What's Up With SKYWARN?

by John Leitten KA2RFT

SKYWARN is a service to the public provided by the cooperation of the National Weather Service and Amateur Radio. The National Weather Service and the ARRL (the principal organization representing hams nationwide) have signed an agreement to work together to enhance the SKYWARN network.

Some offices which do not already have a SKYWARN network in place, for example Binghamton, are using the ARRL, specifically ARES, to establish their networks.

On the local scene, the Buffalo office is working through ARES to obtain resources ($$$) from the county and state to obtain a packet system for the Western New York SKYWARN program.

To most people familiar with the current SKYWARN program, there will be little noticeable difference. In cases of severe weather, a ham will be called to the Buffalo Weather Service office to operate the base station radio and search out reports of dangerous weather. If all goes as planned, the Buffalo office will also have a packet system to receive additional reports.

The facts are:

1. ARES is not attempting a hostile takeover of

March Meeting

The March club meeting will be held at the Hamburg Youth Center (Prospect Ave. and Hawkins Ave.) on Thursday March 3 at 7:00 PM. All interested in amateur radio are invited; neither club membership nor an amateur radio license is required.

Our program for the meeting will have a theme of "Involving Youth in Amateur Radio." We will show a short video of the award-winning program of Carole Perry from Long Island, NY.

Randy Schueler KA2RFW will talk about STARS program at the Hamburg Youth Center and will have some of his students tell of their radio experiences. Joe Claus KB2JDB will also talk about his work with students in a school environment.

Everyone says that we should involve younger people in amateur radio, and this program may give you some ideas of how you can do it! We encourage you to invite young people to this meeting!

SKYWARN in Western New York.

2. The 2-meter radio will remain at the Buffalo office, and this summer will continue to be the primary means of sharing information.

3. STARS never has or never will run SKYWARN. As amateurs, we volunteer to provide a service. SKYWARN belongs to all of Western New York.

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★ STARS ★

STARS & ARRL Memberships

Membership in STARS is open to anyone with an interest in amateur radio; an amateur radio license is not required.

Membership applications may be obtained by sending a SASE to Frank Modzelewski WG2H, 1818 Clinton Street, Buffalo, NY 14206, from the newsletter editor or from board members.

Annual dues are payable on January 1 and are $15 for a single membership, $23 for family memberships and $8 for a student membership (through grade 12). The dues are pro-rated on a monthly basis for new members plus there is an initiation fee of $5 when first applying to the club. For example, a new member joining in July would pay $7.50 (6 months X $1.25/month) plus the $5.00 initiation fee for a total of $12.50.

Applications should be returned to Frank WG2H along with the appropriate dues. The applications will be reviewed and voted on by the Board of Directors at their business meeting. The applications are then voted on by the general membership at the next regular club meeting.

Members should send their ARRL renewal memberships to Jack Cullum, Jr. KB2ESM, 6871 Webster Rd., Orchard Park, NY 14127 along with a check made out to STARS. No extra cost to you and STARS benefits!

Club Nets

STARS HF net meets at 10 AM local time on Saturdays on 3.925 Mhz +/- QRM. Net control is usually Guz WB2EZU.

STARS VHF net meets at 7 PM on Wednesdays on STARS club repeater WB2ELW 147.09/.69 (output/input). Net control is Tony KB2OUT.

STARS Traders Net meets at 7:30 PM on Tuesdays on the 147.09 repeater. Net control is Dennis K2CEC.

SKYWARN
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The above are the facts of what's happening to SKYWARN in Western New York. It's time to stop the gossip, rumors and in-fighting and look ahead to the 1994 summer weather season.

If you want to find out anything else pertaining to the local SKYWARN program, call Judy Levan N2TEZ at the Buffalo NWS office at 632-1319. She manages the SKYWARN program there and can tell you the truth of what's going on with SKYWARN.

Finally, for those interested, SKYWARN training will be held:

Mon., March 14 at 7:30 PM at Albion
Tues., March 14 at 7:30 PM at ARATS
Fri., March 18 at 7:30 PM at Batavia
Wed., April 6 at 7:30 PM at PROS

The hams in Western New York have done an excellent job with SKYWARN in the past. The Weather Service needs that to continue.

March of Dimes Walkathon

HI,

We are looking for volunteers in the Lockport Area that could help out with communications Saturday April 23, 1994 for the "94 March of Dimes Walkathon". All voluteers interested must have either a VHF or UHF HT.

The date for this activity is Saturday April 23. Hams will be asked to assemble about 8:30 AM and this activity should last not later than about 2:00 PM that afternoon.

If you live in this area and would like more information please leave me a msg. on this Mailbox,

Tnx. Ray Baker - N2DAY
EC/RO Erie County

STARS GOSSIP COLUMN

Well, the February meeting was another bell ringer for **STARS**. Jim KF2LN, who operates the DX packet cluster for DXers, gave a hands-on exhibition of what to expect from the cluster and how they can connect to other clusters in the USA in order to share info on stations throughout the world.

Jim is a very dedicated SYSOP and makes sure everything is operating smoothly. It was nice of him to bring some of the units that make a packet cluster operate. It always makes you feel good to see how things operate and ask questions that you always wanted to know the answers to. They put up two clusters and connected to an outside node for a nice display.

It sure looks easy to see it work so nice in a make shift station. The equipment was more than you need, so don't think you have to have as much equipment as Jim displayed.

Maybe now you will be more interested in packet radio that you have seen a complete station. At home, you only need a computer & monitor (or dumb terminal), a TNC, a 2-meter radio and an antenna.

There are quite a few members in packet radio, and I am sure they will be a big help to you to get started.

Remember **STARS** has one of the best informational BBS's and fact finding units around. After you get used to it, you will wonder why you went without it for so long. The SYSOP is Greg KE2VW, and he sure keeps it up to date all the time.

The Nike Base station has been open on Saturdays for awhile on a trial basis. It was done so that most members that work can get a chance to come down and enjoy the nice super station set-up. Elsewhere in this newsletter will be a sked of times and hours of operation. I understand that these may be flexible.

Well, about this time the Board of Directors and officers have started to pick out the chairpersons for the 1994 year.

Happy Hamming Guz WB2EZU

New Members

We want to welcome the following new STARS members:

Janet Mischel   N2ENG Technician
Joseph Krawczyk N2XBN Technician
Mark Kogutowski N2XBH Technician
Lee Rose   KB2IHJ Technician
Kenneth Brzyski N2NOE Technician
Paul Zielinski   WA2CEN General
James Brooks Jr. N2UPN General
Jim Luscher   AA2EN Extra
William Parker   N2WYA Technician

1994 Roster

We will be including a new 1994 club roster with next month's newsletter. If you have any changes, please get them into Terry KM4XZ quickly so we can get them made in time! If you haven't paid your 1994 dues, you won't be in the roster!

Nike Base Open Saturdays

The remodel of the operating room at **STARS** Nike Base HF Club Station has now basically been completed by Bob WA2IQX and Jake KB2NNN, and it looks beautiful. We have switched our weekly openings from Monday nights to Saturday afternoon from 1 to 3 PM based upon the survey results from our members. We hope that you will come out to operate or just to sit and talk. If you have radio questions, it is a good chance to ask someone about them, too.

Buy/Sell/Trade

Any STARS members who would like to take advantage of listing the items you have for sale or may be looking for (amateur related only) on Packet radio, can give me a call at 826-7643 and ask for Tony (KB2OUT). If you have any questions Please feel free to call me.

Tony J. Balas Jr . KB2OUT

"PACKET RACKET"
an introduction to packet radio, part 2

In the first part of this series you were acquainted, in general terms, with what packet radio is all about... what it is, its uses, the equipment used and how its transmitted. Now we're going to tll you how to get on the air, make a QSO, and become familiar with your packet station's operatins. Whether you're new to packet, or are one of the "old timers", (with 3 or 4 years of experience), this series should help you. Even if you don't have a packet station currently, keep this article handy for future use.

The equipment needed to get on the air is a Vhf or Uhf transceiver, a computer or terminal, and a TNC - the terminal node controller - the little black box we talked about in part 1. (There is packet activity on Hf, but VHF/Uhf is where all the action is. It's the best place to start out.)

When you buy a TNC and take it out of the box, you'll find cables supplied for connecting it to the radi, but you'll have to attach the appropriate microphone and speaker jack connectors for the radio you're going to use. You will also have to furnish the cable that connects the TNC to your computer or terminal. In most cases, the standard RS-232 port is used between the TNC and computer, however this varies with the computer and TNC used. The operating manuals supplied with the TNC contain information on various computers and the cabling required to hook to that TNC. READ YOUR TNC MANUAL VERY CAREFULLY!. Most companies have written excellent manuals, and you usually can figure out your setup problems from the information supplied in the manual.

Once you have everything wired and connected together, turn on the computer, load a terminal program (anything used for a phone modem will work for packet) and you should be in the receive mode. Now turn on your radio, making sure the volume is turned up about a quarter turn(9 o'clock position) and the squelch is set at the point where the background noise just dissappears, as it would be set for a voice QSO. Next, turn on the TNC. You should get a "greeting" or sign on message showing the manufacturer's name, software version, etc. If you see a bunch of gibberish, such as &^%$#, it means that the data rate (called baud rate) of the TNC and computer are not the same. Check you

TNC manual for instructions on setting the baud rate. If you don't see a "greeting" or the gibberish, check your cables/connections to be sure that you have everything connected properly, ie. that the correct wires are on the correct pins, etc.

Now we need to explain the three levels of communicating you can do from the keyboard. First, you can communicate with your computer for setting up the terminal program; second, you can communicate with the TNC directly; and third, you can communicate with the radio. It's very important that you know which level you're in when working packet. The computer level varies among different models and types, but once you get the terminal program and are ready to receive data, you're ready to talk to the TNC!

First, do a "control C" (press the CNTL and the letter C simultaneously). This puts the TNC in COMMAND mode, the level where you communicate with it directly from the keyboard. You should see "cmd:" on your screen. Enter Enter "MYCALL XX2XX" with your callsign in place of the XX2XX, followed by a carriage return (CR). ALL COMMANDS ARE FOLLOWED BY A (CR). This command putsinto the TNC memory the callsign you're going to use on the air. Then if you type "MYCALL" (CR) again, it should respond with the callsign you enterred. If it does, you've proven that the computer to TNC linkup is working fine. If you do not see anything on the screen when you type, try typing: ECHO ON (CR). If you see two of everything you type, such as MMYYCCAALLLL, type: ECHO OFF (CR).

You're now ready to go on the air! Tune the receiver to any odd frequency between 144.91 and 145.09, or 145.51 and 145.79 that has some activity on it and set the rig up for simplex operation. Type "MONITOR ON" (CR), then

Amateur Radio Examinations

STARS will hold test sessions on March 26 and June 11, 1994 at the Hamburg Youth Center (Prospect and Hawkins Aves.). Walk-ins should arrive by 9:00 AM and pre-registered candidates should arrive by 9:45. The tests start at 10 AM. For information on **STARS** test sessions, contact Norm Jones KD2KK at 824-1148.

Lancaster ARC (LARC) will hold test sessions on March 16, April 20, May 18 and June 15, 1994 in Lancaster, NY. For information, call Chuck Koester WD2AIK at 937-3592.

ARATS will hold test sessions on March 5, April 9, May 7 and June 11, 1994 in N. Tonawanda, NY. For information, call Vern Siegel AA2AC at 693-5977 (days) or 634-5276 (nights).

Lockport ARA (LARA) will hold a test session April 30, 1994 in Lockport, NY. For information, call Judy Cianchetti at 751-9223.

Most sessions except for **STARS** do not allow walk-ins, so call ahead and make a reservation.

watch the screen. You should soon be seeing the packets that you are hearing. Watch for callsigns with a * next to it, such as KM4XZ-1*, KE2SR-1*, or KB2JDB-2*. Callsigns identified with an asterisk indicate stations your packet station heard directly.

On packet, you can have up to 16 different stations on the air at the same time using the same callsign! That's where the numbers come into play. The calls WE2Y, WE2Y-1, WE2Y-2, WE2Y-3, WE2Y-4 and WE2Y-5 are all individual stations operating under the same station license.

Now, bfe you try to make your firt QSO with someone else, you should check out your equipment to make sure it's set up properly. To do that, you should CONNECT to yourself. Note one of the callsigns you logged previously. Make sure your radio is still tuned to the frequency where you heard that call, then enter the following: " C XX2XX V YY2YY " (CR), where XX2XX is your callsign and YY2YY is the call of the station you logged. The C means CONNECT and the V means VIA. "C XX2XX

V WE2Y-1" means connect to XX2XX via WE2Y-1. You should soon see "*** CONNECTED to XX2XX on the screen. You have now enterred the third level of communications, called CONVERSE mode, and this is where you communicate from the keyboard to the radio. Anything you type on the keyboard will be transmitted over the air as a packet whenever you hit a (CR). If you enter "Test" (CR) you should see "Test" a second time on the screen, as it's transmitted, then digipeated (repeated), an sent back to you. In this case you'll only be talking to yourself via the other station, but it's a good way to check to make sure your system is working properly. If it seems to take a while to get a response, your transmitter may be over/under deviating. Read your manual closely for the proper setting of transmitter deviation, to avoid multiple retries on the packets, and "spurious eminations"! If all seems t be working, hit a CONTROL C to put you back into the COMMAND mode where you talk to the TNC. Then type D, which will disconnect you from the other station, and you'll see "DISCONNECTED" on the screen.

Now you're ready to talk to someone else! Watch for a familiar call on the screen while monitoring, or note calls you see frequently. Be sure to note whether or not a digipeater is being used by watching for the location of the *. If you see WA2TVT > KE2VW, K2SLZ-1*, for example, you're actually receiving the packets from K2SLZ-1. When the station you want to contact (connect to) has finished his QSO, enter "C WA2TVT" or "C WA2TVT V K2SLZ-1" (depending on whether or not a digipeater is needed), followed by a (CR). You should get a "*** CONNECTED TO ..." on your screen, which puts you into the converse mode, and you're having your first packet QSO! Anything you type now will be sent to the other station, and whatever he/she types will be sent to you. When you're finished, remember to do a CONTROL C to get back into the command mode, and then enter "D" to disconnect from the other station.

We will continue your digital voyage on your way to lots of packet fun and adventure in the next part of this article! Thanks to WB9LOZ, KB4VOL, KO6GGD, and KA3RFE for text for this series. Until next time, 73, and keep those packets flying!

Greg, KE2VW, SysOp of the
STARS KE2VW BBS.

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Club Repeaters

The club repeater (WB2ELW/R) is located near Colden, NY (147.09/.69 output/input). The repeater is open to all amateurs. Autopatch privileges are available to club members.

The southern club repeater (KE2VW/R) is located in Perrysburg, NY (146.97/.37 output/input, with PL access of 107.2 Mhz). This also is an open repeater.

Club Packet

The club BBS (KE2VW-5) is located in Colden, NY. On 145.71 Mhz: C KE2VW-5 or BBSVW. From the South, on 145.65 Mhz, C BLISS, then C BBSVW. On 446.825 Mhz, you can connect using 9600 baud directly to BBSVW.

Using a telephone modem you can reach the STARS KE2VW BBS by calling 537-9334.

Club Meetings

Club meetings are normally held on the first Thursday of the month at the Hamburg Youth Center (Prospect and Hawkins Aves.) at 7:00 PM. Everyone is welcome; neither club membership nor an amateur radio license is required.

Business meetings are held on the third Thursday of the month at the Hamburg Youth Center at 7:30 PM and are open to all club members.

Club HF Stations

The club Nike Base HF Station (WB2ELW) is located on Lakeview Rd. 1.75 miles e. of Rte 20 next to the Hamburg Town Arena. The station is operated on most Saturdays between 1 and 3 PM local time and is a great DX station. All are welcome.

A second club HF station is located at the Hamburg Youth Center.

STARS

Terry W. Rockhold KM4XZ
4805 Transit Road #1903
Depew, NY 14043
(716) 656-0865

JOHN CULLUM JR. KB2ESM
6871 E. WEBSTER
ORCHARD PARK, NY 14127