



RAY ~ Link

Issue Thirty Three
June 1999

The Regular Newsletter of The Radio Amateurs' Emergency Network

RAY~Link is published for the benefit of all members of the Network. It is posted to all controllers who are requested to assist in ensuring a wide membership circulation.

(This edition has been sent to each Household)

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Annual General Meeting

The annual General Meeting of the Radio Amateurs' Emergency Network will be held in Glasgow on Saturday 6th. November 1999.

Formal notification will accompany the September edition of RAY~Link, but in the meantime, members are asked to put a note in their diaries, and to keep the date free.

It is intended to hold a RAYNET Seminar in Glasgow over the weekend of 5th. to 7th. November, and members' partners are invited to come to Glasgow as well. There will be a separate programme laid on during the Saturday, while members are attending the AGM and RAYNET related presentations, and it is therefore hoped that as many as possible will come North. A ceilidh, or other function is planned for the Saturday evening.

It is hoped that special accommodation rates can be arranged, and members are asked to return the attached form, (which will not be binding in any way,) so that we can get a rough idea of numbers.

Subscriptions

Our subscriptions went up to 40 pence per month (£4.80 per year) at the beginning of June and Personal Accident Insurance was also increased by 1p per year to £1.05.

The Committee of Management thanks everyone for being members, and providing service to the community through RAYNET. New members are always needed, and existing ones are encouraged to "Bring a Friend" to group meetings.

All correspondence and membership registrations should be sent to:-
"Hunters Moon", Newton-le-Willows,
BEDALE, North Yorks, DL8 1SX
Emergency 24 hour contact line:-
(0141) 621 2121

CHAIRMAN: Ron Cowan, GM4SRL
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ZONES:

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SPECIALIST TEAMS

Emergency Planning:

Cathy Clark, G1GQJ

Finance:

Martin Green, G4PMG

Publicity:

David Hicks, G6IFA

Registrations:

David Whiteman, G1ADW

Technical:

Chris Hampson, G8RXA

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Chairman's Report

Presented at the AGM on 7th. November 1998

Ron Cowan GM4SRL

APRS - An Initial Trial

Denis Pibworth G4KWT

APRS, or Automatic Position Reporting System, first caught my eye when the subject came up on the internet newsgroup uk.radio.amateur back around christmas time. Having dabbled with Packet Radio for quite a few years I had always seen it as a 'rebel without a cause' when it came to RAYNET operations. This was something a bit different so I decided to delve further. APRS is the combination of a transmitter, Packet TNC and GPS receiver to give automatic reports of a station's location at pre-determined time intervals. These can then be received by a suitably equipped station, and plotted on a map. This has caught on in a big way in the USA - just put 'APRS' into your favourite Internet search site and see what comes up!

A regular role of ours, at the various running events we support, is to provide communications between the Control station and the Lead and Tail-End vehicles to plot their progress around the course. An ideal use for APRS, I thought, so with the the Wokingham Half-Marathon a few weeks away I decided to aim to use this event to trial the system. This was spurred on by one of our members, Simon G6ZTZ, who already had a GPS receiver and was about to upgrade both it and his hand-portable transceiver. Being a bit of a Kenwood fan, he had decided to get the new TH-7D, a dual-band radio with Packet and, more importantly, APRS functionality built in. His GPS receiver upgrade provided me with a very reasonably priced second-hand GPS receiver and so the technical seeds were sown. I blew the dust of my old PacComm HandiPacket TNC and obtained the firmware upgrade (direct from PacComm - \$38 plus \$8 postage) to give it full APRS functionality. This, combined with my hand-portable and newly acquired GPS box, then gave the group two portable APRS tracker stations. Nearly there!

For the receiving end, I downloaded a copy of WinAPRS V 2.2.4 from the internet. This is the MS Windows shareware APRS programme written by Mark Sproul (KB2ICI) and his brother Keith. This software recently took the major step forward of allowing the use of scanned map images (in GIF format) rather than the digital maps in a peculiar format used previously. An associated text file defines the pixel coordinates and associated Latitude and Longitude of two points on the map image as a datum. This is very easy to set up and is perfect for events that require a special, and possibly non-standard, map. A GPS/APRS equipped TNC is not required to receive APRS data. The use of WinAPRS with a high resolution map image does, however, require a fairly posh PC to run it on (I have a Pentium 233MHz MMX and screen refresh when zooming and panning the map is not blisteringly fast). However when setup and running, which is fairly

straightforward, the results look very impressive indeed.

Initial trials with Simon, prior to the Half-Marathon, showed one slight problem. The incoming APRS signals were producing plots that were not quite in the right place on the map. The error was very slight but noticeable. I carefully checked my digital map information, which looked OK. The problem turned out to be the fact that WinAPRS assumes a map that is drawn on a Latitude/Longitude grid whereas my map was based on the British Ordnance Survey National Grid. The two don't line up, of course, producing the slight errors we were seeing. It was going to be interesting to see if this was going to be a problem when the system was used in earnest.

For the Wokingham Half-Marathon control station, another group member, Paul M1BFO, was able to bring along his laptop PC and this proved ideal as a compact display system for the APRS traffic. I set up my equipment in the lead vehicle and G6ZTZ did tail-end. The position reporting rate was set at 1 minute intervals for the lead vehicle and initially 3 minute intervals for tail-end, this being reduced later to 2 minutes as the tail-end vehicle was moving faster than expected. Both voice traffic and APRS data were carried on the same channel (144.775MHz). The digital map used was of the street atlas type based on NGR and scanned at 150 dpi. The area covered by the map was 5 km by 7 km. The results were, to say the least, very impressive indeed. The progress of each of the vehicles could be clearly seen on the PC screen as they made their way around the course. The slight errors noticed in the trials prior to the event did not prove to be a problem on-the-day. The trial was an unmitigated success.

The next stage is to re-package the tracker equipment in a more robust way - mine was very much a lash-up in an old briefcase just to see if it worked. It did - and very well. We will certainly be using it again.

Denis Pibworth G4KWT

Group Controller - Reading & West Berkshire Group 06/BK/012
E-Mail: denis@pibworth.clara.net (Home) or
denis.pibworth@racalradio.com (Work)

Training Team

**Geoff Darby,
G7GJU**

100 Mile Walk

**Alan
G4YMU**

**THE WOOLF REPORT
IMPORTANT BRIEFING PLEASE READ**

April 26 1999 marked the introduction of the most significant changes to the civil justice system in living memory. The aim of the "Woolf Reforms" which will then become law in England and Wales is to make civil justice quicker, cheaper and less confrontational.

The initial reforms are targeted at personal injury claims worth less than £15,000 but you will be expected to follow the spirit of the reforms on bigger claims including non-personal injury claims.

As yet very little information has been made available to policyholders by their insurers so we have prepared the attached notes which we hope you find to be useful. The most important point to make is that claims must be notified to us quickly.

Stuart Alexander

April 1999

(Stuart Alexander Limited (incorporating Tion Stock) is an Independent Insurance Intermediary. Registered No. 2777604 Registered Office: 10 Philpot Lane, London EC3M 8AA)

Attached Notes:-

What to do if you receive a claim.

You (or your insurers) will have 21 days to acknowledge receipt of a "Letter of Claim". If you (they) don't then the claimant's solicitors can issue proceedings without any sanction. It is therefore essential that you have systems in place to pass on the letter to us without delay.

What happens next?

You and your insurers have a maximum of three months to investigate the claim and tell the claimant whether liability is accepted in full or in part or denied. If liability is denied you must explain why and provide supporting documentation.

What happens if you do not comply with the new rules?

Apart from the risk of prejudicing your insurance cover the Courts may impose:

- * Sanctions upon damages in the form of interest up to 10% over base rate.
- * Sanctions upon costs, including award of costs on an indemnity basis, and interest at up to 10% over base rate.
- * Strict limitations upon the evidence that may be presented in the defence of the claim.

What you need to tell us about

Any incident that might reasonably be expected to produce a claim and in any event for:

- * Employers' Liability: an accident at work involving absence of more than 3 days, head injury and/or hospitalisation
- * Public/Products Liability: all accidents where third party is injured
- * Motor: all accidents where a third party is injured

How to be prepared as an Employer

1. Review your accident reporting and investigation procedures to ensure that any incident which may give rise to a claim is fully investigated at an early stage. Remember, a claimant has up to 3 years to bring an action for personal injury.
2. Take witness statements, recording the names and addresses of witnesses. Include photographs of the scene.
3. Retain all other relevant evidence, for example accident book entries, earnings information, training records, warning notices, personal protective equipment records, first-aider reports, foreman/safety officer reports and security videos.
4. Ensure you comply with all of the appropriate Health & Safety Legislation and have carried out your Risk Assessment.
5. Keep all this information together in a safe place.
6. Nominate a deputy for dealing with Letters of Claim, especially at holiday times - 21 days is an exceptionally short deadline.

Emergency Planning Team

The IARU Region 1 conference in Tel Aviv, held from 30 Sept - 5 October 1996, agreed revised band plans for all VHF and UHF bands, in particular the revised 2m band plan allocated 144.800 - 144.990MHz to digital communications.

As frequencies within this range had been allocated for emergency communications priority, this led on to discussions between the Network's Emergency Planning Team (EPT), the RSGB Data Communications Committee (DCC), the RSGB Repeater Management Committee (RMC) and the RSGB VHF Committee (VHFC).

The initial discussions concentrated on the urgent need to move the 2m digital network to the frequencies which were, at that time, nominated for emergency communications priority. A scheme was devised which allowed changes to take place with the minimum of disruption to both digital and RAYNET users.

Subsequent discussions with the RSGB Committees who have been considering significant revisions of the VHF and UHF band plans, have covered all bands from 6m to 23cm. The aim was to ensure that the revised band plans included frequencies allocated for emergency communications priority, which would allow the use of voice, digital and, where practicable, in-band talk-through.

Following final discussions at the RSGB VHF Convention in February of this year, both the Network and the RSGB publicised the agreed band plan changes. This inevitably produced further comments and suggestions from both individuals and groups with special interests.

The RSGB has decided not to implement the agreed changes immediately, but to allow another 2 months for further consultation. This will follow the publication of an article on proposed band plan changes written by Iain Philipps G0RDI (DCC Chairman) in the April 1999 edition of RadCom.

During this time, the Network EPT will use the well-established working relationships that we have with the RSGB Committees to ensure that the requirements for RAYNET operations are thoroughly understood and adequate provision is made for these in the revised band plans.

The agreed proposals were publicised via the Network's weekly news of 28th February 1999 on 80m, packet, the web site and the telephone BBS.

If any member has any views on the emergency communications aspects of the proposed changes, please send them to the Emergency Planning Team c/o cathyclark@zetnet.co.uk or by post to Hunters Moon, marked "EPT".

Battery Power

Martin Green, ZC4

I have been in touch with Alexander Batteries, Power House, 2, Mcadam Close Drayton Fields, DAVENTRY, Northants. NN11 5RX.. This company specialises in batteries for PMR, Mobile phones and the like. It now accepts RAYNET as a trade customer and as such we can obtain good prices on batteries (eg Icom BP84 £22.55 +vat + carriage) with 2 day delivery. All that is necessary is to call 01327 301090, give "RAYNET" as the customer name, use your callsign as the customer reference and quote your credit card number.

The 1998 Data Protection Act became law on 24th October 1998 and will come into force during 1999. This Act introduces the concept of registered bodies being ?Data Controllers?.

It is unclear just how this new legislation will affect RAYNET. All Groups are urgently advised to determine how this legislation will affect them. The majority of Groups have relied on the exemption contained in Section 33 of the Data Protection Act, 1984 whereby unincorporated clubs and societies are exempt from registration under the Act subject to a number of conditions. There does not seem to be any equivalent exemption under the new Act. However a call to the Office of the Data Protection Registrar in the last week confirms that the list of exemptions under the 1998 Act has still not been finalised, so it is a question of "watch this space". Hopefully the clubs exemption will still be present in the Act, but we may well see a tightening of the conditions required to be fulfilled.

The Network will advise via the 80m News and RAY~Link and changes as and when these are advised. In the meantime all Groups with access to the World Wide Web are strongly encouraged to review the Data Protection Registrar's home page on the following URL:

<http://www.open.gov.uk/dpr/>

Your 80m Net Newsreaders

Action Research 100 98 Bike Ride 30 August

**Lance Whitelegg, G0CCU,
Avon Area RAYNET
Controller**

Health & Safety Issues.

John White G4BCY

We became aware that we may have health and safety liabilities when we sought permission to use a National Trust site for our control station for an event. They asked to see our risk assessment document. We didn't have one, so Nigel G1XBV hurriedly produced one. Since then we have been digging deeper into the problem. We have concentrated on the safety risks we may encounter, wherever we may set up a station. To be responsible for safety we will appoint a "Site Safety Officer". A list of items on the site to be checked has been prepared, although not finalised as yet. We have drawn on authoritative documents wherever possible. This check list will probably become an appendix to the Surrey Raynet Manual which will have to be amended to incorporate it and, also, a statement on site safety. In parallel with this we are working on revised risk assessment documents and an introductory statement so that these various bits and pieces come together to form a set which we can present to any authority interested in how we tackle the problem of safety.

Retired Member.

Keith Gudgeon, G0CXP

I am sorry to have to report that William Eccles, G4UFY has been forced to retire from RAYNET due to ill health.

Bill has been a valuable member of the Nottinghamshire County, Bassetlaw Group (03/NG/288) since it was formed and will be very much missed on RAYNET events.

He always had a joke ready for you and a smile on his face and I am sure that all the local members will miss seeing him walking around with his hand held rig in one hand and a cup of tea in the other!

May I, on behalf of all the membership, take this opportunity to thank Bill for his endeavours and wish him and his family all the best for the future.

Meeting with the RSGB

Ron Cowan and Cathy Clark had an excellent meeting with Ian Kyle and Tom Reilly of the RSGB at Potters Bar in April, when matters of common interest were discussed. These included RAYNET training, the RAYNET Manual, liaison with the Radiocommunications Agency and the Home Office, insurance, attendance at rallies, the callbook, dual membership, publicity, funding, the emergency contact number and generally working together.

It must be stressed that, despite various reports (from non members!) on packet, there is no intention of merging the organisations, or one taking over the other. More important is to recognise the strengths and weakness of each, and to work in such a way that the organisation which can best provide a particular part of the service takes the lead in, for example, discussions with outside bodies, and helps the other organisation to achieve the best possible result. RAYNET must be seen to have a solid core, pulling in the one direction and working to achieve the best possible service for its user services. The meeting at Potters Bar, and the earlier presentation to RSGB Council in January are both examples of how the Committees of both the RSGB and the Radio Amateurs' Emergency Network intend to progress this policy.

RAYNET Trophy.

The RAYNET trophy will again be awarded at the Annual General Meeting, and members are asked to send nominations to the Secretary, Ian Jackson, at the Hunter's Moon address. These should arrive by 31st. July at the latest.

Manchester Appointments

At the Greater Manchester County Raynet AGM, Jon Mossman was elected County Controller and Chris Tyrell, G7OEP, was elected Deputy County Controller.

L11 5RL

80m Net

The Newsreader Duty Roster for June is as follows:-

6th June - Duty G0VPJ, Standby G3STG

13th June - Duty G3STG, Standby G4FSN

20th June - Duty G4AAL, Standby G4KUJ

27th June - Duty G4FSN, Standby G0BDA

This roster marks the completion of the seventh, and the commencement of the eighth, year of rostered operating. - A big "thank you" to all who have helped to keep the net going without a break for all these years!