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From: Tom Whitehurst, KC5UN, Emergency Coordinator, DeKalb Co., AL

To: Amateur Radio Operators In and Near DeKalb County, Alabama

Subject: Series on Tips for Amateur Radio Emergency Nets

Date: 24 July 2012 (revised 25 February 2020)

Net protocols and etiquette

In DeKalb County and elsewhere, Amateur Radio emergency and traffic nets are intended to assist the community via local served agencies. This can take the form of storm spotting weather nets, assisting critical institutions and organizations with their communications needs when conventional telephone and radio circuits are unavailable, and traffic nets passing health and welfare messages in the aftermath of a disaster, etc.

In order to provide meaningful service to our "customers", our nets need to operate efficiently. Here are some ways net participants can contribute to efficient net operations:

- Listen first,
- Only transmit when checking in, checking out, when called on, or when you have something meaningful to report -- there is nothing wrong with lots of silence during a net,
- REPORT ONLY WHAT YOU SEE WITH YOUR OWN EYES; do not report something you hear on television or your scanner (in the case of weather events, the EMA office monitors TV, our net and public service traffic; they report events directly to the National Weather Service; repeating something you hear elsewhere ties up the net and frustrates EMA staff),
- Think about what you're going to say before you transmit, then say it briskly, and
- Listen some more.

For an example of good net operations listen to air traffic controllers on an approach control frequency at a busy airport next time you're in the big city. HF contesting is another good way to hone listening skills and to practice communicating efficiently.

That's good for starters. Don't be intimidated about checking in and participating in the nets. The best way to feel comfortable with net operations is to listen to and check in to the various VHF and HF practice nets -- there are several available every day.

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