

FEEDLINE

March 2000

Next Meeting - March 23 - CARC AUCTION! WATCH OUT EBAY!

FIELD DAY 2000 PREPARATIONS UNDER WAY

The official Field Day 2000 information packet now is available online in PDF format at the ARRL Contest Branch Web Site, <http://www.arrl.org/contests/announcements/fd/fdpack.pdf>. You can download this packet, which include the official rules and forms for FD 2000. To order the packet, send an SASE with three units of first-class postage affixed to Field Day Package, ARRL, 225 Main St, Newington, CT 06111.

A new bonus point category has been added for Field Day 2000. Groups can earn 100 bonus points by setting up a demonstration of a "nontraditional" amateur mode, including APRS, ATV or SSTV. The bonus does not include modes for which regular QSO credit already may be earned (such as AM or FM on phone or packet, PACTOR, AMTOR or PSK-31 on digital). QSOs made via the demo station do not count toward the Field Day score, and the transmitter does not count toward the transmitter total. There are no rule changes regarding the special Novice/Tech Plus station.

The Field Day participation pins also are back this year. To earn a pin, all you need to do is participate in Field Day--no minimum number of contacts to achieve or ARRL sections to work. The pin is for anyone active in helping to make Field Day happen--from the set-up crew and on-the-air operators to the covered-dish organizers and generator crew.

Field Day 2000 pins are available now for \$5 each. Send orders with payment to Field Day Pin Order, ARRL, 225 Main St, Newington, CT 06111. Early orders are recommended, since the 1999 pins sold out rapidly. Clubs and groups are encouraged to purchase their pins together. For more information on Field Day 2000, contact Dan Henderson, ARRL Contest Branch Manager, n1nd@arrl.org or 860-594-0232.--Dan Henderson, N1ND (Feedline Source: ARRL LETTER)

Guidelines for using portable generators at Field Day operations submitted by Ken, KF4OW

The Southern Peninsula Amateur Radio Klub, SPARK, upgraded its emergency power systems several years ago. Now 2 portable generators provide redundancy. AC is delivered to the station sites using 2 cables connected to the generator to balance its output circuits. System ground and lightning protection has been with a 6-ft ground rod at the generators.

At the Station Site, lights and fans, etc are connected the "mains" through Ground-Fault Detectors. Radios are connected to 12 v deep cycle batteries, which are maintained by 10 amp chargers connected to the mains. Computers are supplied with 120 vac through inverters from the battery. Thus, all sensitive electronic gear are protected from the many surges and spikes that characterize most portable generators. The battery readily soaks them up. Also, changing generators or even a generator failure, does not interrupt station operation. Only the lights and fans quit briefly. Each station has it own RF ground.

The system described "appears" safe and has been used for several years without incident. However, after experiencing a vicious rain storm with heavy lightning, re-thinking the electrical hazard possibilities revealed a huge overlooked fault.

System electrical Ground was established at the generator. Standing on wet ground or in a puddle, and coming in contact with a metal electrical distribution box could result is a disastrous shock. Many volts may develop

between the generator ground and the station site 75 to 150 feet distant! Or, imagine the large potential gradient developed by a nearby lightning strike!

The remedy is to use the generator ground for lightning protection only, and establish individual station grounds! Therefore, next Field Day the distribution cables should be "floated" by disconnecting the green grounding wire at the generator end and the station end as well. (Cables so modified should be clearly labeled "For Portable Generator Use ONLY; NOT to be connected to commercial power mains.)

A ground rod installed at the station should be connected to ground the on-site ac power distribution. Then, the wet ground situation will pose no electrical hazard to personnel.

Looking forward to every Amateur Radio club to have an excellent and safer Field Day. 73, Ken, KF4OW

Life Imitates Humor — submitted by Tom, KM4LB

Three guys were sitting at a bar on an island beach. The first one said that he retired on the insurance money after his factory burned down. The second said he retired on the insurance money after his jewelry store was robbed. The third said he retired after his business was destroyed by an earthquake. The first two guys looked at each other with a puzzled stare, and then one asked the third guy "How do you start an earthquake?"

In the fall of '99 I sent the battery packs for my ICOM W21AT off to be repacked with NIMH cells. The first chance I had to drain one of them down was at Band Day '99. I put that one in the charger and loaded the second one onto the my ht. Because the ht was the only radio I could get on the air under the new .39 architecture, I soon drained the second battery. I loaded the recharged first battery back onto the HT.

Up to this point, the HT was working ok, I shut it off and put it away. The next day when I turned the HT on, I was greeted with silence, a blank display, and an apparently dead battery pack. I switched to pack #2 which by this time had been in the charger overnight. More nothing. Tests with an external power supply and voltage checks on the battery packs pointed to the HT rather than a bad pack.

With Christmas just a few weeks away, I sent the ht and packs off to Paul (Amateur Radio Service) in Tucker, Georgia. I called him before leaving for "Christmas in Chicago" and he said that the HT was a total loss. The main board had literally "gone up in flames" with melted components, exploded capacitors, and scorch marks - all indications of a severe over-voltage condition.

We discussed the possibilities - maybe the Icom battery pack's internal charging and voltage regulator had failed while charging the NIMH cells - maybe the circuit had been by-passed altogether - maybe maybe maybe.

Since the battery packs were testing ok on output voltage, and since I would likely be looking to for someone to blame, we decided to ship the HT and battery packs to ICOM for a post-mortem. We would give them permission to open the packs and look for any hanky panky that could have caused the voltage spike. They would also be asked to comment on whether the charging circuit in the NICAD pack would properly recharge NIMH cells. In other words, "should the NICAD packs have been repacked with NIMH?"

And now, "the rest of the story."

A busy month passed and I realized I hadn't heard from ICOM or Paul, so I called him for a status report.

"How's the HT fix going Paul"

"Its a total loss."

"Well I know that Paul. We pretty well assumed as much right after you opened it up."

"No, I mean its a total loss...as in lost...as in lost in a warehouse fire at UPS. Instead of the usual chasing around I have to do tracking a package, UPS called me one day, confirmed what my "shipper-id" is, and then told me that the package containing your ht was lost in a fire at one of their warehouses. UPS said they are sending me claim forms. I will send you the check as soon as I get it."

"Just one question, Paul."

"Yeah?"

"How did you start the fire?"

Arson Humor: Then the thought came to me.... ..battery / HT / scorching / packing material / cardboard / rough-handling

"Say, Paul. If UPS calls you saying they traced the fire to your package and they would like a check for \$2 million dollars to rebuild their warehouse...

"Yeah?

"...I never heard of you."

Tom KM4LB

Post Script to Life Imitates Humor: I should send Paul the Alinco DR 150T I won at JARS a few years ago. It won't transmit tone to open .39 for me. Craige, N4RED and I tested decode on simplex between the Alinco and one of Craige's decode-capable rigs.

Sad part is the rig is out of warranty - could have been broken from the git-go. I programmed some Chicago area codes in last year, but never picked the mike up the whole time we were there. That's unsettling - think of all those features on your latest rig you didn't test while it was under warranty!

Maybe Paul can work his casualty magic on the Alinco.

KM4LB

AMATEUR RADIO SPECTRUM BILL INTRODUCED IN SENATE

The Amateur Radio Spectrum Protection Act bill now has supporting legislation in the US Senate. Idaho Sen Michael Crapo has introduced a bill that mirrors the house bill, HR 783. The Senate measure has been designated S 2183.

"In introducing this bill, we want to do something for Amateur Radio in return for all the good it has done the people of Idaho and elsewhere in the US by providing a reliable means of backup communication in times of emergency," said Crapo, who pledged to work hard to push this bill in the Senate.

Like the House version, the Senate bill, if enacted, would require the FCC to provide equivalent replacement spectrum should it ever be necessary to reallocate Amateur Radio frequencies for some other purpose. The new Senate legislation was introduced with bipartisan co-sponsorship.

So far, the House version of the spectrum bill has drawn bipartisan support, with 140 cosponsors to date, and has met with no opposition. However, Congress, and the all-important House and Senate Commerce committees, have been preoccupied with non-telecommunications matters and the Amateur Spectrum Protection Act has not yet moved out of committee. The new Senate bill provides additional motivation for the Congress to consider the legislation. (Feedline Source:ARRL LETTER)

ENFORCEMENT: HAMS CHARGED WITH ILLEGAL CB OPERATION

The FCC has warned three hams to stop using their amateur gear on 11 meter CB and 10 and half meter Freeband. This in warning letters James W. Walls, NC4JW, Jerry W. Cartner, K4JWC, and James R. Christie, KF4QWR. The February 24th communication from the FCC,s Riley Hollingsworth cites information that the three North Carolina licensees have been using ham gear on the Citizens Band and other frequencies and running a net to sell modified CB gear.

Hollingsworth warned that operating on those frequencies and their use of excessive power levels jeopardizes Walls, Cartner and Christie,s Amateur Radio licenses and could lead to criminal prosecution. The FCC gave the three until March 24th to respond. (FCC, RAIN)

(Feedline Source: NEWSLINE)

EBAY RADIO LAW: YOU CANT SELL ILLEGAL CB GEAR THERE

E-Bay, the giant Internet auction site has told a ham that he may not sell an amplifier capable of 11 meter operation using their site. And E-Bay has ended the bidding on the 2 to 55 MHz amplifier that the ham was trying to sell.

In its letter notifying the radio amateur that it was terminating the bidding, E-Bay officials said that it had been informed that the listing contained items which may be potentially illegal -- namely -- certain linear amplifiers. This says E-Bay is in violation of Section 95 point 411, subpart D of the FCC rules. E-Bay also told the ham that any future incidents of this nature could lead to the suspension of his account.

Whether or not the F-C-C brought the offer to the alleged illegal amplifier to the attention of E-Bay is unknown. Last fall the FCC,s Riley Hollingsworth did indicate that the Commission has a new interest in enforcing the Citizens Band Part 95 rules as vigorously as they are taking on violations in the world of Amateur Radio.

(Feedline Source: Newsline)

VK PACTOR BBS

Australia's Adelaide Hills Amateur Radio Society continues to operate a PACTOR Bulletin Board System on 75 and 15 meters. This, for use by any High Frequency station in Australia. The B-B-S operates under the Callsign VK5BAR, on dial frequencies 3 point 632 and 21 point 075 MHz, using Lower Sideband, with a "Mark" tone of 2095 Hertz. (Feedline Source: Q-News)

DX

In D-X, An interesting cooperative venture is taking place between Turkish and Bulgarian amateurs. TA3J and TA3YJ have invited LZ2CJ and LZ2FV to stay in Turkey for the week of March 22nd to the 29th. The Turkish visitors will operate on all bands from the station of TA3YJ in a village 1000 meters above sea level. Together with TA3D, the whole group will take part in the C-Q World-Wide contest using the special callsign YM3LZ. (Feedline Source: This Is DX)

The Andorran Radioamateur Union is celebrating its 20th anniversary with the creation of a award which will be given to any radio amateur that makes at least one contact with each of the special C-34, C-35 and C-36 prefixes. There are also two wild card stations, C37URA and C37RC, each of which counts as a credit for any one of the three prefixes. All modes and all bands may be used between the now and the 31st of March. To obtain the award, simply send a list of contacts with these stations, no later than the 30th of September 2000, to PO Box 1150, Andorra la Vella, Andorra. Best of all? this award is totally free. (Feedline Source: OPDX)

Listen to AR NEWS While Puttering Around the Shack

RAIN, the Radio Amateur Information Network can be found at www.rainreport.com. Hap Holly, KC9RP is the Network Manager. Just click on the current or one of the archive shows available in streaming Real Audio. List of shows can be found at <http://www.rrsta.com/rain/index.html>. Shows run 15-20 minutes. KM4LB

Feedline

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