

Net Control Operators For Public Service Events by Bruce Pigott – KC1US

Wide area, extended duration events with more than 20 operators are not a training ground for new net control operators. When making assignments at these types of events, choose carefully who is at net control.

Can your net control operator identify the following problems:

A double and which operator to call first, not just bark "DOUBLE!"

Weak radio signal

Difference between audio noise and RF noise

WiRES mode transmissions from Yaesu radios

Battery failing

Walking while talking

Swallowing the mike

Shouting directly into the mike

Quick talking before repeater activates

Moved from hot spot

Not going through the repeater, transmitting simplex on the repeater output frequency.

Over deviation

Radio set to narrow deviation

Locating an open microphone on the net

Radio located on operator's belt

Transmitter off frequency

Receiver set to dual watch mode

Then correct the remote operator briefly, without giving an extended tutorial on radio frequency propagation, transceiver design, battery physics or antenna theory?

Ask potential net control operators:

How many hours have you run a net in the past month?

With how many check ins?

How often do you operate different brand radios?

Participation in other public service activities and position?

For some reason, hams think that being at net control is the magical, special, top of the food chain, easy to handle slot. When making assignments at a large scale public service event, do not put unskilled hams at net control. There are multiple weekly nets desperate for net control operators that can provide the practice to become familiar with the problems listed above. At these events, net control operators must be able to take notes with time stamps, keep a three deep stack of requests in their head and identify multiple operator problems. If there is a bad transmission, does net control give information to correct the fault, or just say "come again"? Does the operator communicate in plain language or a string of acronyms and technical jargon? National Incident Management System standards specify using plain language. During hectic times will they remain calm and not become flustered? Do they speak in clear and confident tones?

Does the net control give an accurate report on signal strength and audio quality? I have heard different net controls say "you are full quieting", "5 by 9", "totally readable", "100% copy" but then asks for the call, name, location, radio model, antenna and favorite ice cream to be repeated phonetically, twice.

Because so many volunteers are needed at large scale activities, you have many hams who are in new locations, with equipment not used that often, who rarely check into weekly nets and are cold/hot/wet/hungry/fatigued/bored/grumpy/distracted/confused. Net control must be able assist the field operators overcome problems quickly.

Do you give your net control operators training and information? They can not show up five minutes before their scheduled duty. Otherwise, they will be constantly asking others what should be done, before they can make a call back to the field with an answer.

Some items to consider for training and sending needed information prior to the event are:

Location and access for net control, schedule, feeding details, equipment to bring – headphones with plug size, computer or other items.

Event details

Repeater coverage, quirks

Maps [KC1US](#)

If using a special event call, proper identification hourly

Radio controls

Check in and check out procedures for stations

List of other nets and channel designations and areas covered

On air privacy of event participants, specifically personally identifiable information

Suggested list of event announcements – what the event is, what group is doing it, thanking other operators for keeping the channel clear, thanking the actual repeater trustee and sponsor.

Certain details can be filled in at the net control location on the day the event runs.

As these major public service events have an ad hoc group of both field and command post personnel, the net control position is crucial to deciphering requests and getting the information to the proper resource.

Field operators have to stop being mother hens. Relating that runner number ? looks funny is not helpful. Then having net control take time asking to watch for a particular number at a different location, distracts from vital communications. The participant will stop and ask for help, if they want it. Repeatedly asking if a person needs help is annoying, especially to the last person in an event.

Remember things can and have changed quickly in the past. More than 5,000 runners were still on the race course when the 2013 Boston Marathon route was shut down. They had to be brought off the course safely and then transported to many destinations.