



Zero Beat

A Publication of the
Hampden County Radio Association
[HTTP://WWW.HCRA.ORG](http://www.hcra.org)

JANUARY 2007



John Ellsworth From the Vintage Radio Museum of CT

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Friday, January 5th at 7:30pm is the date for the HCRA Meeting.



Our guest speaker is John Ellsworth from the Vintage Radio Museum in CT.



John always bring fascinating stories and interesting radios to our meetings.

It's been a few years since John was here last. I'm sure he has lots to share with us. See you there!



Straight Key Night—Jan 1, 2007

Hello All, I definitely plan on putting in some time with my E.F. Johnson Speed-X straight key. During SKN much of the conversation will be about the keys being used. I've had many straight keys and bugs over the years, but I'll be using the Speed-X key I bought as a Novice and used

for my first QSO in 1964. High-speed sending is NOT a requirement during SKN and you will find many QSOs going on at 5 to 10 wpm, so it's really a night for everyone that enjoys cw.



I hope you will join the fun New Years Eve. See you on 40 meters!
73,
George, KC1V
Somers, CT

For more info see:
<http://www.arrl.org/contests/rules/2007/skn.html>

Meeting Location:

Meetings are held at the Feeding Hills Congregational Church, 21 North Westfield Street, Feeding Hills, MA 01030.

The church is located right next to a Dunkin Donuts and across from a gas station.

Parking is in back of the church. Access is HP accessible.

Talk-in is available on the 146.94 repeater.

HCRA Board Meeting

December 14, 2006

Held at corporate boardroom of Rocky's ACE Hardware, Springfield, MA.

Members present: John KI1A, Dave AA1YW, Greg N1AEH, George KC1V, Jim KB1JVF, Jim KK1W, Eric KB1JVI, Larry WB1DBY, John N1JIO and Ed KB1NWH Holiday Party Chairman.

President John, KI1A:

The Holiday Party was very successful with good attendance. The Board expressed its thanks to Ed, KB1NWH, for a job well done. KI1A had samples of the proposed HCRA coffee mugs. WB1DBY moved that HCRA purchase 250 mugs, motion was seconded by AA1YW and passed by voice vote. KI1A will arrange the purchase. KI1A reported that the orders for the HCRA ware raffle prizes have been placed.

Vice President Dave, AA1YW:

The raffle prizes are all set for the January meeting.

Treasurer Greg, N1AEH:

Greg reported that the current club balance is \$4530. A deposit of \$290 was made for December.

Secretary George, KC1V:

Nothing to report this month: Received 4 Membership renewal forms from N1AEH for recording.

At Large Jim, KB1JVF:

Nothing to report this month.

Program Jim, KK1W:

January speaker is confirmed but the February speaker is still not confirmed.

Technical John, N1JIO:

Two people from the last Tech Class passed the Technician Class exam. Nobel Hospital and the German Club are being considered as sites for a

spring General Class.

Membership Eric, KB1JVI:

No one took exams at the last VE session.

Zero Beat Editor Larry, WB1DBY:

The deadline for the next ZB is the December 20, as usual.

Old Business:

There were 9 or 10 Club members active during the 10-meter contest this month.

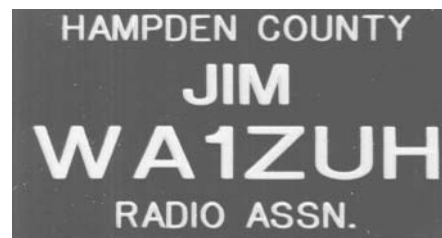
New Business:

Field Day: KB1JVF, Field Day Chairman, has obtained the permit from the Town of Granby for the park for Field Day weekend.

Board of Directors Meeting: The next board meeting will be held on January 11 at Rocky's.

Respectfully submitted,
George Collins, KC1V, Secretary.

Wear it Proudly!
HCRA Name Badges



Only \$6.00. Available for order at any club meeting, or call or drop an email for immediate service!
Show the world you belong to the oldest club in the Pioneer Valley.

Jim, WA1ZUH: jmullen@rockys.com or (413) 245-3228

Dr. DX

Mike DeChristopher, K1KAA



January dawns warm, sunny, and completely unseasonable. Many people would be enjoying this...as for we in the ski industry, we can only hope and pray. If there is a good side, this warm weather will give me plenty of time to throw some new wires up!

In the mean time, we face a gigantic change as radio amateurs. Over the next year, our HF operations will nearly double...and for the first time in a *long* time, propagation has absolutely nothing to do with it. No, this change happens to be in the licensing vicinity.

For those of you who haven't heard, the FCC finally dropped the controversial element 1 Morse code exam required for upgrade to general class. It came suddenly and surprisingly - to some of us. To others, it was much-needed relief for a dead HF spectrum. To *still* others, it was the removal of an obstacle blocking their ladder climb through the license classes.

Say what you will, it has already happened. Despite that, there will still be arguments from either side. Some will claim that the code "keeps the riff-raff off the air". I'm not sure about that, because the "riff-raff" is already on HF (in some occasions). The largest point of contention is the use of Morse code in emergency situations. Rick Lindquist, N1RL, said, "With the surfeit of other, more efficient modes now available to today's Amateur Radio operators, Morse is no longer really even a part of the arsenal."

After reading the arguments and weighing them, as a 5wpm "graduate", if you will, my own opinion is not yet clearly formed. Although, I do believe one thing. I do believe that you *will* find me sitting on 15m, pounding CQ. I do believe that others, like me, will share the same sentiment. Will we last forever? No, of course not. At some point, this is bound to end. Changes in technology are the very spirit of amateur radio! Does it hurt us too deeply to entertain that maybe - just maybe - Morse code was an outdated member of our fraternity?

I supported code with a passion for many years. Since I sat down as a 12-year old and began listening to Gordon West's voice permeate my old computer speakers, I appreciated element one. After I passed, I enjoyed it. Last night, I worked Japan on 15m CW. There is nothing like the feeling of accomplishment after you work a tough one using only your old straight key. However, I am starting to see the other side. Perhaps a better idea would be to replace the element one code exam with something more relevant to today's operator.

I'm not completely "down with code" yet, though. I still think that knowing code is a valuable skill to any ham, especially if they plan on working CQWW CW! I also think that some of the new upgrades, though not required to learn Morse code, will at some point - if only for their own self-justification. I am not one to say that these new general class (and higher) licensees are "no-code generals" and therefore insufficient operators. This is a *faux pas* we have to avoid, because it is, for the most part, imaginary. Passing element one does not grant you operating skills far and beyond that of the mere technician, and it never has!

In the wake of these changes, I expect the bands this month to be active with chatter. You will hear stations defending their own points-of-view, and other stations gearing up to deal with these "no-code generals". Try to keep everything in perspective, and, if you must, come and find me in the 15m CW portion.

Continues on next page

Start	End	Entity	Callsign	QSL via	Notes
2007 Jan0 1	2007 Jan0 9	Leichtenstein	HB0	DL2OB O	By DL2OBO; focus on 160-30m, CW; some SSB + perhaps RTTY PSK
2007 Jan0 2	2007 Jan0 8	Sovereign Military Order of Malta	1A4A	IZ4DPV	By IZ4AKS IZ4DPV I4UFH IK4UPB IW0DJB; 160-2m; SSB CW RTTY; focus on low bands
2007 Jan0 3	2007 Jan0 9	Bahamas	C6ARI	DL3OC H	By DL3OCH DL2JRM DL5SE DL5YWM fm Elbow Cay (NA-219, BAH-018); 160-10m; CW SSB; also EME on 70 & 23cm
2007 Jan0 3	2007 Jan1 0	Senegal	6W	PA3GIO	By PA3GIO as PA3GIO/6W fm Somone (6W7RV's QTH); 160-10m; SSB; 100w
2007 Jan0 3	2007 Feb0 3	Niger	5U5U	See Info	By 5U5U; all bands; SSB; QSL: Christian Saint-Arroman, Chemin de Mousteguy, F-64990 Urcuit, France
2007 Jan0 4	2007 Jan2 8	Djibouti	J2OSA	ON7SA T	By ON7SAT; 40 20 15 10m; SSB; spare time operation
2007 Jan0 6	2007 Jan1 2	Dominican Republic	HI3	LotW	By W1BYH; all bands, focus on WARC; focus on RTTY PSK31; QSL also OK via Buro or direct; QRV for ARRL RTTY Roundup
2007 Jan0 6	2007 Jan2 0	Burkina Faso	XT2C	F9IE	By N6OX N2WB F2JD F2VX F5LMJ F5TVG OE8KDK F9IE F4AJQ F8BJI; 160-6m; CW SSB RTTY PSK31/63 SSTV, perhaps WSJT on 6m; QSL OK via REF Buro or direct
2007 Jan0 7	2007 Jan3 0	Cambodia	XU7AC Y	K2NJ	By NO2R fm Sihanoukville; focus on lowbands, CW SSB; W2EN pilot stn
2007 Jan0 7	2007 Feb1 1	Tunisia	3V8SS		By GM0DHZ; 80-10m, perhaps 160m; CW SSB; holiday style operation
2007 Jan0 8	2007 Jan2 1	Taiwan	BX0ZR	W8UVZ	By N8BJQ W8UVZ W9ZR + BV ops; all bands, focus on 160 80m; vertical, Beverages; amplifier; fm quiet location
2007 Jan0 9	2007 Jan1 1	Fiji	3D2	JA7GAX Direct	By JA7GAX fm OC-016
2007 Jan1 0	2007 Jan1 6	Bangladesh	S21XA	EA3BT	By EA3BT EA3WL EA2PA EA5FX EA8CAC; 160-6m; SSB CW RTTY; 3 stations; QSL OK via Buro or direct
2007 Jan1 5	2007 Jan2 5	Lakshadweep Islands	VU7RG	See Info	By a 50 member NIAR multinational team; all bands and modes; QSL: Region 1 via GDXF, Region 2 via N200, Region 3 via JA3UB
2007 Jan1 8	2007 Jan2 9	Tanzania	5H1Z	F6AML	By F6AML (F6KOP Team member) fm Zanzibar Is (AF-032); 80-10m; SSB CW; 400w; verticals; focus on NA + Asia; QSL OK via Buro or direct (SAE + 1 IRC or US\$1 for EU, US\$2 for others)
2007 Jan2 1	2007 Feb0 2	Maldives	8Q7AK	G7COD	By G7COD fm Embudu Is (AS-013); 30-12m; mainly SSB, some CW; QSL OK via Buro or direct, but all returns will be via Buro

Remote Desktopting

The Interface

by Johnny, KI1A

Hello again everyone!

Remember a couple of months ago, I wrote an article called "Remote Desktopting"? Well, this month we're going to start the short series on the subject.

As you might recall, I described a setup where you could control your home station from anywhere that you have a computer with internet access, speakers and a microphone.

In order to do this, you'll need the following: A rig at home that can be PC controlled, a PC dedicated to that rig, and an interface (to connect the PC soundcard to the rig).

Now, if you already have a soundcard interface (the same one you use for PSK31, etc.), this first article in the series may not apply to you. But, if you don't already have one of those soundcard interfaces and would rather build your own, instead of buying one, read on.

Fig.1 shows a schematic for a pretty simple interface. The whole purpose of this device is to connect the radio's speaker output and microphone input to the PC's soundcard "in's" and "out's". The tricky part about doing this is keeping the rig and PC electrically isolated from each other. Otherwise, you will most likely end up a nasty hum problem.

Now, let's go over the circuit. Referring again to Fig.1, the PC speaker output is ultimately fed to T1 (a 1:1 isolation transformer) through C2/C3 & VR1. C2 and C3 are used as DC blocking caps and as an easy way to combine the stereo output of the soundcard into a mono signal for the rig's mic input. C1 is optional, really. It's just there to help keep any RF out of the audio. VR1 of course, is for tweaking the audio level being fed into the rig.

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SW1 is also optional. It's just there to help keep you from moving cables every time you want to switch modes. Otherwise, the output of T1 can be connected directly to radio's mic input.

The other half of the circuit, built around T2, is pretty much the same thing (the signal is just flowing in the other direction). VR2 adjusts the level coming from the rig speaker output (or if you're lucky, your rig might have a line-level output on your rig you can use instead). The lowered level from VR2 is feed directly to one side of T2. The output of T2 is then fed through C4 & C5 (again, to block DC) and then to the soundcard's stereo input.

SW2 is just another option I added in there to simplify mode changes, but not necessary. Don't be afraid to experiment with options that suit your situation.

When choosing an enclosure, I recommend that you use a metal one for RF and hum shielding. Just remember that the "PC out to Rig in" connections must not make any contact with the rest of the circuit.

Questions, Comments, and Suggestions
Can Be Directed To:

HCRA OFFICERS

President

Johnny Lenville, K1IA
(413) 543-9367 K1IA@comcast.net

Vice-President

Dave Cain, AA1YW
(413) 569-6801 AA1YW@arrl.net

Treasurer

Greg Stoddard, N1AEH
(860) 668-5143 gstoddard@rcn.com

Secretary

George Collins, KC1V
(860) 749-2701 gjcollins@cox.net

HCRA DIRECTORS

At Large

Jim Harrington, KB1JVF
(413) 862-3230 jldhjr@verizon.net

Program

Jim Mullen, KK1W
(413) 245-3228 jmullen@rockys.com

Membership

Eric Richardson, KB1JVI
(413) 283-6351 kb1jvi@arrl.net

Zero Beat

Larry Krainson, WB1DBY
(413) 567-3505 wb1dby@comcast.net

Technical

John Stark, N1JIO
(413) 747-8169 n1jio@earthlink.net

STATION TRUSTEES

WINY Trustee

Don Johnson, W1UPH
(413) 566-3560 w1uph@arrl.net

WB1Z Trustee

Jim Mullen, KK1W
(413) 245-3228 jmullen@rockys.com

IRLP Trustee

John Pise, Kx1x
(413) 532-7474 kx1x@arrl.net

10m Contest Comments

Another 10-meter contest is over. Aside from coming down with a bug that wiped me out Friday night and all of Saturday it was a great contest. Ed, KB1NWH, stopped by this afternoon and between the two of us, we made 100 mixed Qs for a total score of 13,800 some point. Ed handled most of the SSB contacts, with me as control op, and I got some (needed) practice on cw. Missed some of the club members that I'm sure were on, but worked more CT stations than in the past. In fact, early on, the log looked like it could have been a 2-meter simplex contest! But then the band opened up and we had QSOs coast to coast along with a hand full of DX. And, best of all, it was a lot of fun.

73, George, KC1V

Amen, George. The 160-Meter Contest has been my primary December operating event for years, but I took a few hours to try my hand at the 10-Meter Contest this weekend, and it was really a lot of fun!

Even though I'm not especially well-equipped for 10 (no beams, just a couple of multiband dipoles) and didn't run the amp (too much RFI!), I put somewhat more than 12,000 points in the log Sunday afternoon. The real thrillers were contacts like these:

QSO: 28000 CW 2006-12-10 1947 N1RL	599 MA	ZL1BYZ	599 486
QSO: 28000 CW 2006-12-10 2000 N1RL	599 MA	KF6T	599 CA
QSO: 28000 CW 2006-12-10 2003 N1RL	599 MA	H7A	599 195
QSO: 28000 CW 2006-12-10 2006 N1RL	599 MA	LT7W	599 1042
QSO: 28000 CW 2006-12-10 2014 N1RL	599 MA	W7RN	599 NV
QSO: 28000 CW 2006-12-10 2014 N1RL	599 MA	VP5D	599 449

The ZL1 was loud and came back on the first call! Heard a ZL4 too, but I didn't try to work him. Also did a bit of SSB operating and even picked up a few good ones by calling CQ. Of course, as George says, lots of CT stations (and MA too), but I also worked RI, which was a mini coup in itself. In all, a total of 80 Qs on both modes. Will definitely make a bigger effort next year, time permitting.

73, Rick, N1RL

HCRA Ham Shacks

The KK1W Shack



The basic station consists of an Icom IC-756PROII feeding a SteppIR 3E beam for 20 thru 6 meters and a trap dipole for 80/40/30 meters. A Heil microphone and Schurr key round out the communication part of the rig. Above the Icom is a Yaesu FT-2600M, on 24/7 broadcasting weather info into the packet world via a Peet Brothers U2100 weather station, interfaced with Wxtrak. The rest of the equipment in that stack is for rotor and antenna control.

A basic PC with dual monitors handles the logging and PSK functions for the station. A couple of HT's and a portable SW receiver round out the radio gear.

Jim, KK1W

Each month we showcase ham shacks from HCRA members. If you would like to submit your shack, please do the following: take a digital picture so you or someone you know can email it, write a description of the shack with equipment, model numbers, etc. Plus a comment on the type of operating that you prefer. Don't forget your name and call. Please send it all to: wb1dby@comcast.net

WE NEED **YOUR SUGGESTIONS**

We are asking for your suggestions and ideas for future HCRA meetings. The recent success of HCRA has been, in part, because of its interesting and timely key speakers and topics.

If you can help, please contact Jim, KK1W at jmullen@rockys.com or (413) 245-3228

HCRA 10m Net

Join NCS, Tom Doyle (n1muv),
each Monday night at 7:30 PM (local) on

28.375 MHz

Get the latest local word, join good friends,
take part in good conversation each week!!!
Anyone can join in, don't be shy!!!

ARRL 10 Meter Contest 2006 Scores

*This was our fifth year participating as a club in the popular ARRL 10M Contest.
Preliminary Scores Below*

Name	Call	Class	Score
John	K1VOI	Mixed - ?	4118
Jim	KK1W	Mixed - LP	33,642
George	KC1V	Multi	13,800
Earl	KD1UU	Mixed - ?	?
Jim	K1JAW	CW - QRP	1,004
Tom	N1MUV	SSB - LP	?
Rick	N1RL	Mixed - LP	12,000
Dave	KB1MU	SSB - LP	1332
Les	K1DNX	Mixed - LP	140
Crew DX	NE1C	Multi	?
Total Club Score:			66,036

Another exciting ARRL 10 Meter Contest for HCRA

The bottom of the sunspot cycle didn't stop our members from having a good time again this year. For the fifth straight year a stalwart group of HCRA members got on the air and did some operating. Participation was much improved this year with at least 10 of our members joining in. It was nice to see a few new calls on the list along with the regulars. Congratulations to KC1V for opening up his station and running a multi-op with Ed, KB1NWH. This was Ed's first exposure to HF contesting and he had a super time. Jim, K1JAW says he has been bitten by the contesting bug and will be back next year. Even N1RL admitted he had a lot of fun in and will be back for more in 2007. It was really nice to see ten percent of our members becoming active on HF - it's what keeps HCRA and ham radio strong.

Next year - wow, what can we expect? With the hope that propagation will be improved and the prospect of many new members with the recent no-code licensing change who knows? What I do know is anyone who participates will be assured of having a good time. For more information and some 'soapbox' comments please visit: http://www.hcra.org/arrl_10m_2006.htm. While you're there take a look at some of our past efforts too, it's been a fun five years.

See you next year,
Jim, KK1W

Remote Desktoping

continued from page 4

Once you're done, connect it all up and test it listening for hum and sufficient audio levels. Start by turning on your PC and your rig. If you have PC speakers, leave them connected instead of the interface. With the speakers, PC and rig on, make sure you can hear your radio through the PC speakers. If you don't hear anything at first, check your PC's soundcard input settings and make the necessary adjustments. Once you're satisfied with the rig audio coming from the PC speaker, unplug the speakers and plug in the rest of the interface. The best way to do the rest of this test is with you rig connected to a dummy load, and another radio or receiver nearby. With the rig and receiver tuned to

the same frequency and mode, key the transmitter and play an audio file on your PC. While listening to the receiver, make adjustments to the interface, rig mic gain and PC volume to optimize the audio so that there's no distortion.

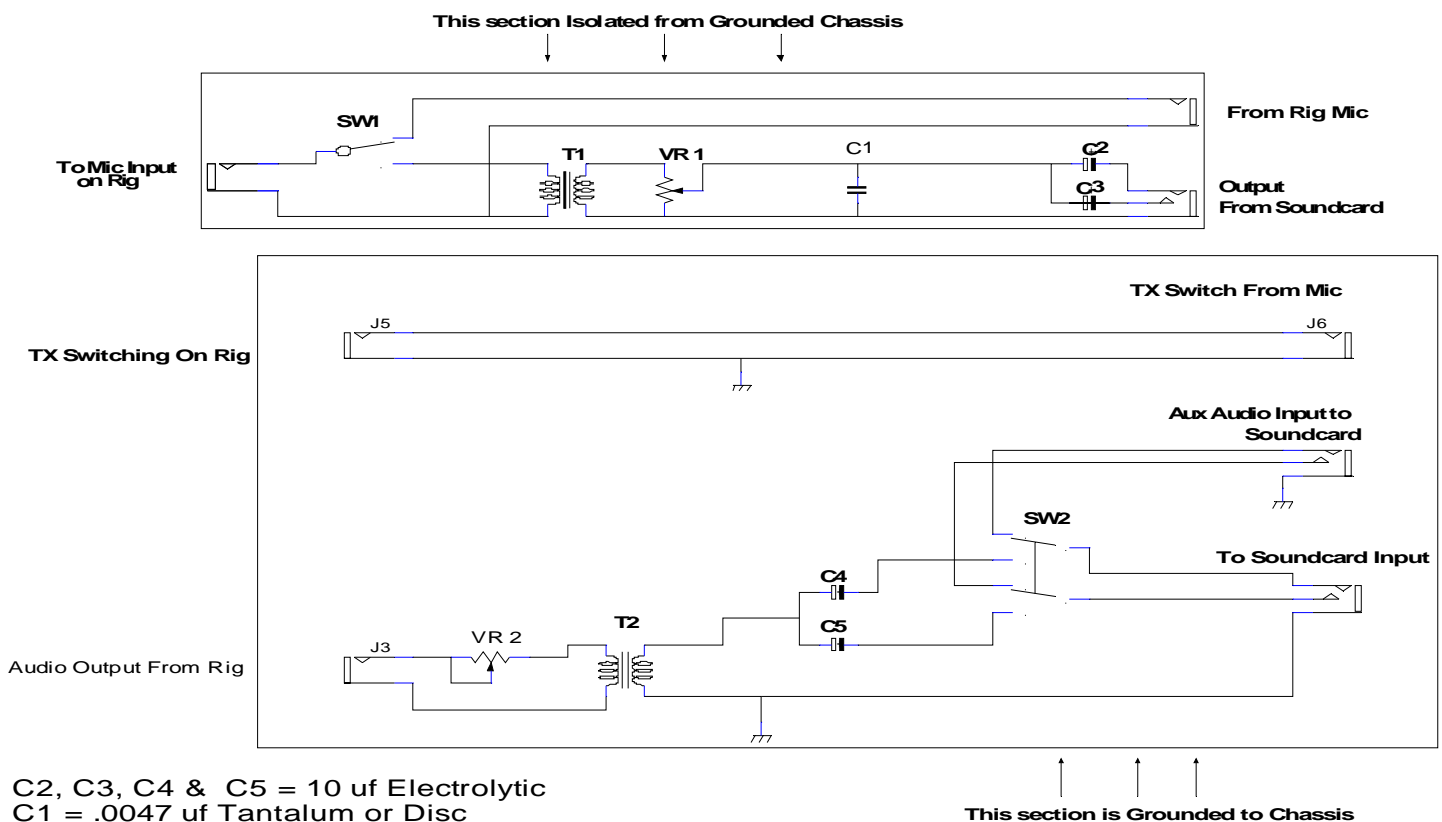
That's it! You're done!

Stay tuned for Part 2 next month when I'll be discussing software!

73 for now!

-Johnny, KI1A

Figure 1



- C2, C3, C4 & C5 = 10 uf Electrolytic
- C1 = .0047 uf Tantalum or Disc
- VR1 & VR 2 = 5k Ohm Potentiometer
- SW 1 = SPDT Mini Toggle Switch
- SW 2 = DPDT Mini Toggle Switch
- T1 & T2 = 1:1 600 Ohm Isolation Transformer
- Misc: Input & Output Jacks, PC Board, Metal Enclosure, Etc.

*Note: ALL Jacks for Rig Audio Connections MUST be insulated From Metal Enclosure!

HCRA Auction Photos



Thank you to Mark—W1MRB
for the Auction Pictures



***Have you
tried IRLP yet?***

IRLP is the Internet Radio Linking Project, connecting radios over the Internet. With your 2m radio, you make contacts all over the world. HCRA sponsors an IRLP node, in South Hadley, MA. It is there for your use, please give it a try (at least turn it on and listen) 146.46 simplex, 114.8hz PL Kx1x, Node #7270, S.Hadley, MA

For a list of IRLP nodes and other IRLP information, go to: <http://www.irlp.net/>

SET 2006 Statewide Exercise

Local amateurs joined operators statewide in the annual SET; Simulated Emergency Test. With a scenario of a 6.5 Richter earthquake in E/MA. The nets came up @ 10:00 am. Net Control N1MUV started the exercise on the 94 repeater with a check in of operators & a description of the earthquake.

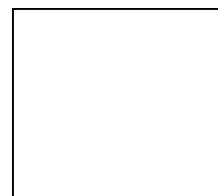
Traffic began to pass early in the net. HF liaison stations K1YO, N1IVT, passed traffic from 94 to ARES leadership via 40/75 meters. Net Control requested Damage Assessment in our area. Reports to be passed as tactical messages. W1MRB brought up a net on the kd1xp repeater 145.130 accepting & passing traffic.

At 10:00 am A Packet exercise began Dave KB1MU Asst. Section Manager SW W/MA ARES directed packet operations. Contacting stations throughout the Pioneer Valley & Berkshire County. To keep traffic flowing ,their were 2 liaisons to the 94 net. K1JAW, KB1XG .They moved stations with messages to other frequencies to pass traffic. On two occasions the 94 repeater was deactivated A simulated loss. Net control came up & transmitted on 94 direct. 90% of net operators were checking in on 94 direct and passing traffic within 5 minutes.

A learning experience for all, 22 voice & 12 packet messages were sent. Some 31 amateur operators took part. A number of newly licensed amateurs, experienced their first emergency drill. The exercise ended @ 12:30 pm local. A complete copy of the SET 2006 report will be up on the MTARA web site (www.mtara.org) soon.

73, Tom Doyle N1MUV—DEC W/MA ARES

*Hampden County Radio Association
P.O. Box 562
Agawam, Massachusetts 01001*



PLEASE HAND CANCEL