Maryland-DC
Section Wide Winlink Test

Description

The MDC Section-Wide Winlink Check-In is a monthly Amateur Radio digital net sponsored by the Maryland-DC Section of the ARRL where check-ins are accomplished using the Winlink (Global Email via amateur radio) system. All amateurs are welcome to check in via any Winlink mode.

Purpose

The primary purpose of this Check-In is to encourage the regular use of Winlink among amateur radio operators in and around the MDC Section. All amateurs in and around the Mid-Atlantic area are welcome to check in. The MDC Section encourages the use of Winlink in an EmComm environment and therefore its use by all amateur radio operators.

During an incident radio operators from the MDC Section will most likely need to contact operators outside the section or even the division. Participation from these areas will become a valuable resource and are encouraged to use Winlink regularly.

Participation

Check-ins may be submitted anytime between 0000 and 2359 (ET) on the second Tuesday of each Month with the use of Winlink Express Software available on the Winlink.org site. Visit the FTP link of https://downloads.winlink.org/User%20Programs/. Simply download the file entitled "Winlink_Express_install_1-5-26-0.zip" file. The last few numerics indicate the current version number so this changes often. This file is always the last stable non-beta version. This program does not make entries in your system files, it simply extracts all of its files so it can be installed on any drive including your internal hard drive, USB drives, external hard drives, additional partitions on your hard drives, etc. Choose the default location unless you have a specific need for running different instances of Winlink.

Messages may be sent via _**any**_ session type but **RF truly tests the system**. Learning the Winlink software is an important step in using Winlink in an EmComm environment. Sending check-in's via Telnet (using your current internet connection with no additional hardware) allows new users to learn the software without the purchase of any additional equipment other than their computer. If you have RF capabilities please use it.

Users sending check-in's via RF will be accessing a RMS station (Remote Mail Server) Winlink gateway. A map of these stations can be viewed at www.winlink.org/RMSchannels. At the top of the map select the "Packet" radio button to see the 2m/70cm stations near you. Selecting another mode will provide a map of the other stations running the selected protocol.

Messages & Form Completion

All must send their check-in to the Winlink Tactical Address **MDCASEC**. To encourage the use of Winlink's Forms, check-in's can be sent using any of Winlink Forms (open in your default browser for completion, one example below) where the format can be followed or simply the default message window but all must use the below standard format to allow easy tabulation of data:

To: MDCASEC
Subject: MDC Section Check-In
Message body:
callsign, first name, city or town, county, state and session type and protocol used to send the message.
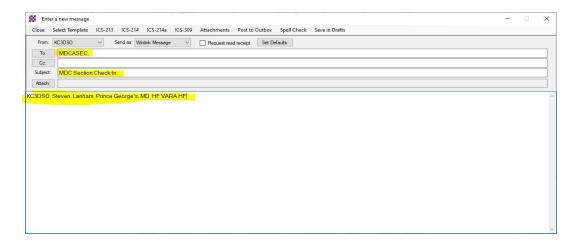
Message body example:
KC3DSO, Steven, Lanham, Prince George's, MD (HF VARA)

Session type examples are "HF VARA," "HF Winmor," "HF Pactor", "VHF Packet," VHF VARA," "Telnet," etc. Most check-in's will be "Telnet" or "VHF Packet."
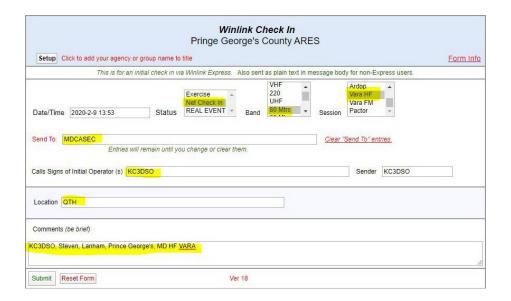
The easiest way to check-in is to send using the default New Message Window (no form).

Top Menu select Message->New Message. The new message window opens then simply complete as shown above, then from the top menu select "Post to Outbox" then make your connection.

Using the Winlink Check In form built into Winlink

Top Menu select "Message->New Message->Select Template (unless you have this form saved as one of your favorites). This will display a directory tree of template options. Selected "+" to the left of "Standard Templates (Version 1.0.113.0)." This version changes often as updates are done. Then the "+" sign to the left of "GENERAL forms." Then click Winlink Check In.txt which is at the bottom. Sometimes this directory tree changes as forms are added/changed.

Setup is if you want to enter a agency/group name, Sender is automatically filled in for you, balance you complete. Click in the "Date/Time" block at add the current date/time from your computer. Status will be "Net Check In," "Band" will be whatever applies (if Telnet choose "-N/A-", Session will be "Packet" or "Telnet" for most users. Choose what applies to the session type you are using for the submission. "Send To" will be the MDC ASEC's tactical callsign of MDCASEC. "Callsigns of Initial Operator" will be the callsign of the operator checking in. The "Sender" is the default Winlink account you are logged in under for this session. "Location" can be left blank if at your QTH as I will be using the address of your call for mapping. If other location enter the data. "Comments" will be the same Message Body like above. This must be exact for recording purposes. Click submit and Winlink will put the data in your message window for you to post to the Outbox.

Peer-to-Peer Sessions

Peer-to-Peer (P2P) sessions on VHF, UHF and HF will be added in the future as in a true emergency we will most likely only have P2P operations available. P2P sessions using various modes and bands will allow Winlink users in the Mid-Atlantic area to be ready for an incident. Minor changes are needed when operating a P2P session vs a Winlink (using RMS gatesways) session which need to be practiced.

Net Results, Statistics & Questions

A brief message is distributed via Winlink to the current week's participants acknowledging their check-ins, providing links to maps which show the locations of the Mid-Atlantic Check-in's, a check in roster, and additional information. Stations are encouraged to send multiple check-in messages exercising different protocols. Questions can be sent to Steven Keller, KC3DSO, MDC ASEC via Winlink to mdcasec@winlink.org or kc3dso@gmail.com.