

Date: August 30, 2010

Subject: Packet Network Update

Attention: All ECs, AECs, MACs and other Santa Clara County Packet Users

This Packet Network Notice contains important information which affects your ability to access and use the county packet backbone. This update covers the following topics:

- Updated Web Page
- Expansion of Tactical Call Feature
- New Features in Outpost/PacFORMS Combined Installer
- Schedule summary
- Action items
- Questions / Comments / Concerns

Please read this information thoroughly and pass along to any packet users in your local area.

Updated Web Page

The Packet Frequency and BBS Information web page on the county website has been updated with message routing information. See: <http://www.scc-ares-races.org/freqs/packet-freqs.html>. You should download and save a copy in your go kit.

The web page now explains how messages to tactical calls are automatically routed to the primary BBS for each agency, as well as how to override that behavior in the event that the primary BBS is down. This information will also appear in a bulletin in the "perm" bulletin area soon. The bulletin insures that you have access to this information even if the Internet is down and you cannot reach the county web site.

The web page also lists a secondary BBS for each agency in the county. We understand that some sites may have difficulty reaching the currently assigned secondary BBS. Two additional BBSs will soon provide better distribution of primary traffic and a viable backup location for each agency.

Expansion of Tactical Call Feature

The county packet network will soon be able to accept a wider variety of tactical calls. This feature is currently undergoing final testing and is scheduled to roll out on Sept. 13th.

Currently, individual users of the county packet network log in using their FCC calls sign. Emergency Operation Centers – such as in each city, agency and at the county – log in with a tactical call sign. These tactical call signs are pre-configured on each packet backbone BBS and routing is set up to automatically send messages addressed to each tactical call to the default BBS used by that agency. This eliminates the need for everyone to know which BBS is assigned to each agency.

The new feature expands this capability to any number of tactical calls. Each city or agency in the county may submit a text file containing the additional tactical calls they would like to use. Example

usage scenarios include schools, fire stations, shelters, and other locations where you expect to deploy packet operators.

Instructions for “How to Request Tactical Calls” were sent out to all agency ECs several weeks ago and are also posted on the packet page of the county website: <http://www.scc-ares-races.org/packet.html>. The new, agency-specific tactical calls will soon be loaded into the county BBSs and message routing within the packet network will be updated to automatically route messages based on the three letter prefix assigned to each agency. These prefixes are listed on the county website at: <http://www.scc-ares-races.org/freqs/packet-freqs.html>. The same information will soon be available as a bulletin in the “perm” area on the packet network. Automatic routing can be overridden by explicitly addressing the message to a particular BBS name, as described on the above web page.

If you wish to add tactical calls for likely deployment locations within your city or agency, make sure to follow the above referenced instructions and submit your file right away. We will update the network a minimum of once per quarter. So, if you are unable to submit your list in time for this update, the change can be made in the following quarter.

New Features in Outpost/PacFORMS Combined Installer

Two major new features will soon be available in Outpost/PacForms: incoming message numbering and an ICS 309 Communications Log. These features are currently undergoing final testing. The new installer is expected to be released on Monday, Sep. 13th.

Incoming Message Numbering

Currently, there is no automated process for assigning *incoming* message numbers to packet messages.

Beginning with the next version of the installer, Outpost will have the ability to assign an incoming message number. This is for sites (like the County EOC) where all messages, outbound and inbound, receive a local message number for easier tracking within the EOC. The feature can be turned on or off, depending on the specific operational protocol in place at your agency.

When enabled, Outpost and PacFORMS will automatically perform the following actions:

- When a message is received, Outpost will assign a local/incoming message number to it. This message number will be shown in the message lists (such as the In Tray), on the message detail view when it is opened for reading or printing and on the ICS 309 communications log.
- Outpost will include the local message number in the auto delivery receipt. This provides an automated notification to the sender that the message was received at a particular time and date and was assigned a particular message number.
- If the received message is a PacFORMS message, Outpost will insert a new header line in the message. This header line tells the PacFORMS application what the received message number is.
- When the PacFORMS message is opened, PacFORMS will read the received message number from the new Outpost header line and insert the incoming message into the proper message

number box on the PacFORM message. The sender's message number will be moved to the sender's message number box – the same way message numbering is handled on voice nets.

ICS 309 Communications Log

Currently, the ICS 309 Communications Log is maintained manually by the packet station operator.

Beginning with the next version of the installer, Outpost will have the ability to generate and print an ICS 309 Communications Log. The log will look like the existing county-standard ICS 309 form. The log can be printed at any time and the output can be filtered several ways, including date and time range.

An automated printing feature will also be included. This insures that you have a recent paper copy of the log, even if your packet computer crashes. You can configure the system to print the log on a user-defined time interval. You can also configure Outpost to print only the log of those messages that arrived or were sent after the last time the log was printed. This helps minimize the amount of paper used.

These two new features eliminate much of the manual processing of packet operations. Both features will help packet operators process far more messages, with more accuracy, than ever before.

Schedule Summary

Monday, September 13th:

- New tactical calls and routing rules loaded into BBSs
- New combined Outpost/PacFORMS installer available on county website
 - <http://www.scc-ares-races.org/packet.html>

Saturday, September 25th:

- County MAC drill
- All packet operators will be expected to use the new version

Saturday, October 23rd:

- County Quarterly Drill
- All packet operators will be expected to use the new version

Action Items

1. Mark your calendar for the September 13th availability of the new installer
2. On September 13th, or as soon as possible thereafter, download and install the software. Connect to your assigned primary BBS and send one or more test messages to yourself (including PacFORMS) to verify proper operation.
3. Check-in with packet to SPECS (Monday evenings) or SVECS (Tuesday evenings) to further verify operation. There will be two opportunities to check-in (13th/14th and 20th/21st) prior to the county MAC drill.

Questions / Comments / Concerns

That's all for this update. If you have any questions, comments or concerns, it is likely that someone else does, too. So it would be helpful if you direct them to the scc-packet Yahoo group. That way, everyone can see the answer.

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Santa Clara County ARES/RACES Packet Committee