

MORE ON WINLINK 2000

For those of you concerned about whether the WL2K network is sufficiently robust to survive under all conditions of an emergency, locally or nationally, the Winlink Committee has further developed the means for all of us equipped with packet or HF Pactor radio to exchange email formatted message traffic directly between our stations, yes radio-all-the way, without use of the internet or WL2K. This is an operation undertaken manually with the Airmail software and is no more difficult to accomplish than operating our manual nets or accessing existing NTSD stations. It is important to note that this is a messaging technology using the standard email format as opposed to 25 word text-only messaging, and we can all do it with the appropriate gear. For example, when necessary, properly equipped stations can move email directly by radio to stations elsewhere where it can be re-filed onto WL2K or the public internet.

MESSAGING LAYERS

Can those of us that participate daily or during emergencies in the NTS or NTSD currently move email formatted traffic around the country in times of infrastructure loss? Yes, WL2K will allow us to offer that service to our nation. Together ARES, the NTS and NTSD can utilize radio email to provide a replacement for the email service lost during a

disaster, and officials can originate and receive those emails on their own computers if desired. This greatly enhances our ability to provide for total agency interoperability under ICS and NIMS command strategies, and to do so without using additional intermediate amateur manual relaying manpower in affected areas. This is a substantial improvement in service to establish our relevance. ARESMAT groups can be equipped to carry this technology into disaster areas as needed.

I personally believe that if as many of us as possible gear up for using WL2K and also make provisions for direct station-to-station transfer of email messages we will advance the amateur art substantially. To our served agencies at federal, state and local levels we will be able to offer standard email service to all with total agency interoperability. We will sustain the manual voice and CW text messaging services as well. We can work out the details of BPL and other rewarding certificates for stations using these new and the older modes at our discretion. The big picture of how to enhance our messaging layers is at this moment a more pressing issue.

Anyone with a computer and an internet connection can get on the WL2K network with Airmail in short

order (usually in less than an hour, and with computers dating all the way back to Windows 95™). Not all of us are required to gear up for packet or HF to add this capability to the NTS/NTSD or ARES system. With sufficient numbers willing to help out, however, we can operate with these capabilities and greatly enhance our ability to respond, particularly with respect to emergency communications, as stipulated in Part 97.1. The use of this advanced technology may also help us bring in new young amateurs interested in such things.

The Winlink 2000 Development Team has given us this new technology to add to our tool kit. I hope you will share with me the vision of having a modern amateur radio messaging service relevant in today's IT world and add WL2K capabilities to your stations. I hope you will join those of us that are using WL2K and direct radio-email transfer. With the support of the ARES root connections to all those we serve we can provide additional and critical life saving services to this nation in the best tradition of the Amateur Service.

If the ARES/RACES/NTS and NTSD are to remain relevant in this modern IT world does it not make sense to look at how we can deploy this technology to the greatest extent possible? I think so.