The Texan
Newsletter of the Texas NTS CW Net (TEX)

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September, 2005

Hello fellow TEX members. This is the first net "newsletter" to be published on a more-or-less regular basis to keep you informed of what is happening and hopefully inspire you to join us on TEX as often as you are able.

The big news, of course, is the communication effort related to Hurricane Katrina. As I write this, there are many nets operating to handle emergency and priority as well as health and welfare traffic (primary during the day, 7285 for E/P, 7290 for H/W). I have heard some of you (KD5TXD, AC5XK, KA5KLU) on these nets helping out wherever possible. Due to the lack of security, our ARES brethren have not yet been allowed to enter the worst hit disaster areas, so traffic coming out of them, much of which we hope will use the services of the NTS, has not yet materialized. I anticipate that as shelters are better organized and assisted by ARES and SATERN personnel, and ARES teams are able to travel to the Gulf coast, there will be more traffic coming from these areas for delivery across the nation.

As far as inward traffic is concerned to Louisiana and Mississippi, several NTS stations have been doing a tremendous job of "being there" as much as possible to handle it. Noteworthy are W5CDX and K5MC in Louisiana and K5VV and W5XX in Mississippi. Note that Mal, W5XX, is the SM for MS and has been operating on RN5 using generator power for the past several days.

Many of us have worked with Jim, KB5W, the manager of RN5. His QTH in Gautier, MS, received a near direct and severe blow from Katrina. We were all quite concerned for his safety, but I am very happy and relieved to report that although he lost all his antennas (but his 60 foot Rohn tower survived), as of today, Sunday the 4th, he is back up on 80 and 40 meters, and apparently his power and Internet service have been restored (he sent an E-Mail out today).

For now, please refrain from sending inquiry messages into the New Orleans and Mississippi gulf areas since there are few people still remaining there and delivery is impossible. I have been trying to find sources of information on the Internet such as registries of displaced persons in shelters, but so far I have not had any luck. Perhaps it is still too early for that sort of organization. If we can provide information from those sorts of sources back to the originators of inquiry messages we receive from friends or via the NTS, it would also be a great service.

Transitioning to TEX net affairs, I kept detailed records of many net statistics, shown later, using a Visual Basic for Apps program I wrote in Excel to help make the data entry easier. I would like to congratulate and thank Bert, AC5Z, and Floyd, N5EL, on their tie for "first place" with the most QNI's to the early TEX net (21 out of 31). On the late TEX net, Charlie, W5GKH, barely edged out Don, AC5XK, for first place in most QNI's (11). Don, AC5XK, in turn edged out Floyd, N5EL, for the most early + late QNI's (27).

I would like to welcome Roger, K5HHS, and Jay, N5PWG, as new NCS stations in training. Roger has taken the Friday night early session and Jay has taken the Friday night late session. Please give both of them your support and understanding. They have been busy handling Hurricane Relief messages and with ARES activities (Jay is an AEC in the Houston area) so have only had one opportunity at NCS, but both will make fine NCS's when things "quiet down" a bit.

Below is the schedule, as we currently have it, of NCS and RN5 liaison slots. As you can see, Friday and Saturday are still problem days for RN5. Don, AC5XK, is shown as "acting" in the Saturday NCS slot, but we would be very happy if others would take either or both sessions over as he often has other commitments on weekends.

TEX CW Net Weekly Schedule

Local	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
NCS #1	AC5Z	KA5KLU	K6JT	AC5Z	K5HHS	AC5XK/a	W5GKH
NCS #2	W5GKH	KA5KLU	K6JT	AC5XK	N5PWG	AC5XK/a	W5GKH
RN5 #1	W5GKH	KA5KLU	W5TFB	AC5XK	?	?	W5GKH
RN5 #2	W5GKH	KA5KLU	W5TFB	AC5XK	?	?	W5GKH

TEX/1: 3643 (7043) at 19:00 local; TEX/2 3643 at 22:00 local
RN5/1: 7045 (3650) at 19:30; CAN: 7052 (3670) at 20:30; RN5/2: 3650 at 21:30 local

Being the TEX liaison to RN5 is not difficult, although it can be somewhat intimidating as things move pretty fast there and some of the NCS stations send at 30+ WPM. But they, and the traffic handlers, are very willing to slow down if you have trouble copying them. Just QNI at your desired speed. More information on RN5 is given later.

Often, one must also slow down due to conditions. Communication theory documents the need for better signal-to-noise ratios to handle higher information rates. So if conditions are very bad (due to the seemingly ever present nighttime T-Storm QRN, and atmospheric noise sources / QSB), it is far better to slow down to between 18 and 25 WPM in order to enhance accuracy. I have started doing this on TEX during poor conditions and it seems to work better. For noisy conditions, it is best to NOT use the so-called "Farnsworth" method of sending letters at higher speed and spacing them out more to lower the overall rate. The higher speed letters will still suffer badly from the signal-to-noise degradation and the receive radio's AGC will also be disadvantaged.

Crank the keyer speed knob down instead, and maintain consistent and regular letter and word spacing. It will greatly improve the likelihood of error-free copy.

TEX Statistics for August 2005

Call	Name	QNI	Total	NCS	RN5	TTN	DFW	CTTN
		1/2						
W5CDX	Wads	0	4					
*		4						
N5EL	Floyd	21	26					
*		5						
W5ESE	Scott	7	7					1
*		0						
W5GKH	Charlie	11	22	5	10	10		
*		11		10	10	10		
K5HHS	Roger	9	9	2		8		
*		0						
K5JRN	Si	1	1				1	
*		0						
K6JT	Steve	26	54	8	5		25	
*		28		9	8		28	
K0KJ	Eric	9	14					1
*		5						
KA5KLU	Doug	5	10	5	5	1		
*		5		5	5	1		
N5PWG	Jay	8	13					
*		5		1				
W5TFB	Jack	7	13		4			
*		6			2			
W5TV	Tom	1	1					
		0						
KD5TXD	Pat	4	6					
*		2						
AC5XK	Don	17	27	2	4	5		16
*		10		5	4	9		10
AC5Z	Bert	21	21	9				
*		0						
Totals		228		61	57	44	54	28
				98%	92%	71%	87%	45%
QTC 1		56	117					
QTC 2		61						
Time 1		339	596	(9 Hr, 56 Min)				
Time 2		257						

Notes on the TEX Net Statistics: Each station has 2 lines, the first is for session 1 at 7 PM and the second for session 2 at 10 PM. Similarly, the totals at the bottom are divided for each session.

TEX Net Stations (QNS)

Call	Name	Location / Notes	Call	Name	Location / Notes
KF9AS*	Megan	Dallas	KØKJ	Eric	San Antonio
N5BA*	Brian	Houston	KA5KLU	Doug	San Antonio
W5CDX	Wads	Crowley LA	W6LFB	Jim	Denton
AC5CI*	Homer	Caldwell	WA5MUF	Bill	Watauga
W5CU	Sam	Edmond OK	KB5NJD*	John	Duncanville
N5EL	Floyd	Temple	KA5NNG*	Mike	Marshall AR
W5ESE	Scott	Dripping Springs	N5PWG	Jay	Pasadena
W5GKH	Charlie	West Columbia	K5RG	Ken	Houston
K5GM	Pete	Austin	N5SIG*	Randy	Huntsville
K5HHS	Roger	Mathis	W5TFB	Jack	College Station
KA5HZV*	Ron	Houston	W5TV*	Tom	Nacogdoches
KJ9J	Newt	Pharr TX (winter)	KD5TXD	Pat	Kingsville
K5JRN	Si	Denton	KS5V*	Ed	Bulverde (SA)
K6JT	Steve	Plano	AC5XK	Don	San Antonio
KA5KAB*	Carl	Baytown	AC5Z	Bert	Nacogdoches (Lufkin)

* I do not have the E-Mail addresses for these stations. If anyone knows how to contact them via E-Mail, please advise me.

Region Net 5 Liaison

I generated a "cheat sheet" for NCS operation on TEX and sent it to our new NCS stations to use. I will be happy to send it to anyone else who requests one. I do not have a similar "cheat sheet" for RN5 liaison, so I'll briefly describe it here in the hopes of convincing some of you to try out the Friday and Saturday slots, which Don and I have been taking, when possible, in the interim. You don't have to volunteer for a "regular" slot at first if you are not sure. Instead, check in on one of those nights and volunteer to take the early session, late session, or both to see how it goes.

I must admit to being timid about taking an RN5 liaison myself a few months back. Although I had lots of experience on RN6 when I lived in California, it was much simpler than RN5 due to only having 2 main nets and the PAN liaisons to handle. I did not know the proper routing on RN5 or even what states and sections it covered.

RN5 covers 7 states and 9 sections (3 in Texas): Texas (TX), Oklahoma (OK), Louisiana (LA), Arkansas (AR), Alabama (AL), Mississippi (MS), and Tennessee (TN). There also appears to be a regular QNI from Florida (FL), although that state is officially in the Eastern area. There are also 2 liaison stations to the Central Area Net (CAN), one to take traffic there from RN5/1 and the other to bring back traffic to RN5/2.

If you decide to take up the challenge and volunteer to go to RN5, note the two different sessions, one at 7:30 and the other at 9:30 (see frequency list under the TEX weekly schedule). Currently the early session is using 40 meters with 80 as a backup (and 80 is often used on Saturday evenings due to contest QRM on 40). The late session always uses 80 meters. It is important to cover both sessions, since incoming traffic may come from the other states on the early session and CAN on the late session. However, if you can only make one, the late session is the most important one for incoming traffic (assuming TEX has no outgoing traffic). It is not unusual, and certainly more efficient, to have 2 different stations covering incoming and outgoing traffic from a given state during high traffic times. But with the lower staffing available at all NTS levels, one station is all that can be expected most of the time.

If there is traffic on TEX going outside the state, it goes to RN5 (and should be listed as "RN5"). Sort your traffic by state and list it for each state separately, using the abbreviations shown above (OK, LA, AR, AL, MS, and TN). Since there is often a Florida station as well, list that as FL. Anything outside these states is listed as "CAN". If no FL station checks in, that traffic can be routed to CAN at the direction of the NCS.

The NCS stations differ in their procedure. Many use a QNA callup like we have on TEX, calling for each state in turn to QNI and list traffic. As with TEX, when called, simply send "de (yourcall)" TX QTC xx" or "QRU" if you have no traffic. For example, if you have 2 for Louisiana, one for Alabama, and one each for Illinois, Iowa, and California, you would QNI with "de (call) TX QTC LA 2 AA AL 1 AA CAN 3 AR". (Note the use of the AA separators to improve understanding – this is not absolutely required, but is good practice, also when listing traffic on TEX).

The NCS will send you off frequency to handle the traffic with the appropriate liaison stations as they QNI, just like on TEX. If there are messages for Texas, you will be sent off frequency to meet another station to receive them, just like on TEX. Operation is thus nearly identical to what you are used to on TEX, except it is liaisons with states instead of cities that are used. As always, return to the net control after each off-frequency assignment and send your call suffix to let him know you are back and ready for another assignment. A good NCS will try to "stack up" stations off frequency with you, so don't hit the frequency change knob too quickly after signing with a station. Wait at least 10 seconds to see if there is another one calling you. You will be excused the same as on TEX when everything is done.

So you see, it is not really that difficult. Normally there are not many messages on the early session nor the late except for LA and MS recently due to the Hurricane welfare messages. Oh yes, if the messages are other than Routine, add the priority after the number of messages in your initial QTC list (e.g., QTC MS 2 W).

It is important for all of us to be experienced enough to take liaisons or NCS when a critical need arises. There is no better way than by actually doing it, if not on a regular basis, at least as an occasional fill-in. 73 for now. Steve K6JT