

WINLINK EMAIL OPERATIONS WITHOUT WINLINK SOFTWARE

by Gordon Gibby KX4Z
April 2017

Did you know there is a way to do simple email reception and sending using the WINLINK system without even needing Windows-based WINLINK EXPRESS? All you need is a way to reach a gateway that can give you CMS access. That could be done over a radio using any terminal-type packet software (e.g., UZ7HO's EASYTERM) or if you know a telnet entry point for a favorite linbpq gateway, you could do it using SSH or other access allowed by that gateway.

Before beginning, you'll want to “number off” the letters of your password, because the password challenge method used by WINLINK doesn't actually have you just send your password in clear text, rather they ask you to include certain letters from your password in a 6-character response. For example, WINLINK may ask for the 1st, 5th, and 3rd characters in your password, embedded in any order into a 6-character response.

Let's say your password is PASSWORD. Here we number that off:

PASSWORD
12345678

Now go obtain keyboard type access to a CMS gateway and request access:

```
rms  
Trying perth.winlink.org  
*** KX4Z Connected to CMS  
[WL2K-3.2-B2FWIHJMS]  
;PQ: 63293588  
Perth CMS via KX4Z-10 >
```

Now type LM (a request to “list all mail”) (or a ?) and you'll be given a password challenge:

```
lm  
Login [153]:  
Perth CMS via KX4Z-10 >
```

The system wants you to reply with a 6-character response that includes the 1st, 5th, and 3rd characters of your password. They don't even have to be in order, but you have to add in 3 other characters to make it be a six character response. See how they are protecting your password, since you are conversing “in the clear”?

You respond for the example password above,

ABCPWS

where ABC are filler characters that could have gone at the end or elsewhere, and the P, W, S are the 1st, 5th, and 3rd characters of your actual password. Another valid response would have been XPSWYZ.

Assuming all goes well, you'll be greeted with some positive response :

```
Hello KX4Z
Perth CMS via KX4Z-10 >
```

From here, you can use commands to read, mark-as-read, etc. WINLINK tracks messages with a MESSAGE-ID number.

LM list all messages
R <MESSAGE-ID> read a particular message
RM read all messages (so you don't have to type in the message id's
K <MESSAGE-ID> mark that message as read
KM mark all messages as read; so you don't have to type in the message id's
B disconnect

Since typing long message ID's isn't a lot of fun, you're likely to read ALL your messages (RM) and then mark ALL of them as read (KM) unless you really have to look at just one. I don't know how to find your "sent" messages with these commands yet.

How do you send a message? Easy 3-step progress

SP <destination> is a command that you want to send an email to one or more addresses. The addresses can be WINLINK call signs (e.g. W4AAA) or internet email addresses (e.g., SMTP:bestfriend@gmail.com but don't forget the SMTP: including the colon. Separate more than one addressee either with colons or commas. Examples: **SP W4AAA**, **SMTP:bestfriend@gmail.com, W4BBB**

The system will next ask you for a subject line.

Finally it will ask you for the body of the text and tell you to put **/EX** on a separate line at the end. Your message body can have carriage returns, can be many lines long. Just put **/EX** on a separate line at the end and that will terminate your message to be sent. (Note: PuTTY for Windows will not allow you to easily copy and paste; you're probably going to actually have to TYPE the message you want to send.)

I've used this system several times now and it works amazingly well. I don't know additional commands, nor how to send attachments, and note that this does not compress or obscure your message in any way, so it is "in the clear" security-wise. But you're presumably doing this over packet or ssh, so there is some security there also.

If you have additional questions, read the N4SER page at: <http://n4ser.org/2016/winlink-terminal->

[program/](#)

Cheers!

Gordon Gibby KX4Z