soiled and worn over time. Such "wear and tear" is typical and should be anticipated. Nevertheless, there are some steps you can take to help keep your radios in proper physical and electronic condition and ready for action whenever the need arises. By exercising some precautions and performing some general maintenance on your receivers regularly, you can help to prevent costly damage in terms of both lost equipment and lost monitoring opportunities.

### Cleaning Your Investment

Obviously, the first step towards keeping your radios in prime condition is to keep them clean. Before you attempt any sort of care or maintenance, it is important to turn off your equipment and disconnect it from any power source. Sure, this may seem tedious, but never disregard safety over convenience. The goal here is to protect both yourself as well as your radio from any harm. Before disengaging from any power, however, it is also a good idea to write down any programmed frequencies just as a precaution to guard against accidental memory loss. Since most receivers today are capable of being programmed via a computer, recording your data is no longer the challenge that it once was for many of us.

Dust, dirt and grime are the enemy. Go to your local computer or office supply store and buy a mini-vacuum cleaner or a can of compressed air. With these in hand and your radio unplugged, carefully commence your cleaning. Remove the controls from the radio and clean them with a neutral detergent and some warm water. The case itself can be cleaned with a cloth which has been lightly dampened with the same neutral detergent and warm water solution. Try to avoid using harsh cleaning chemicals as they are often too unforgiving on the plastics found on today's equipment. For light, infrequent cleaning, you can use some quality window cleaner sprayed onto a cotton cloth or quality paper towel. However, don't make this cleaning option a continual habit as the ammonia content can gradually wear down some plastics. In addition, you can also use isopropyl alcohol to clean - not to mention disinfect - the surface of your radio. To prevent scratches, never use any form of abrasives, solvents or petroleum based cleaners. They will damage your radio!

If you're using a commercial grade communications desktop receiver, the cooling fan inside can be a mixed blessing. On the plus side, the fan moves air over heat-generating components, helping to keep your system cool. However, the fans also concentrate dust both on the fan assembly itself and inside your radio case. This build up of dust can eventually restrict the air flow and result in heat buildup. In order to get the maximum benefit from the fans, you need to clean out the dust at least twice a year depending upon your operating conditions. The best way to clean the dust out of a fan assembly is to propel the dust out of the assembly. To do this, use a can of compressed air or better yet the reverse air flow of a shop vacuum. Reduction kits designed for cleaning tight spaces and which will fit most Shop Vacs units are available from your local home improvement store. Try to avoid the temptation to simply vacuum up the dust as you may inadvertently cause a transfer of static electricity between yourself and your radio.

### Watch The LCD Screen

Your radio's LCD screen requires some special attention. Some screens are more resistance to scratches than others, but nonetheless, be careful to not rub the LCD window when cleaning. While glass covered screens are generally more forgiving, even the slightest particle or imperfection on a cloth or paper towel is capable of scratching a comparatively less forgiving plastic screen. Window cleaner is especially handy for cleaning covered LCD displays. Make sure to gently wipe the surface clean. There are also some excellent LCD cleaning products and transparent screen protectors designed for the PDA and portable computer market segments that can also be used for cleaning and protecting radio displays. Handheld scanners such as the BC246T will especially benefit from using display protectors.

## Protect Your Radio Investment (Continued)

Even with the best of efforts and intentions, LCD displays inevitably get scratched over time. We all know it's eventually going to happen, but what can you do then? Some people who specialize in electronics restorations swear by their use of good 'ol fashioned toothpaste. Basically, toothpaste is capable of the same characteristics as a mild rubbing compound. If your screen is already scratched up and you decide to experiment with this method, make sure to use a white, non-gel based toothpaste. Don't use any of the fancy mint or whitening varieties. To begin, apply a small dab of the toothpaste to a clean cotton wrapped around one finger and polish out the scratch in small circular motions. Work slowly, use minimally, and press lightly to achieve best results. Just be careful not to apply too much pressure on the LCD screen when polishing. Too much polishing can actually make the situation worse. Be aware that if your LCD screen has an "anti-reflective" coating, the use of any abrasive compound to polish out a scratch may also polish out the coating as well and may leave a "shiny" spot on the screen as well.

Suffice it to say that if you are the least bit wary of trying this method, then don't!

### Environmental Concerns

You should operate and store your radio equipment only in normal temperature conditions. In addition, try to avoid using your receiver in any sort of high moisture environment. If your scanner does get wet, wipe it dry immediately. Temperature extremes can shorten the life of electronic devices, damage batteries and in extreme cases even cause plastic to warp. Therefore, try to avoid placing the radio in direct sunlight or near heating elements or vents. If your receiver is located near a window, use blinds or shades to keep direct sunlight off the device. Leave space behind and above your radio so air can freely circulate. Don't stack papers, disks, or anything else on top of your equipment which could restrict air flow.

Also, try to keep the radio away from dust and dirt whenever possible as they can cause premature wear and potentially cause problems with your radio's controls, buttons and interface ports. Restricting exposure may be fairly easy to do for a base installation, but mobile installations may be more taxing by their very nature.

If you have a series of radios mounted on top of your desk, perhaps inside some sort of shelving, cleaning can be especially difficult. One way to help avoid frequent dusting is the thoughtful use of plastic dust covers. Tenting a plastic sheet over your radios will go a long way to keeping them dust free, but make sure that the radios are OFF when covered! And, only use the plastic in situations where pets and children aren't at risk. Common sense should always prevail.

### Use A Carrying Case

Unlike commercial grade equipment, most portable scanners simply are not designed for heavy-duty field use. For handheld scanner users, probably the best way to protect your listening investment is to use a nylon or leather carrying case. Both fitted and generic cases, usually made from nylon or leather, are available for most makes and models. When possible, look for a case that provides at a minimum sufficient protection to both the corners of your radio as well as the display. Keyboard protection is an added bonus, but some radio enthusiasts do not like their scanner's keypad to be potentially blocked in anyway.

#### **There are typically two styles of cases: cut-to-fit and pouch.**

The cut-to-fit variety is designed with a specific radio unit in mind. Cutouts are incorporated into the design to accommodate power/charging and speaker and computer jacks. The area that covers the speaker normally has numerous holed cutouts as well to allow for audio pass-through. Fitted cases are designed to remain on the radio during routine operation. Therefore, removing the radio from the case can take a little effort.

The pouch variety basically acts as a sheath and is typically designed to accommodate a wide range of similarly shaped scanners. When you want to operate the radio, perhaps aside from monitoring it, you need to remove the radio from the case. But, since the case isn't fitted, the radio is easily removed.

Most cases today feature some variation of a belt clip system such as a standard belt clip, a swivel clip or a quick release swivel loop. Some of the heavier duty cases feature metal belt clips which will hold up much better over time and will go a long way to keeping your radio safe.



## Check Your Antenna And Power Systems

Don't forget to include your antenna system as part of your regular radio maintenance regimen. Both the solid-ness of the antenna mounting and the seal at its base are key factors in ensuring quality reception. By regularly inspecting your antenna system, you can detect and fix problems so as to ensure your monitoring station is always working properly. Mobile antenna installations should also be reviewed from time to time. A loose mounting can lead to excessive vibrations that damage the antenna and lead to expensive repair or replacement costs. Also check your grounding connections and weather seals.

While you're at it, you should also check your listening post's power connections. Make sure all connections are tight and all of your electrical wiring is in good condition. Any nicks or abrasions on any of the wires should be tended to immediately.

## Conclusion

Regular maintenance and care of your radios can keep them looking like new while simultaneously boosting your listening efficiency and enjoyment and at the end of the day saving you money. Even with the best of intentions, however, your radios will probably show some evidence of wear over time. You should expect this. Such wear is especially true for handheld scanners which are used outside of the home. The more it's used, the more it will wear. After all, what's the point of owning a radio if you're not going to use it (collecting being an exception to this axiom)? Nonetheless, you should still strive to keep your radios in good working order.

Of course, use your best judgment when deciding what methods are best for your specific situation. Ultimately, you and you alone are responsible for the maintenance of your own equipment. Use due diligence: do your homework, carefully test your cleaning methods and use common sense. After your work is done, you will be rewarded with a clean listening station that is a pleasure to operate.

# Fairview Dealer Lends Radio Operators An Assist

BY SCOTT WUERZ

News-Democrat

Communications equipment made in Fairview Heights is helping to reunite families torn apart by Hurricane Katrina. Bob Heil, owner of Heil Sound at 5800 N. Illinois St., donated 35 ham radio headsets to amateur radio operators who are sending messages in and out of hurricane-ravaged areas that have no other communications.

"People from all over the country have gone to Louisiana and Mississippi with their radios," Heil said. "This equipment gives them the ability to have their hands free to transcribe messages while they talk so they can do their job."

The call for the headsets, called the Traveler, came from the American Radio Relay League, which Heil described as an organization that helps to promote and organize amateur radio operation. One headset costs \$90, so the total donation amounted to about \$3,150.

"When you have 100 people in a room all trying to talk at once, it's nearly impossible," American Radio Relay League spokesman Allen Pitts said. "To have the right equipment makes all the difference in the world. You don't want to miss a message or misunderstand the information." Heil said more than 100 radio operators are in the area ravaged by the hurricane.

"All you need is a portable radio and an antenna," Heil said. "The antenna is just a piece of wire, so you can take a bow and arrow or a sling shot and shoot it high up into a tree and you're ready to go."

Heil said, while he hasn't traveled to the Gulf Coast, he has been able to help pass important messages to and from the devastated area.

A family from a New Orleans suburb that was visiting the metro-east when Katrina hit had spent days trying to find out whether their home was still there. Heil said he sent out a message received by a portable ham operator who was driving his pickup truck in the town in which the family lived.

"He told us that the house was still there and that it looked pretty good," Heil said. "But he said don't try to come down there because there was no water, no power and no gas. He said if you could get enough to get here that you would never get enough gas to get back out."

Heil has made his name making microphones for the likes of rock music legends The Who and The Eagles. But he said that he gets even more satisfaction out of using his ham radio skills in a disaster.

"Amateur radio operators are the backbone of communications whenever there is something like this," Heil said. "But they're under the radar and people don't even know they exist."

Contact reporter Scott Wuerz at [swuerz@bnd.com](mailto:swuerz@bnd.com) or 239-2626.

# **FRANKS FUNNIES**

## **Grateful Offer**

George Bush was out jogging one morning along the parkway when he tripped, fell over the bridge railing and landed in the creek below. Before the Secret Service guys could get to him, three kids, who were fishing, pulled him out of the water. He was so grateful he offered the kids whatever they wanted.

The first kid said, "I want to go to Disneyland." George said, "No problem. I'll take you there on Air Force One."

The second kid said, "I want a new pair of Nike Air Jordan's." George said, "I'll get them for you and even have Michael sign them!"

The third kid said, "I want a motorized wheelchair with a built-in TV and stereo headset!!" Bush is a little perplexed by this and says, "But, Son you don't look like you're handicapped."

The kid says, "I will be after my dad finds out I saved your butt from drowning."

## **Bad Food**

A Doctor was addressing a large audience: "The material we put into our stomachs is enough to have killed most of us sitting here, years ago. Red meat is awful. Soft drinks corrode your stomach lining. Chinese food is loaded with MSG. High fat diets can be disastrous, and none of us realizes the long-term harm caused by the germs in our drinking water. But there is one thing that is the most dangerous of all and we all have, or will, eat it.

Can anyone here tell me what food it is that causes the most grief and suffering for years after eating it?"

After several seconds of quiet, a 75-year-old man in the front row raised his hand, and softly said, "Wedding Cake."

## **Sunday Sermon**

A minister decided that a visual demonstration would add emphasis to his Sunday sermon.

Four worms were placed into four separate jars. The first worm was put into a container of alcohol. The second worm was put into a container of cigarette smoke. The third worm was put into a container of chocolate syrup. The fourth worm was put into a container of good clean soil.

At the conclusion of the sermon, the Minister reported the following results:

The first worm in alcohol - Dead.  
The second worm in cigarette smoke - Dead.  
Third worm in chocolate syrup - Dead.  
Fourth worm in good clean soil - Alive.

So the Minister asked the congregation - What can you learn from this demonstration?

A little old woman in the back quickly raised her hand and said, "As long as you drink, smoke and eat chocolate, you won't have worms!"

Don't you just love little old ladies????

## **The Curse**

An old man goes to the Wizard to ask him if he can remove a curse he has been living with for the last 40 years.

The Wizard says, "Maybe, but you will have to tell me the exact words that were used to put the curse on you.

The old man says, "I now pronounce you man and wife."

## **Rensselaer County ARES/RACES Nets Meet**

### **Each Wednesday Night at 7:30 PM on 145.17 Repeater**

Our Next Meeting will be at the Rensselaer County Public Safety Building on September 28, 2005 at 7:00 PM. We will have a Special Guest Presentation by Northeast Mobile Search and Rescue Display in the Parking Lot and then have our regular business meeting afterwards. All amateurs are invited



Also, Jim Noble our C.R.O is looking for volunteers for the Albany Regatta on the morning of September 24, 2005. If you can please set aside some time for this event please contact Jim **A.S.A.P.** at [K2ZP@NYCAP.RR.COM](mailto:K2ZP@NYCAP.RR.COM).

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# ***THE TARA NEWS***

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P.O. Box 1292

Troy, New York, 12181-1292



Visit us on the Internet

At <http://www.n2ty.org/>

**Regular monthly Meeting**

**Tuesday, September 20, 2005**

**7:30 p.m.**

**Green Island Municipal  
Center**

**Intersection of**

**George St. & Hudson Ave.**

**Green Island, New York**

**Ample Parking**

**Parking Lot on Hudson Ave.**

**Troy's Full Service Repeaters**  
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