

### TRAFFIC

The main source for any volume of traffic is usually either of two occurrences.

1. An unplanned event, which forces people to use the Amateur NTS traffic networks due to failure or overload of normal regular commercial facilities or,

2. A planned event, such as a convention, fair or other public gathering that encourages use of the amateur traffic networks more or less as a novelty. In either case, the average person will need help in composing their messages so they can be properly and expeditiously handled by the Section, Local or NTS network operators. This will be especially so with Health & Welfare traffic coming from disaster shelters in times of emergency.

If any large volume of third party traffic is expected, the radio operator should be assisted by another person or persons who can take care of preparing the messages for transmission. The operator will have his or her hands full just working the radio. The people detailed as counter assistants must be trained and familiar with this kind of message work, but they need not be licensed radio operators.

There are several things that should be considered when we take message information from the general

public:

1. The average sender has no idea about putting their message into the standard format which we require to be used, in order for the generated traffic to be capable of being properly relayed through the system. They will need assistance.

2. The word count of the message text must be kept under control to avoid network overloading.

Improper or illegal content or symbols that cannot be transmitted must be kept out of the text. The message must be composed so as to convey the desired meaning without unnecessary wordage, and to minimize the possibility of being misunderstood by the recipient.

3. Addressing must be properly done in order for the message to be delivered at its ultimate destination.

(a) All messages must be sent to a person or organization by FULL NAME.

(b) The address must also contain a PHYSICAL LOCATION where the addressee can be found in order to deliver the message. Street number and name, rural delivery route, post office box, hotel/motel name and room (if known) are some common ways of providing this information.

(c) The address must also contain the DESTINATION City, State or Province, Country if

not in USA or Canada, and Zip code, if known.

(d) If at all possible, the address should include a full ten-digit TELEPHONE number.

4. The sender only needs to furnish the address, text and signature of the message. Normally, messages should be written either by the sender him/herself or the operator's "public counter" assistant for or in behalf of the sender. Use plain half sheets of paper 8 1/2 by 5 1/2 inches in size. This is plenty large for the average 25-word message, and will help discourage excessive wordiness in message texts. Pre-printed blanks are not really necessary for messages being sent and represent an unnecessary expense and logistic problem.

5. Messages must be SIGNED properly with a name so the recipient will know who sent it. The sender should also furnish LOCAL CONTACT INFORMATION so they can be reached if there is an answer to their message or if some problem occurs with delivering it. This information should be written on the back of the message blank for future reference if needed.

Appropriate message numbering, precedence, handling codes, Station of Origin's call-sign, check, originating point, filing time and date must then be

properly appended as a PREAMBLE along the top edge of the message half-sheet. This is required in order to route the message correctly through all Section, Local and NTS systems from origin to destination. The entire message should be carefully checked over in regard to legibility and completeness at this time. These tasks are best left to the counter assistant who is trained and knows how to do them.

At this point the message is ready to be handed to the radio operator for transmission. The written message copy is now the “document of record” for the message, and after the radio operator notes on it the time sent, frequency or net, and the call-sign of the station it was sent to, it should be filed in the Originating Station’s “Sent” file. The FCC no longer requires copies of amateur messages to be retained, but it is a good idea to keep them on file for at least a year anyway, just in case.

Only by careful attention to all these details will good service be provided for the public. Messages that are properly originated have a far better chance of making it through the system to destination than those which are not.

The primary objective of these methods and protocols

is to facilitate transmission of a properly formatted written formal message from point A to point B so it arrives exactly as written on the original copy, group for group, character for character, space for space. Messages filed in Section Affiliated NTS nets and the NTS must be capable of being transmitted by any mode without message alteration being required. Voice and CW nets must be run with methods and protocols to operate effectively and uniformly so that message traffic may be exchanged with efficiency. Stations who are or will be operating in traffic nets have the responsibility to promptly relay messages along, deliver messages in a timely fashion, or service undeliverable messages back to the originator. Stations must honor this responsibility. Stations operating within the NTS interface directly with the public and served agencies representing all of Amateur Radio. Stations must represent us all well. The methods and protocols of the NTS MPG are intended to facilitate achieving these objectives.

Recent observations indicate these objectives are not being met at any acceptable level in the Section Affiliated Nets or the National Traffic System today. There is sufficient evidence that many problems exist in the relaying process from station-to-station, net-to-net, and area-to-area across the country. The problems are not related to the use of any of the

current modes or methods used in relaying third party messages. The newer digital modes appear to have problems as well as the more traditional CW and SSB or VHF-FM voice modes.

Perhaps part of the problem stems from lack of training or some other lack of understanding among many of the newer amateurs, and some of the older ones also, on the air today. Those who engage in third party written message handling in the Amateur Service need to understand that a certain amount of COMMITMENT and a good ATTITUDE is required whether it is done for the enjoyment of it or as a part of emergency preparedness planning and training. There is an indication that the shortcomings have been recognized by the ARRL as is evidenced by the recent emphasis on the ARECC training that is now being offered.