

WARC Newsletter

The Monthly Newsletter of the Wantagh Amateur Radio Club

March 2004

Meeting Notice: The next monthly meeting of the Wantagh Amateur Radio Club will be held at 8:00 P.M. on Friday, March 12th, at the Wantagh Public Library.

Minutes of the February 13th General Meeting

WARC GENERAL MEETING MINUTES – February 13th, 2004.

Vic, K2IY, President, opened the meeting at 8:12pm P.M..

Officers present:

President: Vic, K2IY
Secretary: Bill, N2RRX
Treasurer: Chris, KC2FBW
Directors: Vince, KD2EP
Frank, N2RSO

January minutes were accepted as read by the Secretary.

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@ SYMBOL ADDED TO MORSE CODE

The Associated Press

Morse code is entering the 21st century -- or at least the late 20th.

The 160-year-old communication system now has a new character to denote the "@" symbol used in e-mail addresses.

In December, the International telecommunications Union, which oversees the entire frequency spectrum, from amateur radio to satellites, voted to add the new character.

The new sign, which will be known as a "commat," consists of the signals for "A" (dot-dash) and "C" (dash-dot-dash-dot), with no space between them.

The new sign is the first in at least several decades, and possibly much longer. Among ITU officials and Morse code aficionados, no one could remember any other addition.

"It's a pretty big deal," said Paul Rinaldo, chief technical officer for the American Radio Relay League, the national association for amateur radio operators. "There certainly hasn't been any change since before World War II."

The change will allow ham radio operators to exchange e-mails more easily. That is because -- in

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Treasurer's Report: Our current balance is \$565.14.

DX Report:

Sid K2LJH reported some activity on 20 meters, but conditions in general are poor. He reminded us that the "Schools on the Air" contest is being held this weekend. The Schools are looking for contacts.

HRU 2004 was a great success. There was an excellent presentation on Broadband over Power Lines. One person stopped by our table and was invited to attend tonight's meeting. He did not come.

Old Business:

Vic K2IY began a follow up on last month's Idea Chart.

Sid K2LJH has contacted Diane Ortiz about Public Relations. She is checking her calendar for March or April and will let him know. He also contacted George Tranos. George would like to make a presentation dealing with the ARRL instead of DXpeditions. Sid will advise Vic of dates.

Ralph WP4KO was absent so there was no report on a demo at the library.

Vic has not yet contacted the Chamber of Commerce relative to the parade and the Fall exhibition.

Vic K2IY, Frank N2RSO, and Jack KI2M are the Field Day Committee members.

Frank N2RSO has not yet found an attorney to talk about incorporating as a tax-exempt organization.

Meeting was adjourned at 9:00 PM. We then enjoyed conversation with our coffee and donuts.

Respectfully Submitted by
Bill N2RRX, Secretary ■

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irony of the digital age -- they often use Morse to initiate conversations over the Internet.

"People trade their e-mail addresses a lot," said Nick Yocanovich, a Morse code enthusiast who lives in Arnold, Md.

Morse code uses two audible electrical signals -- short "dots" and slightly longer "dashes" -- to form letters, numbers and punctuation marks. Created in the 1830s by Samuel F.B. Morse, who invented the telegraph, the electronic signaling system spread across the world, and until the past few decades, it was used widely by the public, industry and government.

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"It was the beginning of the Information Age," said Gary Fowlie, Chief of Media Relations and Public Information for the ITU, which has its headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland.

When Morse died in 1872, more than 650,000 miles of telegraph wire circled the globe. By the early 20th century, Morse messages were being sent wirelessly, via radio.

Perhaps the most famous Morse communication is the international distress signal S-O-S. It consists of three dots, three dashes, and three more dots.

But with the proliferation of digital communications technologies such as cell phones, satellites and the Internet, Morse code has lost its pre-eminent place in global communications. "There's really no reason to use it anymore," said Robert Colburn, research coordinator for the History Center of the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers.

Today it's largely the province of ham radio operators, including 700,000 in the United States. While not all of them communicate regularly in Morse, almost all are familiar with it.

Some ham operators wouldn't mind more changes to spice up the language. While Morse code has a period, a question mark, and even a semicolon, it offers no simple way to articulate excitement.

"I was hoping they'd add a character for the exclamation point," said Yocanovich, who is active in the International Morse Preservation Society. "It expresses an emotion that's difficult to get across any other way."

Hospitals turn to shortwave radio

By SEAN O'SULLIVAN
Staff reporter, The Delaware NewsJournal
03/06/2004



Christiana Care emergency coordinator John DiGiovanni (seated) and assistant Scott Hall operate shortwave radios.

To prepare for potential terrorist threats and other emergencies, Christiana Care has turned to technology from the dawn of the 20th century.

The health-care system is using shortwave radio, also known as ham radio, as an alternative communication system.

"If our usual routes of communication are damaged or inoperable for any reason, the amateur radio offers a backup method for maintaining contact with emergency management agencies, public health and other hospitals," said Dr. Robert A. Rosenbaum, chairman of the emergency management committee for Christiana Care.

Shortwave refers to radio signals 30 megahertz and below that have been popular with radio hobbyists for

decades. The systems are in place at Christiana Hospital and Wilmington Hospital.

Interest in amateur radio as an emergency communication system has surged since the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, experts said. New York City's communication system, including police and fire radios, and land-line and cell phones, was nearly shut down by the loss of a transmitter on the World Trade Center and the volume of calls that followed.

That has given new life to a technology many thought would be eclipsed by e-mail and cell phones.

John DiGiovanni, a Christiana Care employee and licensed ham radio operator, proposed they install the system. He said he has been fascinated by ham radio since he was a child. During Hurricane Andrew, DiGiovanni said he helped pass a message from a woman in a Red Cross shelter in Florida to relatives in Lancaster, Pa., to let them know she was OK.

"I have a radio room in my basement. When I'm not doing things for Christiana Care, I talk to people all over the world. I talk to people in countries you've never heard of, on remote islands and people just driving back from work," he said.

Ross Merlin, telecommunications manager with the Federal Emergency Management Agency, said the agency recommends amateur radio because it is a cheap, dependable, low-tech backup to modern communication systems.

A December report for the U.S. Department of Homeland Security said shortwave radio is an effective alternative. During a terrorism disaster drill involving 64 hospitals in Illinois, federal officials found the phone system was nearly overwhelmed by the demand for voice and data transmission and failed in at least one hospital. Ham radio was the only way one hospital was able to communicate.

The national association for amateur radio, AARL, said its online training classes for emergency use of amateur radio have been filled to capacity, with up to 1,800 people a year completing the course since 2001.

Nationally, there are more than 637,400-licensed amateur radio operators, including nearly 1,300 in Delaware, spokesman Dan Miller said.

More than 20 amateur radio operators in the region have volunteered to be part of Christiana Amateur Radio Emergency Service. The hospital is looking for more volunteers. ■

The WARC Newsletter, an official publication of The Wantagh Amateur Radio Club, is edited and published monthly by Frank Porcaro, N2RSO.

The Wantagh Amateur Radio Club meets on the second Friday of each month at the Wantagh Public Library. Directions to the library, along with notices of meeting changes, invited speakers, demonstrations, etc. can be found at the club's website, <http://www.qsl.net/w2va/home.htm>. Visitors, both hams and other persons interested in amateur radio, are invited to attend. Coffee tea and doughnuts usually are served after the business meeting and before any presentations from guest speakers.

Frank Porcaro. N2RSO. Editor