

The SPARK GAP



147.375

Tone=110.9

434.350



Volume 3 Number 1

January 2006

IN THIS ISSUE

- UNUSUAL SIGHTINGS
- HAPPENINGS
- LETTERS
- NETS/FREQS/TIMES
- AREA HAMFESTS
- MINUTES—DECEMBER MEETING

UNUSUAL SIGHTINGS

Is it a car with an antenna on it or an antenna with a car under it? Do you wonder



what the windload is at 70 MPH? This setup belongs to K3LFO-W3DIO

HAPPENINGS

The following article about Broadband over Power Line (BPL) appeared in The ARRL Letter, Vol 24, No 50—just another page in the

ongoing saga of difficulties with the FCC and their enforcement, or lack thereof, of the rules.

==>RESPONSE TO BPL COMPLAINTS AN "ILLUSION" OF RESOLUTION, ARRL SAYS

In a strongly worded letter to the FCC, the League has once again asked the Commission to shut down the Manassas, Virginia, BPL system because it's still causing harmful interference to Amateur Radio and otherwise does not comply with FCC Part 15 rules. The December 19 letter from ARRL General Counsel Chris Imlay, W3KD, was in response to a November 30 letter from Spectrum Enforcement Division Chief Joseph Casey, who suggested further cooperation between the complaining radio amateurs and the city-owned BPL system. Imlay said more meetings and discussions about ongoing interference are no longer productive while "this hopelessly flawed BPL system" is allowed to continue operating.

"These meetings have not produced any solution to the interference problem but have, instead, created the illusion that the problem is being addressed," Imlay wrote. Ham radio complaints of interference from the BPL system date back to early 2004. "This system should have been taken off the air long ago, pending reconfiguration or re-engineering of it," he added, "and the only operating that it should be doing is for purposes of interference testing."

Communication Technologies (COMTek) operates the BPL system over the municipally owned electric power grid using Main.net equipment on frequencies between 4 MHz and 30 MHz. The League said the FCC has not

discharged its "most fundamental obligation" to prevent or resolve interference issues involving the Manassas system, which, the League charged, only remains operating "because the Commission, for political reasons, has consistently refused to enforce its rules with respect to BPL."

The League told Casey that the only solution at this point is to order the Manassas BPL system--an unlicensed RF emitter permitted to operate only on a non-interference basis--to cease operation except to test for interference.

The Part 15 BPL rules the FCC adopted in October 2004 require a BPL operator informed of harmful interference to "investigate the reported interference and resolve confirmed harmful interference . . . within a reasonable period," Imlay pointed out. "No reasoned examination of this case could produce a finding that this rule has been complied with in Manassas," he added.

Imlay says that at a December 13 meeting, COMTek and the City of Manassas "openly acknowledged the interference to amateur stations" but claimed that until a month or so earlier, they had been unable to "notch" amateur allocations because they didn't yet have the equipment to do so. "By the admission of COMTek, the capability of reducing interference in this system does not exist," Imlay noted.

Previous meetings between the complaining radio amateurs and the BPL operator "produced no measurable results," Imlay contended, referring to the response of Donald Blasdell, W4HJL, to Casey on December 9. At one point in the system, interference was reported at S9 plus 40 dB on typical ham gear. "That level precludes virtually all Amateur Radio communications," he asserted.

Imlay took the opportunity to again point out

that the Manassas BPL system is out of compliance with §15.615(a) because its operator failed to provide full information to the public BPL database by the November 19 deadline.

"ARRL again requests that the BPL facility at Manassas, Virginia, be instructed to shut down immediately," the League's letter concluded, "and that it not resume operation unless the entire facility is shown to be in full compliance with Commission rules regarding radiated emissions; with the non-interference requirement of Section 15.5 of the Commission's rules; and not in any case until thirty days subsequent to full compliance with Section 15.615(a) of the rules."

Field tests conducted by Manassas radio amateurs established that the city's BPL system "was an interference generator at distances of hundreds of feet from the modems on overhead power lines," the ARRL told the FCC October 13. "It was also, incidentally, determined that the system was susceptible to interference from nearby radio transmitters operating between 4 and 20 MHz," the League added.

LETTERS

FROM RON ANDERSON, CE, ARES

Hi everybody! I hope you all had a good Christmas.

After thinking about it for some time, I decided to relate to you a few thoughts about ARES and how **ALL OF US** need to be ready in case of an emergency.

I know that all of you want to help when there is an emergency. When a tornado, ice storm or severe weather of any kind strikes, I hear you check into the local nets to see if you can help.

What I don't see from many of you is willing-

ness to get some additional training to become more effective in an emergency. For your information, there is basic training available through FEMA, the ARRL and even through the Emergency Government Director's office in your county.

Here is one site you can contact investigate how to get some of that training:

<http://www.arrl.org/cce/courses.html>

There you will find a complete listing of courses offered including **Level 1 AREC (EC-001)**.

This course is one that I think anyone who wants to help in ARES, should take. There are others that you may take as well if you desire. But, this is the basic course and takes about an hour per week. You are allowed eight weeks to finish the course.

The course is not difficult. Checking into some of the traffic nets will help. The winter season is a good time to get involved since many of us like to spend more time inside when it is cold outside. This will be a great way to help you pass some time this winter.

I know that many of you like to help and your participation is and will be very much appreciated. However, if a genuine emergency occurs, your local EC may not be able to use your help if you are not certified and/or a member of ARES.

We will need your help in an emergency. By being trained in just the basics that the course mentioned above offers, and being a member of the local ARES group you could be contributing a lot to the county and the ARES group, not to mention the peace of mind of your EC.

If we lost all communications in Chippewa County -meaning radios, telephones and cell

phones, even with operators working 12-hour shifts, we would need 146 operators to cover all locations. You can see quickly that our manpower and communications resources would be inadequate to handle such an emergency.

A breakdown of the 146 operators needed in Chippewa County, is as follows:.

- Chippewa County EOC - minimum 2 ops
- Red Cross - minimum 2 ops
- 7 police agencies - minimum 2 ops = 14
- 7 fire units - minimum 2 ops = 14
- 7 ambulance units - minimum 2 ops = 14
- 3 hospitals, minimum 2 ops = 6
- 48 shelters, minimum 2 ops = 96

This does not include other operators needed for relief if the emergency were to extend beyond the first 24 hours. Running twelve-hour shifts is not ideal. It would be the minimum number of people needed. As you can see, it would take the entire membership in the CVARC and the ECARC inadequately cover Chippewa County for just the first 24 hours.

So I am asking that every one of you who reads this message, and any others you can recruit, to please consider becoming a member of ARES with your local club.

All of the EC's in the surrounding area need your support. Because the fact is, we don't have 148 members in all of the area clubs put together. We will be dependent on each other for support if we have a disaster of any type.

You can be sure, in a real disaster, we will need the help of other ARES groups throughout Wisconsin. They will assist if we ask for their help. We need to be prepared to assist them as well. We will need the best-trained personnel we can get to help us.

I will be publishing a list in the next issue of the Spark Gap, itemizing

the essential equipment and supplies we should all carry in our vehicles. This will help us be prepared if we need to respond to an emergency in our own or another county.

Everyone have a happy New Year!

Ron Anderson – W9RMA

Chippewa County Emergency Coordinator

LIST OF NETS/FREQS/TIMES

- Badger Weather Net 3.985 - 0600
- Badger Emergency Net 3.985 - Noon
- Wisconsin Side Band Net 3.985 - 1715/1730
- ARES/RACES 3.977.5 - Sun - 1800

AREA HAMFESTS

7 Jan 2006

Hamfest and Computer Show
West Allis Radio Amateur Club
Waukesha County Expo Center Forum
1000 Northview Road, Waukesha, WI
<http://www.warac.org>

25 Feb 2006

Hamfest and Computer Show
Madison Area Repeater Association
Mandt Community Center
400 Mandt Parkway
Stoughton, WI
<http://www.qsl.net/mara>

25 Mar 2006

25th Annual Midwinter Madness
Robbinsdale ARC
Buffalo Civic Center
1306 Calder Avenue
Buffalo, MN
<http://www.k0ltc.org>

22 Apr 2006

Hamfest and Computer Show
Madison Area Repeater Association
Mandt Community Center
400 Mandt Parkway
Stoughton, WI
<http://www.qsl.net/mara>

DEC. MEETING MINUTES

(Summary) The November minutes were approved and the Treasurer's report (\$743.75) was made and accepted. Eleven members were in attendance. Old Business included a report by the Photo/Text Directory Project committee and discussion of the progress on liquidation of John W9SWLs radio equipment. New Business included a discussion concerning March 2006 Election of three officers: 1. Vic-president; 2. Secretary; and 3. Treasurer. It was noted that our constitution prohibits the secretary and treasurer from being re-elected to their respective offices. AQ 2006 Tail Gate event was discussed and the opinion of those in attendance was that a date should be set to get the ball rolling. The program, a tape presentation brought by Jim, W9FWQ, was not conducted because a VCR was not available at the airport for our use. The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, January 3, 2006, at the Airport and a program on taking better pictures for E-bay use and in life as we know it, will be presented by Ron (Skip) W9JRW.

Future presentations scheduled include: 1. Tracking Radio Interference (February); 2. Lightning and proper grounding (March); 3. Signal Attenuators for HTs (April); and 4. Field Strength meters (May). Your thoughts on additional presentations and projects are important to the club . . . please share them with any of the officers.

CVARC OFFICERS

President -- Gale Sorum (WD9HFT)

Vice President -- Bert Spangler (W9ZZ)

Secretary -- Ron Krueger (W9JRW)

Treasurer -- Ron Anderson (W9RMA)

Past President -- Joe Eide (KB9R)

Mailing Address

Secretary -- CVARC

18310 79th Ave.

Chippewa Falls, WI 54729

Web: www.w9cva.org

Email: info@w9cva.org