

Radio Etiquette

AirLink Net Etiquette

The AirLink Tuesday evening net is for the purpose of practicing our emergency preparedness skills. In addition to the general guidelines listed at the end, here are a few things to keep in mind during the AirLink net.

Transmitting:

- The AirLink repeater has a courtesy beep after a transmission. Wait for the beep before you key your radio or some of your transmission may be lost.
- To allow for emergency traffic to break in, pause after the beep and before you key your radio. Suggested delay is to count to 5 after the beep before you key. This is good etiquette even if there is not a net and you are simply chatting with someone.
- If your transmission is long, longer than about 30 seconds, you may want to pause occasionally by saying, "Pause" or "one moment" and release your PTT button before continuing. This allows any emergency traffic an opening to break in. Do not use "Break" to indicate your pause. For some repeaters, there is a time-out on the transmission if you get too long-winded, and if you go beyond that time, your transmission will be cut off for a few seconds. By pausing once or twice during a lengthy comment, the timer on the repeater is restarted.

Control of the Net:

- Net control actually controls the net, so if you are not net control, you must have permission to speak. Net control will ask for check ins periodically so that you will have more than one opportunity to check in. Net control also will ask when you check in whether you have traffic for the group. If you do, the proper response is to affirm, "I do have traffic" or just say "no traffic". Wait for net control to ask you to present your traffic to the group.
- If a topic has come up and you feel that you have something important to convey, and you know you likely will not be called on again by net control, you may state your call sign during a pause. Net control will then give you permission to speak.
- If someone breaks protocol and, perhaps, asks a question directly to a participant on the net without going through net control and if you are the party the question is directed to, refrain from responding until acknowledged by net control. If you are net control and this occurs, net control should either entertain the topic but take the lead in bringing the topic to the other party - or, if appropriate, suggest the parties confer after the net is closed. For any inappropriate topic, net control should

defer the discussion until after the net or, perhaps, suggest a phone call or email might be more appropriate.

- The net control schedule usually is made several months in advance. There is a backup assigned. If the assigned net control doesn't begin the net within a minute or so of the start time and is not responding, then the backup should begin the net and continue until the assigned net control takes over. If neither the assigned net control or the backup begins the net within a couple of minutes, then someone else should step up and assume net control responsibilities. In an emergency, the first person to arrive on the net is net control until the assigned net control takes over**, so it's good training. Keep your net control script ready.
- We encourage everyone to take turns being net control. This is an important but not difficult job if you just remember the basic guidelines.

Appropriate Traffic:

- What is appropriate traffic for a net? It includes events associated with the AirLink group, work days for the repeater, topics of discussion about maintaining or improving the repeater, local area events amateur radio operators are involved in, news about meetings related to emergency preparedness, etc. Topics should not be of a political, religious, contentious nature or one that that might be offensive to public listeners.
- If you are net control, do not ask an open-ended question to the group. Rather ask your question and then go through your list of check-ins for each individual's response.
- The "questions of the week" by net control are not always easy to come up with. Some suggested topics are weather, gardening, chickens, current events, antennas, base stations, mud season in Left Hand Canyon when the construction begins between there and Jamestown, voter upgrade to repeater--Mark question, reaching out to new members, get new hams, etc. The best questions sometimes are the ones that are related to emergency preparations where the question is thought provoking and instructional.
- Broadcasting information over ham radio is not allowed. If you have information you believe is vital and there is a net, say your call sign, and when net control responds, net control can decide if the information should be conveyed over the radio. If there is no net, say your call sign and ask if anyone is listening. When someone responds, you can give that person the information.

Actual Emergency Situation:

- If an emergency situation is detected in the mountain area, an AirLink net will be activated.

- AirLink has 3 club officers. Any one of the club officers may decide to begin a net during an event and will be the initial net control. If no club officer is available, anyone who has been net control during a practice net may initialize the net, turning net control over to a club officer if one of them checks in afterward.
- Once a net is begun, net control will be passed around as appropriate with the current net control deciding who will take over and when.
- The suggested maximum time for any one net control to continuously manage the net is 3 hours, but, depending on the situation, a much shorter time may be more appropriate.
- Each new net control may ask for check-ins by location as they assume control of the net if the situation is not too active. If it is felt that a particular community is critical to be represented on the net and no one has checked in from there, an effort may be made to contact radio operators in that area to be sure they are aware of the situation and requesting participation.
- Net control can make it clear that people are welcome to simply listen in to the net without check-in and still provide traffic as appropriate.
- If one particular community is more threatened by the event than others, radio operators from the threatened community should not be expected to be net control during the event. However, net control should make sure radio operators in that threatened community have preference to provide appropriate traffic both to the net (and therefore, to BCARES), as well as within that community as needed.
- If all mountain communities represented on the AirLink net are threatened, AirLink net control will request that BCARES provide net control for AirLink.
- Net control will decide whether and when to shut down the net. If it is late at night and not much is going on, for instance, the net may be shut down for the night. Net control and other operators who are able should keep radios on through the night so they can respond if something changes and the net should be re-opened.
- If the net is shut down over night, non-emergency traffic should be minimized between the hours of 10pm to 8am.
- Since there will be no broadcasts of information about road closures, etc., anyone on the net who does not have access to internet and the Boulder County OEM web site, should ask for specific information. Information will be provided over the net on an as-requested basis.
- Since BCARES listens in to the AirLink net, if BCARES does not respond to a check-in request, net control should make sure they are on the air listening and ask for a check-in from them.

- Net control should request that any formal traffic from BCARES be announced directly on the AirLink net rather than through someone monitoring the BCARES net.

General Guidelines:

- Speak like you were talking to someone face to face. Key the mike, AND THEN start to talk.

Don't start speaking as you key the mike. Repeaters have a short delay before transmitting. If you start speaking too soon, your first few words may not be heard. Make sure you have finished talking before you un-key the mike.

Give your call sign clearly, and slowly.

- Use English and avoid jargon as much as possible. (such as Q-codes. "Roger Roger", "QSL on that"...)
- Avoid phonetics unless you are asked to do so. When using phonetics, use standard phonetics.
"Alpha, Bravo, Charlie"... etc.
- Make sure you ID (state your call sign) according to the rules, but avoid over ID'ing. If you are using a repeater system, the repeater has a timer so that it can ID every 10 minutes. Whenever you hear the repeater ID that is a good time to send yours.
- If you are listening and would like to have a conversation, just give your call sign. You can add "monitoring", or "listening". Using the term "CQ" on a repeater is generally discouraged.
- When you wish to communicate on a frequency, listen for a while before talking, there may be a conversation in progress.
- If you want to join into a conversation, just give your call between transmissions rather than using the term "Break Break". You will be acknowledged and allowed into the conversation.
- If you want to talk to a certain person, say their call sign once or twice, then your call sign.
- In an emergency, give your call and say "emergency" rather than using "Break Break".