

Radio Stations at Scout Events



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INTRODUCTION

This is the second edition of the factsheet which updates that coded FS120123 and dated April 1987.

Further editions may be issued in the light of experience from this edition. The publication of further editions will be notified in SCOUTING magazine, Talking Points and the Activities Newsletter.

NOTE TO ASSIST ORGANISERS

Object

Whilst the operation of stations at Scout events is a pleasant activity the real objective is to present amateur radio as an exciting hobby to your visitors and to exchange information of interest with any other Scout stations you may contact.

It will be realised therefore that operating for operating sake will do little to impress the "Customers". In fact nothing could be more boring to a youngster than to enter a tent to view the backs of operators all talking into complex equipment in what appears a strange tongue, only to be answered in what also seems an almost unintelligible language. At least 50% of the available effort should be used to explain what is happening and if the operator is making a lone effort it is as well to alternate between explanation and demonstration.

The majority of visitors will not have seen an amateur station before and therefore completely audible contacts over a 100 mile path will be more impressive than almost unreadable contact over, say, 13,000 miles. Also remember that it is difficult for anyone to completely understand 'single side band' signals the first time they hear them it takes some time for their ears to become accustomed to the sounds.

The fixation in the minds of many amateurs that they must work as many stations as possible during these events is quite unfounded. On the other hand, it is appreciated that operators will obviously try to work any rare stations they are lucky enough to hear!

Electricity Supply

Unless the equipment will operate from batteries perhaps the most important single factor affecting the station is the electricity supply. If possible try to operate from a mains source as this is normally reliable and noiseless in comparison with generators. On the other hand, if the radio station is only one of many electrically operated displays and is near the end of the supply line it is quite possible for the voltage to drop well below 200 volts and render radio equipment inoperative. Also, the other displays might cause electrical interference and it is as well to check these points before operating commences.

If a generator is used diesel oil or petrol fuel will be required and cost alone might easily restrict the number of operating hours. Generators must be tested before the event despite any verbal assurances that they are suitable. Check the voltage on full load (including lights) and your receiver on all frequencies for the amount of hash produced. The earth wire should be connected to a ground stake at both the generator and the equipment end of the supply line as this reduces hash.

Where more than one generator is in use it is an extremely important safety factor to ensure that the supplies are not only kept separate but are connected to entirely separate groups of equipment. Sharing can result in twice the supply voltage appearing across some distribution terminals - a very dangerous situation.

Remember you will need lights for evening operation and the use of spotlights will enhance the overall effect. Avoid fluorescent lights and

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keep as far away as possible from other displays using them as they can cause considerable interference. Remember the fact that because you are operating at a camp does not mean you can neglect the normal safety principles. Make sure the supply is correctly fused and that there is one main switch to disconnect the supply in an emergency. Long cables carrying mains voltages should not be trailed over the ground and are better sited up in the air well out of reach.

Organisation prior to the event

If only one or two operators are involved they can use their own call signs /A or /P, to avoid confusion when a number of operators are concerned it is as well to obtain a special event call sign. The suffix letters can be chosen to suit the event, e.g. GB4HCC Hampshire County Camp. Application for such a licence should be made at least six weeks before the event. The station organiser should write to

The Membership Services Officer
Radio Society Of Great Britain
Lambda House
Cranbourne Road,
Potters Bar
Hertfordshire
EN6 3JE

TEL: 01707 59015
(between 1000 - 1600 hours)

When applying for the call sign one licensed radio amateur must be nominated as being responsible for the station. A Class B Licensee can be responsible for a Class B special event call sign (GBB series) but not for a Class A station. However Class B Licensees are permitted to operate Class A stations under the supervision of the nominated Class A Licensee. The location, dates, and duration of the event must also be specified.

The names of additional operators need not be specified, and simultaneous operation on all bands licensed for the special event station is permitted. However, similar information e.g. a CQ call, must not be transmitted on more than one frequency at a time by one operator.

Once all the details have been cleared the RSGB makes an application for the call sign two weeks before the event, a copy of the application is sent to the responsible licence holder, so that he knows application has been made on his behalf.

There is no charge for the RSGB service or the licence.

The licence actually takes the form of a letter of authority from the Home Office for attachment to the nominee's licence, and both should be held available in case an inspection of the station should be carried out by the Radio Investigation Service

All the normal licence restrictions apply to GB stations and these must be strictly adhered to. However an attractive relaxation is now permitted in that unlicensed persons present at Special Event Stations may make a two minute greetings message on the microphone when the station is in contact with other amateur stations in the United Kingdom (G,GD,G1,GJ,GM,GU, GW.) (Not Eire - EI). An up-to-date list will be supplied by the Radio Society of Great Britain on request when applying for the Special Event Licence. Please use this privilege sensibly and observe the following points:-

- a) Not EVERY visitor HAS to speak.
- b) Those doing so should speak slowly and distinctly.
- c) If for any reason the regular operators speech is difficult to read then visitors voices will certainly not be heard.
- d) Keep conversations short with quick confirmation that they have been heard. This is far better than discovering that much of a long over has been missed.
- e) Ensure that the visitors who speak play no part whatsoever in the operation of the transmitting equipment.

Where the licensed operator is a Scout himself then he may, of course, enjoy the normal privileges of speaking to any country for as long as he wishes.

QSL cards should be printed in advance but not until the RSGB advise that the call sign you wish to use is available. If, for instance, a prior application has been received for G84HH - Hampshire Cricket Club for operation on the same dates the Cricket Club will take priority. An alternative will then have to be chosen such as GB4HSC - Hampshire Scout Camp, or an alternative figure such as GB2HCC and this in turn will have to be confirmed with the RSGB.

As a rough guide, about 1,000 cards are required for a week's operating. About 10% of these will be required to satisfy requests from short wave listeners and these will be received up to at least two years after the event.

The cards should be completed whilst the station is in operation as this saves a lot of clerical labour afterwards.

To ensure you receive your QSL cards from other stations you must deposit stamped and addressed envelopes with your amateur's QSL bureau. In the case of GB stations these should be sent in advance to G4RVV Mr. M. W. Stoneham, "Hafnia", 139 Hever Avenue, West Kingsdown, Sevenoaks, Kent, TN15 6DT. Mark the call sign and dates showing the operating period of your station clearly in the top left-hand corner of your envelopes.

Some form of display can be arranged prior to the event too. A few radio maps, some posters explaining the use of Q - signals, etc., and some colourful QSL cards will do much to brighten up the look of the station. It is also a good idea to have a few radio magazines handy and details of any relevant Scout Badges, Communicator, Electronic etc. If you have a local amateur who is able to construct simple transistor equipment, even if only for CW use, get him to display and operate it. The fact that a Scout can see something working that he feels he could construct himself is a spur to his interest.

Accommodation and the Station

Try to obtain the use of the largest tent or marquee possible as this must not only house the station but a fair number of spectators too. The next most important decision will be where to actually locate the station on the site and this will usually be a compromise. The station will obviously have to be located fairly near the mains source unless a generator is to be used. If late evening operation is envisaged or a generator is to be used, it is not advisable to be close to a sleeping area.

Whilst it is best to choose a fairly busy part of the camp to ensure the maximum number of visitors, this is usually the very area where the camp organisers will not appreciate a network of mains leads, masts and guy wires. If you intend to use trees as aerial supports the station will have to be reasonably sited in relation to them of course.

At the other end of the scale, the choice of a remote site can result in few visitors, a long walk to the cookhouse the water supply and the toilets!

Should a public address system be in operation, " to ensure that you site the station as far away from the input end as possible especially if they intend to use a wandering microphone with a long lead. If your station does cause interference carry out tests on all bands as you will normally find that only one or two bands are affected. Unless you can clear the interference it will be necessary to liaise with the P.A. operator to keep off the offending bands whilst their equipment is in use.

Unless your station has some definite objective (e.g. to make contacts in certain parts of the world involving directive aerial arrays) it is advisable to keep the aerial as simple as possible. Complicated aerial arrays and masses of equipment too create their own problems and often need days of installation work in order to operate satisfactorily.

Once again remember that it is important to observe the normal safety principles and provide efficient earthing system for the aerial arrays. Camps are normally held during the summer at the very time when thunderstorms are expected!

If sleeping on site, it is as well to screen off a portion of the operating tent as living accommodation. This has the added benefit that you will provide your own guard for the station equipment during the silent hours.

It is advisable to erect a rope barrier between the visitors and the operators to avoid crushing. Any really interested Scout can always be invited "in" to sit with the operators.

Programme.

Do discuss with the camp organisers the services you can provide for them. Suggest a series of short talks on amateur radio ending with demonstration contacts. The station would be closed down during this period to enable the amateurs to concentrate solely on the instruction. These talks would take place during the business part of the camp day. If you have a tape recorder available use this to record any really interesting contacts. Such recordings are very useful to illustrate your comments.

If the camp programme is too full to allow such activities, ask the organisers to promulgate the fact that such talks can be organised on request for groups of Scouts at set intervals during their

free time. Failing this a notice outside the operating tent reading: "The next talk and demonstration will take place at..... hrs, may be used.

Make certain the organisers inform the campers that the station is in operation and open to visitors.

Call for volunteers to help with the logging and completion of the QSL cards from among the more interested Scouts.

Advance Priority

There are now over 1,000 Scout radio amateurs in some 50 countries. In addition many National Scout Headquarters have amateur radio stations. Also there are at least seven Scout nets on various days of the week. It is therefore of interest to other Scout stations to know that your station will be in operation. Details should be passed as early as possible to the Editors of The Short Wave Magazine, Buckingham MK18 IRQ Radio Communication, Lambda House, Cranbourne Road, Potters Bar, Hertfordshire, EN6 3JE; The World Scout Bureau, Case Postale 78, 121 1 Geneva 4, Switzerland; and G3BH K, 28 Darwell Drive, Ascot, Berkshire, SL5 BNB. Enclose a stamped addressed envelope if you are requesting any information in return. The RSGB will also provide publicity over their amateur nationwide Sunday news service if requested.

Scout World Operating Frequencies

Stations operating from Scout events should keep as close as they can to the World Scout Frequencies:

| | | | | | |
|-------|-------|-------|--------|--------|------------|
| cw | 3,590 | 7,030 | 14,070 | 21,140 | 28,190 kHz |
| PHONE | 3,740 | 7,090 | 14,290 | 21,360 | 28,990 kHz |

Final Points

In order to avoid possible embarrassment there are several points concerning finance which should be settled as early as possible. The minimum cost of running a station for periods exceeding a few hours will be at least EI 0. This amount will cover only the cost of printing QSL cards and incidental expenses. If a generator is to be used the cost of petrol or diesel fuel must be considered and this can be very expensive

especially if about 16 hours operation a day is envisaged.

Food is another important consideration. If possible it is better for the operators to cater for themselves as they can then arrange meals to suit operating times. Sometimes camp organisers supply meals free of charge as an expression of gratitude to the amateurs concerned but it is obvious that where a number of operators are involved for a period of more than a couple of days or so the cost becomes so restrictive that they have to be asked to give some financial assistance.

Do decide who pays for what well before the event and avoid later embarrassment.

This leaflet does not attempt to cover every pitfall arising from the Organisation of amateur stations at Scout events. As no two operating sites will be found to be alike the problems present an ever changing challenge. Overcoming these difficulties is part of the enjoyment whether you are operating from a mountain top, an island or a more conventional camp site. Helping you overcome these difficulties can also be part of the enjoyment for the Scouts camping with you so do not be afraid to ask for their help whenever it is required.