

Weekly Net Control



How to operate as Net Control
for a Monday night Net.

by Madeline Lombaerde, KD6JTU



This training session will cover how to be Net Control for the weekly Monday night net..

Many elements transfer directly into being Net Control for an emergency as well.

This session covers proper procedures for the weekly net.

Why is there a Weekly Net?



- Test your equipment
- Test EOC radio equipment
- Training for a directed net
- Training for using radio and linked repeater to send/receive messages
- Latest information about events/exercises
- Get to know members' voices over radio



3/19/2009

South County Amateur Radio Emergency Services

2

Why do we have a weekly net?

- We are COMMUNICATORS! The weekly net is for practice/training and testing our radios and antennas.
- Practice for participating in a directed net
- Practice using a repeater and linked remote base
- Get the latest information about coming events and exercises; chance to volunteer
- Will get to know members' voices ... helps when signals are weak

Net Control Preparation



- Net Procedure
- Roll Call
 - in call sign order
 - in city order
- Call sign of Net Control for next week
- Paper/pencils/pens
- Assistant (optional)
- Directions/access codes to EOC
- Practice, Practice, Practice



3/19/2009

South County Amateur Radio Emergency Services

3

Before the day of your net control assignment,

•Get a copy of the net procedure and **REHEARSE IT**. Don't try to wing it! Listeners can tell when you have not prepared. Suggestion: use this copy to follow net when others are Net Control. How do you get the net procedure? Download latest copy from k6mpn.org or send email to weeklynet@k6mpn.org

Fill in the italicized words with information you know beforehand. Finish it just before net starts.

•**Get the Roll Call** either in call sign order or city order. If this is your first time, use call sign order. City order is for experienced operators. How do you get the Roll Call in call sign order? Download from web site or send email to weeklynet@k6mpn.org (gives you all three: net proc, roll call by call sign, roll call by city). Cannot download Roll Call by city from web site, but can use keyword RollCallByCity.

•Get the call sign and first name of the member assigned as Net Control for the week following your assignment. How do you get it? Look at newsletter or better yet send an email to netcontrol@k6mpn.org ... this will always be the latest list.

•Bring extra paper and pencils/pens

•It's optional to have an **assistant**, but it is nice to have one; it's essential if you're new to being Net Control

•Run the net from an EOC installation, **NOT FROM HOME**. We're testing the installation equipment at the EOCs to identify potential problems BEFORE an emergency activation

•Redwood City: requires access code for parking lot and building entrance. What is it?

•Belmont: use PD entrance on far right side of City Hall entrance. Ask at window for the key to get into the EOC (2nd floor)

•San Carlos: more difficult to get in. Must make arrangements well in advance.

•Menlo Park/Atherton

•Again, practice going over the net procedure.

Before Net



- Get to EOC around 7 pm
- Start up equipment and ask for a radio check
 - Don't make changes to radio settings
 - Pre-set memories for K6MPN and 2m simplex
- Organize your supplies and paperwork
- 2 meter remote base link: 7:15pm
- Ask for Relay starting around 7:20pm
- Don't ask for early check-ins



3/19/2009

South County Amateur Radio Emergency Services

4

•Try to **arrive early**. One time, the key for the Belmont EOC was missing and it took 25 minutes to find it.

•At most installations, you just have to **turn on the power supply** to start up all the radios. Look for signs posted in the radio room about how to turn things on. Don't turn off radios individually at Redwood City and Belmont. Use the power supply. Ask the EC about the set up at other city installations.

•Don't change the radio settings unless it's absolutely necessary. All EOC radios are pre-set to be on the K6MPN repeater and the SCARES simplex frequency.

•Ask for a radio check and a time check if there's not an atomic clock available. Your cell phone may have the latest time (if it's automatically updated by the carrier).

•If you haven't already done so, fill in the italicized words with your information and finish it before net starts.

•The link comes up around 7:15pm. Listen for the announcement ... try to not be transmitting when it starts. **Test the link once it's up**: look for signal strength bars on both frequencies to come up.

During Net



- Start the Net on time
- Calmly read the Preamble
 - Don't rush
 - "Let it drop .." Drop repeater after long paragraph
 - Let go of PTT to listen
- Start the Roll Call
 - If by call sign, read the opening paragraph as is
 - If by city, mention that roll call is in city order



3/19/2009

South County Amateur Radio Emergency Services

5

•It's important to start on time or folks will be wondering what's going on ... is there a problem with their equipment, your equipment, the repeater?
If something delays you, make an announcement or have someone else make it.

•Take a deep breath, relax, and calmly read the Preamble:

- don't rush, stay calm
- speak at a slower than normal pace
- let the repeater and link drop after long paragraphs: let's the repeater timer reset. This also allows high priority or emergency traffic to break in.
- Once you hear the short beep, the timer has reset and you can key up again
- release the PTT button to listen for emergency/priority traffic: it's "Push to Talk", not "Push to Think"
- listen for ARRL officials; if an official checks in and has traffic, allow them to go ahead with their traffic. But, there's no need to ask if they have traffic. If they do, they'll let you know.

•Review opening paragraph for Roll Call

•Roll Call by call sign: have the option of doing it in reverse alphabetical order. Mention this when reading the opening paragraph.

Roll Call Do's

- Hold mike button for 1 second before speaking
- Call by call sign only or city
 - NOT phonetically
 - NOT with name (use at acknowledgement)
- Acknowledge check-in or say "Nothing Heard"
- Acknowledge traffic ("Traffic noted")
- Don't skip over early check-ins
- Allow your Relay to check in (might have traffic)
- Confirm next week's Net Control at check-in
- Give your FCC call sign every 10 mins (:40, :50, :00,...; ~ end of column)
- Mark yourself on the list (use "NC")



3/19/2009

South County Amateur Radio Emergency Services

6

- Why do you have to wait 1 second before speaking
 - Allow link to come up
 - To check this, look at signal meter on radio(s)
- Why not phonetically? Adds too much time to net
- Don't give call sign AND name: leave name for acknowledgement
- Acknowledge check-in or say "nothing heard"
 - Let's the member know if they were heard
 - Let's relay know if you heard the check-in
 - Let's the person recording the net in the database know that the member checked in (may not be able to hear all check-ins)
- Mark "T" by call sign of member who says they have traffic and acknowledge ("Your traffic is noted")
- Don't skip over early check-ins: "<call sign> checked in early"
- Allow your Relay to check-in in case they have traffic for the net
- If the person assigned as next week's Net Control checks in, confirm their assignment
- Remember to give your FCC Call sign every 10 minutes. Roughly at the end of each column, but best to check the clock. Assistant can help with this. Don't give it too frequently (some have done it every 3 minutes!)
- Mark yourself on the roll call list ("NC")
- If someone doesn't check in, please leave the line blank (don't put a 0 or other mark; makes it hard to read)

Roll Call Don'ts

- Don't forget to wait 1 second after PTT
- Don't give call signs phonetically
- Don't say name along with call sign
- Don't ask each station if they have traffic
- Don't skip over your Relay
- Don't skip over early check-ins
- Don't mention when someone is out of town
- Don't give your FCC call sign too frequently



3/19/2009

South County Amateur Radio Emergency Services

7

- Why do you have to wait 1 second before speaking
 - Allow link to come up
 - To check this, look at signal meter on radio(s)
- Why not phonetically? Adds too much time to net
- Don't give call sign AND name: leave name for acknowledgement
- Don't skip over early check-ins: "<call sign> checked in early"
- Don't mention when someone is out of town: you never know who is listening
- Some NC's give their FCC call sign too often (every 3-4 mins)

Working with Relay



- Relay will break in as needed (“Relay..”)
- Weak signal check-in
 - Ask station to try one more time
 - Ask Relay
 - Move on
- Relay: give FCC call at end of each relay
- Acknowledge relayed check-in



3/19/2009

South County Amateur Radio Emergency Services

8

You don't have to ask relay repeatedly if they heard anything. Relay will break in with something like “Relay”. You respond with “Go, Relay” or “Go ahead”

[This is why we don't key up quickly ... it allows Relay or high priority traffic to break in.]

When you can't hear a check-in because of a weak signal, ask the calling station to try once more. If still can't get it, ask Relay. If not able to get it, move on. Don't start asking “Is that <call sign>?” or “Is that you <name>?” You can suggest they try a better antenna or higher power when you call for late member check-ins.

Relay should give FCC call sign at the end of each relay: “<call sign> checked in. KD6JTU”. Relay doesn't know if they'll be on again within 10 minutes.

Acknowledge the check-in so both the Relay and the member knows you got the relay.

Late Member Check-ins



- Roll Call by Call Sign
 - Follow the Net Procedure as is
 - Can wait until multiple check-ins end
 - Acknowledge each check-in.
- Roll Call by City
 - Request members to check in giving their city first, then their call sign and maybe name
 - Alternative: quickly go through the city list
- Ask for relay at end



3/19/2009

South County Amateur Radio Emergency Services

9

This part can get hectic and is when an assistant can be the most help.

Some folks write down the calls as they come in, then mark the list as they give the acknowledgement to each.

When doing roll call by city, request the late check-ins give their city first, then call sign. You might even want them to give their name to slow things down.

As an alternative, quickly go through each city asking for late check-ins.

Be sure to acknowledge each late check in so the member and Relay knows you heard it.

Ask for any relays at the end. Relay may break in also.

Associate & Non-Member Check-ins



- Associates are inactive members who are no longer listed on the Roll Call lists
- Read the section paragraph as is
 - Emphasize that guests should go slowly
 - Request each guest to give
 - Call sign phonetically (slowly)
 - First name
 - Location
- Ask for relays when no calls are heard



3/19/2009

South County Amateur Radio Emergency Services

10

Again, this can get hectic. You are in charge so don't be afraid to ask that folks speak slowly. It's a good idea to acknowledge by repeating the call sign, name, and location

Traffic



- Go through the list of stations that said they had traffic for the net
 - Go reverse alphabetically if that's how you did the roll call
 - "<Call sign>, go ahead with your traffic"
- Make notes of traffic
 - May have to relay to station that couldn't hear it completely
 - Optional: ask if any station needs a "fill" on the traffic
- Station giving traffic
 - Let the repeater drop every minute or so
 - Allows emergency traffic to break in
 - Allows the repeater timer to reset
 - Ask for volunteers without asking permission from Net Control
 - Clearly turn the net back to Net Control
 - "That is the extent of my traffic. Back to Net Control"
 - Give FCC call sign



3/19/2009

South County Amateur Radio Emergency Services

11

This is a directed net. When net control turns the frequency over to a station who wishes to give traffic, that station should proceed with all the traffic, including asking for volunteers when applicable. It is not necessary to get Net Control's permission ... Net Control already gave it! Stopping to unnecessarily ask permission slows down and delays the net.

Invitation to Guests



- Listen to Board member traffic in case this has already been done.
- Be aware of meeting location changes
- Can skip if no guests checked in



3/19/2009

South County Amateur Radio Emergency Services

12

Most meetings are at San Carlos City Hall. You need to know if the location has changed for the next meeting and change this section as needed.

Closing the Net



- **Invite additional traffic**
- **Last call for member, associate or non-member check-ins**
- **Thank your Relay station**
- **Announce net control for net week**
- **Give time/date of close of net**
- **Release the frequencies**



3/19/2009

South County Amateur Radio Emergency Services

13

Ask members to identify themselves as members so you know to look on the list

Don't offer or request to contact next week's net control. It's each member's responsibility to show up for their assignment.

After Net



- At EOC/radio room
 - Radio settings must be left on K6MPN and 2m simplex
 - Shut down power to radio/equipment
 - Shut off lights and lock if applicable
 - Return key if applicable
- At home:
 - Note total number of member check-ins
 - Note total number of guests
 - Fax roll call sheet to 650-585-9585 or give to KD6JTU at next general membership meeting



3/19/2009

South County Amateur Radio Emergency Services

14

Be sure to put the radio memories back the way you found them! You should not have to make any changes, but if you did, put the radio settings back the way you found them.

Don't shut off radios individually: if they went on with the power supply, just turn off the power supply to shut them off.

Net Control Practice



- Break into groups of four
- Split roll call list into four parts
- Split net procedure
 - All stations ...
 - We are operating from ...
 - Is there any emergency traffic (to end of page 1)
 - Opening paragraph of Roll Call
- [Roll Call parts 1,2,3,4] - optional
- Remainder
 - Late member check-ins
 - Associate & non-members
 - Traffic
 - Invitation to guests and Closing



3/19/2009

South County Amateur Radio Emergency Services

15

- This will be a table top exercise, simulating a weekly net.
- Break into groups of 4 operators
- Split the roll call list into four parts: one for each operator
- Split the net procedure as follows:
 1. Preamble, 1st paragraph: All stations ...
 2. Preamble, 2nd paragraph: We are operating ...
 3. Preamble, 3rd and 4th paragraphs: Is there any emergency traffic to the end of page 1
 4. Opening two paragraphs of Roll Call (page 2)
- If time permits: each operator, starting with the first part of the lists, calls each call sign ... one group member checks in as half of the stations (specify traffic for two stations), another acts as relay, third assists net control
- Repeat for each operator; rotate assignments
- When roll call list is complete, continue with rest of the net procedure as follows:
 1. Late member check-ins
 2. Associate and non-members
 3. Traffic (can split traffic between two other group members)
 4. Invitation to guests and Closing
- Be sure to practice holding mike button down for one second, letting the repeater drop, giving FCC call sign at appropriate times