

From: Pat Scolla WB0EGR, EC, Harford County
Subject: General Repeater Operation Pointers

Here is some information I take for granted and I want to thank those who reminded me of this for pointing it out to me. This info is being passed along for everyone's benefit, and with a little practice will become second nature to everyone.

Repeaters, which one may or may not know, normally have timers on their receivers. While transmitting into them one must unkey their microphone every 2 or 3 minutes for a few seconds to reset the timer. On the .775 machine, the timer resets when the courtesy beep or tone is heard after releasing your PTT. Some repeaters do not have a courtesy beep or tone, but still reset the timer as soon as you let up on the mic. During typical repeater operations (especially net-related), please wait for the beep, or longer, before transmitting after the other fellow has turned it over to you. It may normal for the repeater to keep transmitting for several seconds after the tone in order to minimize wear and tear on relays and other components in the repeater system. Please note: not all repeaters have a "hang time". Whether or not there is a hang time typically is left up to the discretion of the repeater owner/maintainer.

The timer is there for a number of reasons. One is so no one operator can hog the frequency, which can takes some getting used to if one is used to working mostly simplex with long transmit sessions (repeater transmissions tend to be short back and forth transmissions). Anyone transmitting too long 'times out' the repeater, which means the repeater's transmitter simply drops out until the station transmitting into it unkeys, at which time the repeater resets. No one will hear you after the repeater has timed out, and it's generally considered embarrassing.

Another function of the time out feature is to prevent inadvertent transmissions from someone mobile who might be sitting on their mike or gets their mic jammed between the seats (trust me it happens) and ties up the channel all the way to work. This can be extremely embarrassing too, especially if one is unaware it's their mic which is keyed and they have been on a cell phone or making comments about things they see on their way to work.

Another, and possibly the most important feature of the repeater time out function is it forces one to break frequently to allow others access to the repeater if they need to get in to join a QSO or to report an emergency or urgent situation.

During a net operation, once you have checked into the net, it is extremely important the net control station (NCS) knows the status of all the stations on the net at that instant. The NCS presumes you are present and located where you last reported you were unless you tell him differently.

During a directed net, like the Tuesday night ARES nets, technically no one is supposed to leave the net for any reason until released by net control. If something comes up and you need to scoot, wait for the next break, which with repeaters will be soon, then be quick and toss in only your call as soon as the other fellow unkeys. The NCS will acknowledge your break. A competent NCS will acknowledge you instantly. During Emcomm operations, breakers have a very high priority and are dealt with instantly. At the time the NCS acknowledges you, tell him you must leave and ask to be released from the net. The NCS will then release you. Until he does so, one technically still is

logged into the net. And weekly net logs are kept, for a variety of reasons.

During a net operation, the break between transmissions is the time to jump in if one needs to, and then it is done only by stating your call. Again, a competent NCS will acknowledge you instantly. Do not say 'BREAK' or especially 'BREAK EMERGENCY' unless you truly have an emergency. If you do have an emergency, do not hesitate to break, and these are the words to use on any repeater, net in session or not, *if you have an emergency*.

All that said, we live in the real world and sometimes things happen, you have to go to the bathroom, your radio croaks, your battery dies or whatever. Should this happen to you and you cannot strictly follow the net procedures don't lose any sleep over it. Just let the NCS know as soon as you can you are back in case they tried to reach you. The NCS will take frequent breaks for new check-ins, and this is the time to let him know you're back. It's not necessary to break in for a routine message such as you are back on frequency.

Remember, in a directed net, it is rare you would make a transmission unless you either have an emergency or are responding to an appropriate request from net control.

If during a net you have relevant questions, and the timing is appropriate, do not hesitate to ask the questions. Most training nets have a roundtable session for comments from each member logged in. In a formal net when the net is activated for a specific reason other than training, be more discreet but still don't hesitate to ask the question. If it's a bad time, the NCS will let you know and will normally get back to you as soon as the situation permits. This might be in a minute or two, a couple of hours, or immediately after the net. Plenty of others don't know either, and no one is born knowing all this stuff. The question you ask may answer a question someone else was embarrassed to ask.

Feel free to ask questions on this forum or directly of the volunteers involved in EmComm operations. We're hams and one of the most basic tenets of hamming is working together and sharing knowledge.

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73's
Pat WB0EGR
Harford County EC
WB0EGR@comcast.net