Types of Nets

On-Air Training
Idaho Falls Bishops' Storehouse
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Welcome

Welcome to tonight's training. Last week we talked about vanity call signs. I'm just curious, did anyone apply for a vanity call sign this past week? I won't take comments, but if you applied for a vanity call sign in the past seven days, give your call sign now?

Introduction

We are involved in a lot of nets. I personally check in to at least 4 nets a week and sometimes as many as 8. Some of you are involved in more than 10 a week on a regular basis. I enjoy checking in to the nets. I enjoy hearing you on the air and learning from each of your. Rarely do we get through a net without someone asking a question or someone experiencing an issue that we can all learn from.

I'll start this evening by describing a few different types of nets. Then, I have some scenarios where I'd like to get your ideas about what type of net might best suit the situation. Finally, we'll wrap things up with a few brief comments about who can be a net control station.

What is a net?

A net in its simplest form is an on-air meeting. Generally, there is a predefined demographic or organization (like ERC or ARES), a specific frequency, and a pre-arranged time. This is a net. We arranged for all ERC operators to meet on the 146.880 MHz repeater at 9:00 PM each Wednesday night. This is actually a continuation of your regional simplex nets. On Thursday nights at 9:00 PM on the 146.940 MHz repeater the District 6 ARES operators meet for their net.

Types of Nets

There are a LOT of different types of nets. But I think we can boil them all down to just three general categories: a traffic net, a contact net, and a ragchew net. Let me explain.

A traffic net is any type of net where information needs to be transmitted or received. There are traffic nets where formal messages are passed like the National Traffic System which is a system of operators that relay messages around the country. A traffic net can also handle informal traffic. What is the difference between formal and informal traffic?

An example of a traffic net that handles informal traffic might be a net we use to track runners in a marathon or report weather conditions. In my loose classification system, this net is a traffic net. Earlier, each of you passed a small bit of informal traffic -- whether you were operating on commercial or emergency power and perhaps with how much power you were transmitting.

The second type of net in my categorization system is the contact net. I've also seen this type of net called a DX (delta x-ray) DX net. The purpose for this type of net is to make contacts with locations that might be difficult to find just by tuning through the bands. One good example of such a net is the Old Man International Sideband Society (OMISS). Mike Odom KJ7FX is a net control operator for this net. The OMISS net convenes at least once each day. People check into this net and their location is logged. If you trying to make a contact with an operator in every state in the union, you can check into this net and see if operators from states you still need contacts with are on the net.

The third type of net is the ragchew net. Ragchew is not a common word and perhaps some newer hams do not know what a ragchew is. In an effort to find an *official* definition, I search the web and found a decent, somewhat comical definition on urbandictionary.com. It says,

> "A long QSO between two amateur radio operators. This is generally what amateur radio operators are doing on the radio when they're not contesting, testing equipment, bouncing signals off the moon or meteor showers, providing communications in national emergencies, sending still or moving pictures or text back and forth, connecting to packet radio networks, and partaking in nets."

A little humorous, but accurate nonetheless. A ragchew net is basically operators shootin' the breeze, just talkin' about anything and everything.

A ragchew net would be the place for operators to gather and just talk. The topic may be pre-defined or there may be no topic assigned. We used to have a similar net after the ARES net on Thursday nights. Some operators would stick around after the net. We would do a quick roll call to see who was still on frequency and then open it up. Anyone could ask a question or make a comment that the group would then discuss.

So that is my three general categories of nets: traffic net, a contact net, and a ragchew net. Are there any questions or comments about the different types of nets?

Scenarios

Let's run through a few scenarios. I'll present the scenario and you state what type of net might be best suited for the situation. There might be more than one right answer -- there often is in this sort of thing. There is usually more than one way to skin a cat. If you wish to respond, remember to give your call sign phonetically and wait to be acknowledged before giving your answer. Don't think because one person gave their call sign that you have to wait. I'll pause for a few moments to allow multiple people with comments to give their call

sign and then we'll go down the list receiving your answers or comments. This would be much more efficient that having to ask for more comments after each response.

Scenario #1: The power goes out at 8:00 AM Sunday morning?

Does the situation change if it's 20 degrees below zero?
What if the power has been out for 6 hours?

Scenario #2: A home in your stake catches fire?

Scenario #3: The BYU-Idaho amateur radio society wants to see who has completed the construction of their yagi antennas and discuss any issues.

Scenario #4: The Idaho Falls Bishops Storehouse wants to ensure that every storehouse in Idaho has tested their emergency power this month?

Scenario #5: The stake presidency has asked you to provide communication for the Trek event next summer.

Who can be net control?

Anyone can serve as a net control station. If there is an event of some kind--whether it is a power outage, weather, or just your stake net--if the time comes for a net and no one is stepping up to be net control, then you should do it. (Some of you are thinking right now, "He's not talking to me. Is he talking to me?") Yes, I'm talking to you -- anyone. The operator will be much more effective if he or she has a commanding signal--one in which she can be heard and hear other operators. Someone gathering information is usually better than no one at all.

Bear in mind, too, that if a net control station asks you to relay another operator or make a call for other operators in your area, you are serving as a temporary net control operator. Don't be shy about letting your regional coordinator know that you are interested in gaining some experience as net control. Work on getting a station that would help make you successful. That might mean buying a mobile radio that puts out a little more power or getting the antenna up another 15 feet.

This is an extremely brief explanation of who might serve as net control. We could spend hours talking about net control qualifications and protocols. Given that, are there any questions or comments about net control operators or stations?

Conclusion

That concludes tonight's training. Like last week, I'll see that a summary and link is posted on the ERC website. I'll also post a link to a list of more common nets in our area.

Link to local nets: http://rexburghams.org/assets/LocalNets.pdf

I would encourage you to tune in to a few this week. You don't necessarily have to check-in, but listen for the differences in the way they are run, how the different net control operators handle different situations. If you are a brand new operator, some of what you hear might still be a bit confusing. Don't worry. Listen anyway. See if you can copy down some of the call signs you hear. Look them up on QRZ.com and see if you find anyone your recognize.

All right, that's all from me. 73 to all of you. This is N7TMS, back to net control.