

# Repeater Etiquette by David Pifer N9YNF

One of the first things we are told about learning to use amateur radio is to get a radio and listen to others on the air. However this assumes that the people we are listening to have good operating habits. Bad habits are the hardest to correct, so if you did learn your operating habits over the air you might be in for surprise. Or maybe you knew this stuff all along. We are all guilty of one thing or another when we really look at this. The most common mode of communications in our area is the 2 Meter Repeater. Lets look at some recommended techniques.

## The Basics

- When using phone mode speak in plain English.
- Use the correct official phonetic alphabet when identifying. The cute stuff is nice to help remember a call but not for id purposes.
- Listen to see if the frequency is in use before you call. If in doubt, ask, "**Is the frequency in use your call**".
- Don't call CQ, just "**your call Listening**".
- Use "**Break**" only in emergencies.
- To interrupt give your call sign between the other stations transmissions.
- Acknowledge a station interrupting and turn it over to them as soon as possible. It just might be an emergency.
- Have you ever heard the squelch tail? Don't be trigger-happy. Let up on the PTT switch to let someone else in. PTT vs. RTL (Release to listen)
- Brevity, be short and concise with your conversations. If you want to catch up on someone or something go to simplex if possible.
- If several hams are talking pass it off by saying the person's name or call to pass it off to.
- If you wonder if you can hit the repeater, don't kerchunk it. Give "**your call testing**".
- Run on the lowest necessary power to operate, but don't try to call in on a very low power HT when everyone tells you it is unreadable. Increase your power. Ask for a signal report before you go too much further with your conversation. Remember that the goal is quality communications.
- Speak clearly, don't key and un-key your rig the instant you start and stop speaking. It takes a few seconds for the system to come up and down.
- Ignore jammers, but take lots of notes; the reason they jam is for the attention.
- Basic repeater traffic priorities:
  1. Emergency and Priority Traffic.
  2. System test or maintenance.
  3. Public Service (Skywarn etc....)
  4. Fixed stations should ensure that mobiles and portable stations have priority (especially if you can go to simplex).
  5. Fixed stations.
- Follow FCC identification rules. You have to do it every 10 minutes but not necessary to start a conversation with a local station.
- Remember that nothing is private on the air. If you have something private to talk about use the telephone (on both ends).

- Don't think out loud, your mind may be in idle but the repeater could be used during that time.
- No need for "**no contact**" or "**nothing heard**" or "**clear**" after making a failed call. All the other stations heard you not make your contact.
- Use extreme caution and it is even better not to repeat what you hear on police frequencies over the repeater. There are laws concerning the public dissemination of information from scanners. Informing the Skywarn net that "**they are reporting trees down**" in a specific area might be okay.

## Auto-patch

- No business on the radio. Ordering a pizza is up to the local auto-patch group.
- Cannot be used to place a call to avoid long distance rates or phone tariffs.
- When you call a non-ham be sure they know the rules about language, business etc.
- Auto-patches can be terminated immediately if they violate rules of the auto-patch.
- Station identification must be observed.
- Keep the patch brief as possible.
- If you are in doubt about the legality of your patch, don't do it.
- Cannot be initiated by a non-ham including amateur automated systems. An amateur must be present.

## Auto-patch and 911

- Know exactly where you are before you call.
- When you call use the following example "**I am a amateur radio operator, my call is your call, I am calling from my car and would like to report a \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_ . Over.**"
- Know what an emergency is - any live threatening situation. A flat tire or boil over is not an emergency. Even though the person with these conditions will need assistance.
- Don't use police signal / 10 codes. They are coded messages, which are against amateur regulations, and each police department may not use the same codes. Use plain English "**auto accident with injuries**".
- Remember that probably every other car around you has a cell phone and probably has already beaten you to the draw.... Remote areas or late hours are a definite time to make the call, downtown Terre Haute during rush hour... probably not.

## What is an Emergency - Immediate danger to human life or property.

- Auto accidents
- Fires
- Airplane crashes
- Floods Hurricanes
- Tornadoes

- Criminal assaults
- Downed power lines or other severe road hazards
- Accidents while hiking, camping, skiing or boating.
- A person suddenly taken ill.
- Other traumatic situations.

## Nets

- The Net Control is called that because that is what they are supposed be in, control.
- Call when called upon unless you are declaring an emergency. If you are late then wait for the call for late check-ins.
- Do you know what suffix means? It is the part of your call after your numeric, i.e. my call is N9YNF my suffix is YNF. So when the net control calls for check-ins suffix beginning Alpha through Oscar I don't respond. When Papa through Zulu is called, then I respond.

## Other Stuff

- Before you go out of town for a vacation don't announce it on the air, especially over the nets. A dishonest person listening to the frequency could really cash in. Especially since many people can access the call sign databases on the Internet.
- Our repeater is sensitive to over deviation on microphone audio on weak signals, back off the microphone and speak normally and soft. Yelling into it will not help.
- If in doubt about the legality of any issue, use common sense and don't do it until you know what the correct legal answer is. It will be better to ask permission than forgiveness.
- If someone tells you they have rough copy on you, use short tests to find the perfect hot spot or to adjust your power setting. DO NOT move 3 inches to the left and try the long QSO again. The idea is **quality** radio, **not quantity**, especially in emergencies.

*This was presented as the program for a WVARA club meeting by N9YNF. Portions were taken from various ARRL publications and personal close encounters. Feel free to copy and distribute as long as due credit for the work is given accordingly. Comments? Contact me at*

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