

## “National Traffic System Reasons”

The National Traffic System as known today started in 1949. Before that time, there were various options that were tried but none of them were ever really successful. Originally, the National Traffic System was set up for emergency communications during a disaster for served agencies requesting either assistance or providing updates with regard to the situation.

Since Public Service has been the cornerstone of Amateur Radio from the very beginning, the NTS was expanded to include sending messages to third parties who were non-hams, called third party traffic and return messages were received from the delivering Ham and sent back to the originating individual via Ham Radio in the NTS. Most Ham's today do not totally understand how the cycles in the National Traffic System needs to operate for it to become as efficient as it can be. Remember, the NTS is only as strong as its weakest link.

Unfortunately, due to modern communications available to the public, the NTS has fallen on hard times for lack of meaningful traffic. There are always opportunities for Ham's to **demonstrate how the NTS should work** through locally based community events such as fairs, festivals etc. A club or the Ares/Races group can set up a booth and advertise that as hams, we can send a message to your friends or relatives across the country or, in some cases, to certain countries where we have third party agreements. This is also an excellent way of getting exposure for Ham radio.

Since emergency preparedness is what we should be about, the NTS should be used in all exercises and in the real thing as much as possible. **Most people want to help, and their heart is in the right place, but they do not understand what is supposed to happen and how they fit into the NTS.** For example, more often than not, a station will pick up a piece of traffic from a station and if they cannot deliver it, especially if it is out of state traffic, rather than writing out a radiogram and stating that they have traffic for the 10th region they will just call the person who sent the message to them just stating that they could not deliver the traffic. This is not the correct procedure. If you take a message and it is from out of state for someone in your local area and you can not pass it, then it is incumbent upon

you to originate a message for the 10th region and send it properly through the chain of command.

The National Traffic System is the principal facility for medium to long range traffic. It is organized on the basis of daily operation, in accordance with the operating habits and skills of the average amateur operator. In emergencies, the National Traffic System is geared to go into continuous operations in accordance with the needs and the extent of the particular emergency or disaster. A message goes through the National Traffic System in a manner much like an air line passenger who starts out in a small town with a destination across the Country in another small town. He may change carriers several times in the process, starting with a small feeder air line, changing to a regional carrier, and then to another feeder which lands at the destination town.

In a similar manner, a message starts with the originating station and is picked up on a local net, which transfers it to the regional and then back down to the destination for delivery by another local net. Throughout the process, the message is handled only by radio amateurs who are trained and practiced to professional standards in traffic-handling. The routing from end to end is a controlled process so that the message accuracy and integrity is maintained.

This is in distinct contrast to the potentially haphazard handling a message may receive if it is sent through uncontrolled amateur radio net routing, where it may be handled by well-meaning but untrained operators. The average Ham operator is simply not familiar enough with proper traffic net and traffic handling procedures to ensure accurate and consistent transmission.

In this day and time, too many people have drifted away from what the NTS is truly supposed to be. In a misguided effort some Hams have resorted to sending junk spam traffic to deceased, divorced, no longer active Hams. We need to get back to the original purpose of the NTS and make messages meaningful and send them to family, friends and acquaintances. By doing this, we will be able to give NTS a lease on new life and help train Hams new to NTS traffic handling.

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