

By and For RADIO Operators Who Are Serious About EmComm

EMCOMM MONTHLY

“PREPAREDNESS is our most important PRODUCT”

NUMBER TWO

JULY 2004

EM ONLINE: www.emcomm.org/em/ INTERNET: www.emcomm.org

IN THIS ISSUE

Welcome to the second issue of EMMCOMM MONTHLY. This month long time readers of the EMMCOMMWEST BULLETIN will recognize the return of SHORT CIRCUITS our “parts bin”, where all sorts of miscellaneous items may be found. Next is FEEDBACK with comments from our readers, followed by a BOOK REVIEW of Ham Radio For Dummies. (Look for more book reviews in the future.) NETWORK NEWS, EMMCOMM TRAFFIC TRAINING (call it “ETT”) follows. New this month we introduce the first in a series of SPECIALTY PRODUCTS... practical items for sale that are of special interest to EMMCOMM operators. RETRO REVIEW is a replay from a former ECWB. This month: tips for setting up a WELL EQUIPPED AMATEUR RADIO STATION. Last month, QSH sparked a lot of interest. This month after a few goofy RADIO OXYMORONS, the reader’s responses to last month’s hypothetical question: WHAT KILLED AMATEUR RADIO? are reported followed by Part I of an essay presenting EM editor’s perspective on this question. Wrapping up this issue is NEW SUBSCRIBERS, CONTRIBUTORS, SUPPORT OUR SUPPORTERS and our handy REFERENCE SECTION. Finally, THANK YOU to all who have commented, contributed material, and/or otherwise helped to make EMMCOMM MONTHLY a success!

SHORT CIRCUITS

More about “vacuum tube” (pneumatic) telegraphs:

www.capsu.org/history/telegram_conveyors.html

Reference ECWB #208 and 209:

www.emcomm.org/svares/archives/number208.htm

www.emcomm.org/svares/archives/number209.htm

A scholarly perspective on messaging, message delivery, and a “Victorian Internet”: www.mercurians.org/Nov_99/info_networks.html

(Thanks to Ed Ewell, K7DXV for forwarding these very interesting links!)

FEEDBACK, MUSINGS... and SPURIOUS EMISSIONS

Re. EMMCOMM MONTHLY’s Premier Edition:

“Here’s to a long life for EMMCOMM Monthly!!”

- Nancy Ballard, Modoc County (CA) Office of Emergency Services

“Congrats on the new EMMCOMM MONTHLY. But I bet you’ll spend as much (or more!) time on it than you did on the weekly BULLETIN.

- Ed Ryan, N7VEX, ARC Disaster Specialist, Grand Canyon Chapter, Arizona

“The new product looks great. Anyone in Emergency Communications can benefit from reading these.”

- Tom Hyers, W7TCH, EC Douglas County (OR) ARES, RACES

“Great newsletter and web site.” - Tom Mackay, W6WC, Fountain Valley, California

“Love the new look...” - Jack Ruckman, AC6FU, Silver Springs, Nevada

“Thank you for a fantastic EMMCOMMWEST Convention in Reno. I was a vendor at the show (my first time), but I plan to return to the Reno show and others at other locations also. Please

advise how I can become a contributing sponsor. I've found that ads in newsletters and on web sites read and seen by a specific targeted audience is worth its weight in gold compared to far more expensive ads elsewhere. I grew up around hams all my life with my father being an avid amateur radio enthusiast, but for some reason, probably being so near to it every day, I never took up the craft. Now years later I wish I had. I wish now that I could have had my amateur radio license a few years back and had the joy of sharing the learning experience with him.

Enough of my ramblings! Thanks again for your part in a great EMCOMMWEST Show in Reno and let me know what I can do to help the cause and support EMCOMMWEST." Jerry Gosnell, The Wireless Store, Akron, Ohio. www.niljon.com/

Authorized Dealer:

WiFi-PLUS, Inc. MP (Multi-Polarized) Antennas. 2.4 GHz - 5.x GHz.
Toll-Free: (877) 751- 8125 Fax: (330) 733-3671

COMMENT: Thanks a heap Jerry and I recall meeting and visiting with you. 99.44% of the credit for EMCOMMWEST 2004 RENO must rightly go to the leaders and other hard working volunteers of the ARRL Nevada Section. Especially those of the greater Reno area.

EM doesn't accept any commercial advertisements, but we do recognize and list vendors who trade in EMCOMM related products and also support our efforts. If you wish to support EMCOMM MONTHLY and EMCOMM.ORG, periodically send a donation in whatever amount you think that our services are worth to you. Oh yes, "it's never too late" to get an amateur radio license. And what better tribute could you give to your father? – DW

BOOK REVIEW - "Ham Radio For Dummies" - by Jerry Boyd, KW7J

You might ask what a book review of "Ham Radio For Dummies" is doing in Emcomm Monthly. The book, authored by Ward Silver, N0AX is 341 pages of information for "would be" amateurs as well as new amateurs. It covers a variety of subjects from how to become licensed to how to set up and operate a station—and everything in between. So why feature this book here? Because the author, among his many other amateur radio interests (he's a top contest operator and DX'er) is "EmComm active" in the State of Washington. Plus, he clearly understands and often states in the book the correct basis and purpose of the amateur radio service. On the book's cover emergency service is mentioned and Chapter 10 is devoted entirely to the various aspects of EmComm including traffic handling. If you know someone who might be interested in becoming a ham and want to encourage them to do so for the right reason, this is the book for them! Information on purchasing the book at: permcoordinator@wiley.com or visit: www.dummies.com/WileyCDA/DummiesTitle/productCd-0764559877.html

NETWORK NEWS

NETWORK NEWS, provides schedules and updates on regional, national, and international specialty EMCOMM and TRAFFIC nets. NN is not intended to duplicate other resources such as the:

ARRL Net Directory: (ISBN: 0-87259-835-7) #8357 \$5.00

ARRL Net Search: www.arrl.org/FandES/field/nets/client/update.html

EMCOMM.ORG NET DIRECTORY PAGE: www.emcomm.org/netdirectory/

RADIO WATCH • MONITOR • CALLING • TRAFFIC • EMCOMM • GUARD

- 7111 kHz DAYTIME / 3711 kHz NIGHTTIME / 146.52 MHz
- ALASKA WATCH - 3534 / 7042 kHz / 14.050 MHz
- NEVADA ARES MONITOR/CALLING SSB: 3965 ± kHz SSB
- NATIONAL RADIO EMERGENCY NETWORK: 7068 / 10122 / 14050 kHz •
- WEST COAST NET (WCN) Slow Speed Traffic/Training Daily 1900 Pacific 3702 kHz
- Alaska-Pacific Emergency Preparedness Net 1630Z 14.292 MHz

- IMRA TRAFFIC NET (INTERNATIONAL MISSION RADIO ASSOCIATION)
14.280 MHz USB M-F 1800Z (summer) 1900Z (winter)
- ARES 146.55 MHz
- ARES/Red Cross 147.42 MHz
- NATIONAL CALLING (and Wilderness Protocol) 146.52 MHz
- WILDERNESS PROTOCOL (ref. June 1996 QST, page 85).

Primary frequency: 146.52 MHz (FM simplex). Secondary frequencies: 446.0, 223.5, 52.525 and 1294.5 MHz. All stations (both fixed, portable or mobile) monitor the primary (and secondary if possible) frequency(s) every three hours starting at 7:00 am local time, for five minutes (7:00-7:05 AM, 10:00-10:05 AM, etc.) Additionally, stations that have sufficient power resources monitor for five minutes starting at the top of every hour, or continuously."

WINCOM NETWORK

WINCOM is for ARRL Official Emergency Stations, Official Relay Stations, ARES stations, and other EMCOMM stations in Washington, Idaho, Nevada, California, Oregon, Montana and any other affiliated EMCOMM stations within range. Scheduled nets on the 1st and 3rd Wednesdays at 1930 Pacific Time zone on 3987 kHz (down) SSB.

The WINCOM NETWORK may be activated during disasters, communications system failures, and other emergency incidents as a regional SSB network for tactical and/or formal EMCOMM traffic. WINCOM is not intended to replace local or section ARES or RACES nets, but rather to supplement and provide regional support by skilled operators who know each other and work together on a regular basis.

EMCOMM stations are encouraged to monitor and/or use these frequencies for routine calling and for a RADIO WATCH during actual or potential incidents. (During actual events move message traffic at least 5 kHz up or down.) Nighttime: 3987 kHz (down) 1982 kHz (down) alternate). Daytime: 7232 kHz (up) NOTE: These frequencies may be in use for other scheduled ARES section or state nets.

Always yield for scheduled nets. E.g. - JNN is daily at 1200 Pacific on 7232 kHz SSB.

HELPFUL URLS

- NATIONAL HURRICANE CENTER AMATEUR RADIO STATION
<http://www.fiu.edu/orgs/w4ehw/>
- HURRICANE FREQUENCY LISTINGS
<http://www.qsl.net/g3yrc/hurricane.htm>

EMCOMM TRAFFIC TRAINING (ETT)

--.- - -.-.

"For want of a letter, a word was lost.

For want of a word, the message was lost.

For want of a message, a life was lost."

.-.-.

CW NIGHTLY SLOW SPEED (10 WPM) TRAINING-TRAFFIC WEST COAST NET (WCN)

- NIGHTLY 3702 kHz ± 1900 Pacific Time
- SSB ON-THE-AIR RADIOGRAM TRAINING-PRACTICE NET (WEST COAST)
- WEDNESDAYS 3987 kHz ± 2000 Pacific Time (approx.)
- BEGINS shortly after WINCOM and/or SV Section ARRL/ARES NET.
- NON-HF HAMS AND SWLS ARE INVITED TO LISTEN AND COPY.
- A SPECIAL CERTIFICATE IS AVAILABLE to anyone who submits a correct copy of at least one of the transmitted RADIOGRAMS postmarked within three (3) days of the practice session.
- Use standard ARRL RADIOGRAM format and send to: EMCOMM, PO Box 99,

Macdoel, CA 96058. (Enclose a #10 self-addressed stamped envelope.)
NOTE: When band conditions are poor or there is thunderstorm activity in the area,
the SSB training-practice net may be cancelled. Listen the following Wednesday.

-...-

TRAINING RADIOGRAMS SENT DURING JUNE 2004 ON 3987 (SSB)
SENDING STATION -- K6SOJ
RECEIVING STATIONS -- WO6P AB6UE WB6AGR W6DHN KA7FOO W7IBN6GJM K6PTT
KQ6YW
(Permission granted to use the TEST messages below for training purposes)

NR 116 TEST W W6SOJ ARL5 SHERMAN OAKS CA JUN 2

ALGONQUIN CALHOUN
113 PEPPER ST
LOS ANGELES CA 90023
213 555 9476

TEST MESSAGE X ARL FIVE

ROSIE

NR 117 TEST W W6SOJ ARL23 INDIO CA 1645PDT JUN 1

CLARENCE ROGERS
4448 N POPLAR RD
RIVERSIDE CA 98746
714 555 5119

TEST MESSAGE X ARL ONE
X WE ARE LODGED AT
DESERT SONG MOTEL ON HWY
111 ROOM 4 THERMAL CA
X PHONES OUT

ROBERTA

NR 118 TEST R W6SOJ ARL17 SIERRA VIEW CA JUN 15

ENRIQUE SALAZAR
45698 OLD RIVER RD
SALINAS CA 93901
408 555 7232

TEST MESSAGE X ARL SIXTY
FOUR X TALL PINES CAMP
X NO PHONE HERE X
ARL SEVEN

HERALDO

NR 119 TEST R N6GJM ARL18 SALINAS CA JUN 16

HERALDO VIERRA
TALL PINES CAMP
SIERRA VIEW CA

TEST MESSAGE X ARL TWENTY
THREE X I PLAN TO
VISIT YOU THIS SATURDAY X
WILL BRING CHARCOAL

ENRIQUE

NR 120 TEST R W6SOJ 25 SIERRA VIEW CA JUN 16

ENRIQUE SALAZAR
45698 OLD RIVER RD
SALINAS CA 93901
408 555 7232

TEST MESSAGE X FROM TUNERVILLE
TAKE COUNTY RD 14 NORTH
7 MILES TO USFS 12
X FS12 EAST 4 MILES
X WATCH FOR WOODEN SIGN

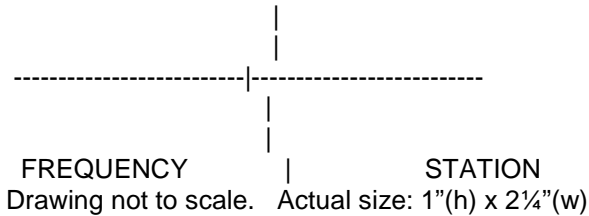
HERALDO

SPECIALTY PRODUCTS

NOW AVAILABLE! -- "MESSAGE SERVICE CROSS" (RUBBER STAMP)

- Makes the "record" part of record message traffic easy and efficient
- Use on any message form or on plain paper
- A message received and forwarded should be stamped twice (L lower / R lower)
- Check TOR (Time Received) or TOD (Time Delivered / Forwarded)
- Available in two styles:
 - Order: SIRS - Self inking rubber stamp - \$15.00 each postpaid
 - Order: WHRS - Wood handle (traditional) rubber stamp - \$12.00 each postpaid
- Advance orders being accepted. Order yours today!
- Specify style an quantity and send check or money order to:
 - EMCOMM Rubber Stamp Offer
 - P O Box 99
 - Macdoel, CA 96058
- Allow 2 to 4 weeks for delivery

TIME TOR |
 TOD | DATE



SUGGESTIONS ON HOW TO USE RADIOGRAM TRAINING AND PRACTICE SESSIONS

For ARES leaders (within range of course):

- 1) Organize small "study groups" to meet at a HF capable ham's shack, an EOC or club station, or the home of anyone with a short-wave receiver. Pass out blank forms and have your members copy the RADIOGRAMS. Follow the on-the-air session with a discussion period and refreshments. Have printed reference material, such as the ARRL Net Directory on hand.
- 2) Tape record the on-the-air sessions and play them back at your local meetings. Provide blank forms and have your ARES members copy the RADIOGRAMS. Follow with a critique and discussion period (and refreshments)! Have printed reference material, such as the ARRL Net Directory on hand.
- 3) A few ARES units around the country have been using the RADIOGRAMS published in the EM in training session...both on-the-air and/or in classroom settings. Feel free to use any/all if it helps!

"TRAFFIC HANDLER'S MANTRA" (Recite to help remember the eight parts in preamble):

"No • Prepared • Ham • Should • Copy • Priority • Traffic • Delayed"

(NUMBER-PRECEDENCE-HX-STATION OF ORIGIN-CHECK-PLACE OF ORIGIN-TIME-DATE)

RETRO REVIEW - "EMCOMM viewed through the Retrospect-O-Scope"

+ THE WELL EQUIPPED AMATEUR RADIO STATION

[Refer: ECWB No. 125 www.emcomm.org/svares/archives/number125.htm]

Whether you are a skilled EMMCOMM operator, a serious traffic handler, or simply a hobby operator; listed below are a few accoutrements that will make ham radio more enjoyable and efficient in your own "WELL EQUIPPED AMATEUR STATION".

- Ideally you'll have a RADIO ROOM. But that is a luxury that many hams just don't enjoy. But you should have some kind of designated space. Whether it's a corner of a room, a closet, an attic space, or in the basement or garage. Some hams use a camp trailer or camper in their back yard as their "shack"
- A well lighted desk or table and a comfortable chair.
- Accurate battery clock (Two are better. One set for local time and one for UTC.)
- Wall calendar. (REMINDER...the UTC/GMT/ZULU date is tomorrow after 0000 UTC until midnight your local time.)
- Flashlight or other emergency light source.
- Logbook(s), note books, 3x5" index cards and file, QSL cards, etc.
- ARRL Repeater Directory, Operating guide, local and regional emergency plan, antenna books, recent issues of QST, and a recent copy of FCC "Part 97".
- Telephone list and appropriate telephone books. (See "Ready Book" below.)
- Maps. Local, state, regional and world. Road, political and topographic. Forest service, BLM, aeronautical and nautical. Amateur radio call area and zone. It is impossible to have too many!
- Current world postal guide, plus stamps, envelopes, address labels, etc.
- Recent World Almanac.
- Extra pens and pencils (+ sharpener).

- A safe place (where it won't get spilled) for your cup, mug, or plate.
- File folders and cabinet(s).
- Weather station or outdoor thermometer (properly shaded).
- Wallpaper. (FCC license, certificates, awards, QSL cards, snapshots, pennants, other memorabilia, and whatever else may be important to you.
- All serious EMCOMM operators keep a READY BOOK handy! A 3-ring "half-size" binder, that accepts 5½ x 8½ paper works very well, It stands up nicely on the desk and is handy for "grab 'n go". A section for EMERGENCY numbers, names and addresses is essential. Lists of contact persons in FIRE, OES, SAR, Red Cross, U.S. Coast Guard and NWS. Also have a section with lists of VHF and HF net frequencies and schedules, severe WEATHER reporting criteria, media contacts, plus one addresses and phone numbers.
- All serious TRAFFIC HANDLERS keep a good supply of message blanks or paper, headphones (a must), and a (non-electric) typewriter "at the ready".
- There is more that could be added to this list...but this should provide a great start towards setting up a "WELL EQUIPPED AMATEUR STATION".

QSH ! EM's Quiz, Satire ;-), and [attempt at] Humor :-) Section

RADIO OXYMORONS

- "Negative Copy"
- "Wireless Cable"
- "Mobile Station"
- "Bootleg Ham"
- "Mobile. No Traffic." (If in Los Angeles, New York or some other urban quagmire.)

EM'S JULY SURVEY:

Considering all factors, features and qualities, if you could have only ONE XCVR for EMCOMM work, what make and model would YOU choose?

Take our EM reader's survey now at: www.emcomm.org/em/survey/ Read the results of this SURVEY in the next issue of EMCOMM MONTHLY.

IN THE JUNE SURVEY EM ASKED:

Suppose it is the year 2020. You are being interviewed by a reporter who asks you to give a one word answer to this question: "What killed amateur radio?" After thinking about it...what is your answer?

OUR READERS REPLIED:

"Disuse" - Bruce Webb, AD6RV, Lookout, CA
 "Lackofuseinterestanddiscipline" (real funny OM) - Richard Cloyd, W06P, Shingletown, CA
 "Apathy" - Casey McPartland, W7IB, Loomis CA
 "Infighting" - James Wades, WB6SIW, Grand Rapids, MI
 "Laziness" - Curt Benjamin, K8AI, Grand Rapids, MI
 "Mediocrity" - Pat Lambert, WØIPL, Longmont, CO
 "Apathy" - Warren Grandall, KF6PQM, Meadow Valley, CA
 "BPL" - Ray Bass, Sr., W7YKN, Sparks, NV
 "Apathy" - Mike D'Antonio, KC2GMH, Alma, NY
 "Hazing" - Rick Aldom, W7STS, Maricopa County, Arizona
 "Inaction" - Richard Nehrbass, N7TGB, Sun Valley, Nevada
 "BPL" - Terence A. Sturmey, KB6TR, Millbrae, California
 Op-Ed: WHAT KILLED AMATEUR RADIO? - by D. W. Thorne, K6SOJ

There is no single answer to the question, "What killed amateur radio"? It may not actually die; but as is true with most other technologies, it is in a constant state of flux. I submit that it will continue to *morph** to the point that it would not be recognized by the radio pioneers. It is

changing rapidly, almost on a logarithmic scale, and it will continue to evolve. Sadly, amateur radio's historic and traditional role will not survive. But then, what else has remained the same as it was 50 or 100 years ago? All of the factors suggested above have, and will, contribute to the eventual extinction of amateur radio as *radiophiles* have known and loved it. But like all great love affairs it must eventually come to an end.

Ironically, the factor that will contribute the most to the demise of amateur radio is what actually spawned it over one hundred years ago. That factor is: "Technology". (BPL Internet service may prove to be the lethal injection.) The Industrial Revolution of the late 19th century produced a climate wherein amateur technology (of many disciplines) blossomed. Amateur scientists and experimenters contributed greatly to the subsequent and present culture of professional engineering, research and development.

Early hams built all of their own gear. If they didn't learn Morse code, they were unable to communicate. Within a few decades however, professional technology, engineering and modern manufacturing methods took over and surpassed what most amateurs were able to accomplish by tinkering around in their garages, barns or basements. Today, the ham who actually builds his or her own transmitter or receiver (if even from a kit) and actually operates it on-the-air is a rarity. Even if most hams no longer build their own rigs, how many even own a manufactured (vintage) radio that they can actually repair if necessary?

The number of radio amateurs who experience the excitement and satisfaction that comes from communicating via radio over great distances, using devices that they have assembled and connected to a wire suspended over their house continue to decline with each passing day.

The magic of radio remains alive with fewer and fewer, because to experience this adventure; one must be willing to spend some time studying basic electronic theory and expend some actual effort.

Tapping out a CQ on a J-38 on cold, clear starry night, and then listening in headphones for that weak and distant reply, no longer holds much magic for most prospective 21st century armchair travelers. The magic of long distance communications has been usurped by more modern technologies. The thrill of a distant radio contact or a round robin rag chew has been replaced by email, cell phone text messaging, the Internet "chat room", and the radio-landline hybrid: IRLP.

I can still recall how excited I was when my first QSL card arrived in the mail! Whether from a neighboring county or from half-way around the world, the best mail is the mail with a personal, human, touch! I treasure the subtle beauty of a unusual card or even the envelope. Often with a few beautiful and unusual postage stamps, or some rubber stamp logo or sticker decorating the backside. Even the envelope is often worth saving and it's a real treat when the sender has enclosed a photo, a clipping, or some other interesting souvenir. Yes, I still enjoy receiving real mail.

I still send and receive a few real QSL cards, and derive great pleasure from including a personal note or some item that I hope the recipient will enjoy.

I wonder how many hams licensed in the last twenty years have never experienced the pleasure of exchanging QSL cards. Sadly, I have met hams who confess that they have never had their own QSL cards. Today, some amateurs exchange QSL "cards" via email. Technology strikes again! Sorry...a "virtual QSL card" just doesn't do it for me. It's about as satisfying as a glass of virtual wine or a virtual Porterhouse steak.

As far as I am concerned, without the *gestalt* ** of radio, there is no magic.

To me, radio is sound. It is weak Morse signals or elusive SSB voice transmissions mingled with static and fading in and out. FM, repeaters, and modern high-tech audio circuits have eliminated much of the thrill, the adventure, and other challenges for many amateurs.

To me, radio is sight. It's the glow of the dial lamps or better yet, the quiet warm glow of tubes sending my signals out across the miles. It's the view you get from your roof or tower while working on an antenna, or from a mountain top while operating as a VHF relay.

To me, radio is smell. It's the smell of ozone emitted by the arcing of a rotary switch or a dusty power supply. The smell of old paper-wax capacitors in a musty old cigar box. It's the sweet odor of the radiophile's incense, the essence of rosin core solder rising up as if it was an offering to the messenger god Mercury.

To me, radio is touch. It's the sensation in your fingertips as you gently turn your rig's main tuning dial. It's the ischemic discomfort of your ears from prolonged use of headphones with worn-out padding. It's even the smug rewarding feeling in your fingers as you proudly write a rare entry with pen or pencil in your logbook.

To me, radio is taste. A cup of coffee that you savor while sitting at your console on a long winter night while tuning across the bands searching for a weak signal station from across the ocean or over the pole. It's a stale sandwich hastily eaten between contacts on Field Day.

To me, radio is art. Have you ever noticed that the FCC uses the term "art" twice in reference to amateur radio in Part 97.1? The ability of humans to effectively communicate is not an exact science. It is truly...an art form! Also, the radios that we use to communicate (especially vintage sets) are, often, works of art. Sculptures of metal and glass or wood and even plastic. To a true radiophile, a National or Hallicrafters or Swan or the rugged beauty of some military radio communications equipment that has been modified for amateur use. To me, these are each "a thing of beauty and a joy forever!"

To me, radio is public service. Knowing that you have put your abilities and special skills to work to benefit a neighbor or a stranger when you have sent or received a piece of welfare traffic that has put someone's anxiety to rest.

We all know that "hobby operating" is not allowed on government or military or business band radio frequencies. And does anyone recall that the 11 meter "Citizens Band" was originally restricted to only business, personal, and public service communications? And then...only if and when necessary!

Commercial broadcast stations are required to provide a certain amount of free air time for community and public service announcements. Can't you just imagine the weeping, wailing and gnashing of teeth if Uncle Charlie ever decided to make it a requirement for all radio amateurs to learn how to, and provide a certain amount of meaningful public service and/or EMCOMM in order to retain their radio privileges? And imagine what would happen if prospective amateurs would be required to demonstrate skill in handling formal message traffic in order to obtain an entry level amateur license!

But the day of skilled amateur radio operators passing formal message traffic (in any significant quantity) after a winter storm or a summer hurricane has knocked out all landline services, for government or private agencies is rapidly becoming history. Sophisticated and very high tech automated technologies have virtually eliminated the need for our traditional services.

And anyone who believes that self-funded radio amateurs (with few exceptions) are interested in or can ever hope to keep up or compete with these state-of-the-art and very expensive technologies developed by professional designers and engineers in the laboratories of huge corporations is not in touch with reality.

Let's face it folks, technology has produced a lot of very sophisticated automated computerized communications systems utilizing VHF, UHF, and microwave technologies that are really are (almost) "fail safe"; and they are widely used by government and commercial services. Does anyone really believe that any significant number of amateurs will be able to, or have the financial resources, to even come remotely close to duplicating what is now, or will be, in operation?

If and when these systems ever do fail, the amateur radio community will not be able to even come close to handling all of the demand for radio communications. Imagine some future 21st and-a-half Century Mad Max scenario. The infrastructure has been destroyed or is in the complete control of some evil empire. The search would be on for "any and all old time operators, who know how to communicate using home-brew gear and using an obsolete language called Morse".

Many hams alive today have never read FCC Part 97. And if they have, it was probably so long ago that they have long forgotten what it says. Do you know that the word service appears five times in Part 97.1 alone?

More food for thought: "Let the government do it. That's what I pay taxes for!", is a pervasive attitude in today's society that was unheard of a hundred years ago. Just imagine...if only ten per cent of the 600,000+ licensed amateurs in the United States were to become trained in formal (record) message traffic handling, we would have over 60,000 "IFR" (Infrastructure Free Radio) EMCOMM stations in the U.S. alone! An average of 1,200 per state. What a tremendous resource!

As it is now, government at all levels, and some private non-profit organizations, are spending millions of tax-payer dollars for communications equipment and staff that amateur radio operators could and should provide for little or no cost!

Of course if an attempt was ever made to seriously tap into this amateur resource, it would mean that all of the amateur resistors and parasitic oscillators would have to get up off their keisters and actually do something constructive. Instead of spending hours and hours ad nauseum on-the-air jawing about their recent colonoscopy (thank goodness they don't all have ATV!) they would actually have to do something worthwhile. And for those who do not possess the mental capacitance to learn how to, or want to, perform public service, maybe they should be banned to the Internet.

Will this ever actually happen? I doubt it. Call me a pessimist if you must. And I will respond by saying, "a pessimist is a well-informed optimist".

I predict that amateur radio will continue to split into two main camps. The majority of ham radio will become exam free, or possibly require a simple token exam with a few questions about some basic regulations. The number of "hams" will increase...while the amateur bands "shrink". A portion of each band will become a hobby band with all modes legal anywhere in the band. Operating discipline will be a thing of the past (it almost is now) and any effective EMCOMM will be next to impossible.

Small sub-bands for public service only, tightly regulated by government, will be designated. Only registered operators handling authorized communications will be permitted to transmit within those segments. Non-government organizations (NGOs) who do not subject themselves to government control will not be permitted in these portions of the spectrum, but they will be allowed to use the hobby sub-bands for EMCOMM.

Boot-leggers, free-banders, and jammers will proliferate. Uncle Charlie (or his successor) will occasionally "nail" someone and make an example out of him or her.

Amateur radio clubs, which were once the backbone of amateur radio, will become social in purpose. There will be no need for radio instruction or license exams. QRP, home-brew and radio kit building will continue and there will be a few publications to serve those special interest groups. Same for vintage radio aficionados. The few remaining radio-telegraphers and vintage radio enthusiasts will be relegated to the same category as Civil War re-enactors.

Ham radio magazines will continue to "fold". Those that survive will do so by becoming more and more computer (and other high technologies) oriented, focusing on the hobby aspects of technology, and driven by advertisements from the few remaining major manufacturers producing consumer goods of interest to high tech hobbyists.

In the meantime, is there still a need for amateur radio EMCOMM operators? Is there any niche that we can fill and thereby fulfill the "Basis and Purpose" of the amateur service as defined in FCC Part 97? Can amateur radio EMCOMM serve a meaningful purpose? Is there anything that we can provide...that the others can't?

Consider these qualities that are unique to the Amateur Radio Service. Currently:

- All operators must pass an FCC exam and are licensed.
- All operators have knowledge of technical skills, regulations, and procedures.
- Very wide range of frequency bands, privileges and modes. (1.8 MHz to above 300GHz)
- May / build / repair / modify amateur radio transmitters.
- Is not "channelized" (except for 60M). Amateurs are free to tune infinite frequencies to avoid QRM, etc.
- Is "infrastructure free" and is not dependent upon landline services, satellite, or internet.
- Can be QRV within minutes just about anytime, anywhere.
XCVR, battery, mast or wire in tree, key or mic, pencil and pad of paper: ON-THE-AIR!
- There is NO COST to government, private organizations, or the general public.
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* Morph - "...a local population of a species that consists of interbreeding organisms and is distinguishable from other populations by morphology or behavior though capable of interbreeding with them."

* Gestalt - "a structure, configuration, or pattern of physical, biological, or psychological phenomena so integrated as to constitute a functional unit with properties not derivable by summation of its parts."

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