Date: Nov 28, 2011

From: Santa Clara County ARES/RACES Packet Committee

Subject: Packet Network Update – New AMPRnet and E-mail gateways

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:

- New AMPRnet Gateway
- New E-mail Gateway

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

New AMPRnet Gateway

The AMPRnet is an AMateur Packet Radio network consisting of packet radio BBSs located worldwide. Local networks of BBSs are interconnected to other local networks through gateways. These gateways use IP-in-IP tunnels to connect to each other. AMPRnet IP addresses are allocated from the IP address block of 44.0.0.0/8.

Once a BBS or local network of BBSs is connected to AMPRnet, each of the BBSs can reach any other BBS on the AMPRnet, and vice-versa. For example, in the State of Michigan, each county has a local network of one or more BBSs. Each county is connected to all other counties (and to the rest of the world) with AMPRnet connections. Here in California, we can use AMPRnet connections to reach other counties which do not have a radio path to our network. We have just started to reach out to other counties to work on making those connections.

There are two primary uses for this connectivity:

1) Messaging:

Messages can now be addressed to anyone at any of the AMPRnet BBSs with a simple and standard Internet-style address format: callsign@bbshostname.ampr.org. Likewise, anyone on any BBS connected to the AMPRnet can address messages to a user on any of our BBSs as follows:

> callsign@w6xsc-1.ampr.org
> callsign@w6xsc-2.ampr.org
> callsign@w6xsc-3.ampr.org
> callsign@w6xsc-4.ampr.org

2) Bulletins:

The traditional worldwide BBS network makes extensive use of bulletins for transferring information. Bulletins are usually organized by topic, allowing users to read just the bulletins related to the topics which interest them. Some topics are dedicated to emergency communications-oriented content, but the list of topics is virtually limitless.

Bulletin forwarding is in the works, but not yet implemented in our network. As per our usual standard of operation, configurations will first be tested on a test gateway before configuring on our main W6XSC BBSs. Stay tuned for more information.

New E-Mail Gateway

The E-mail gateway allows messages to be originated from our W6XSC packet network and sent to Internet e-mail addresses. Currently, the gateway is outbound only. In other words, if the recipient of your message tries to reply, the reply will fail.

Outbound connectivity offers the same level of e-mail connectivity currently allowed by the WebEOC application being deployed at the Santa Clara County EOC and various city EOCs. Outbound e-mails can be originated from any of our W6XSC BBSs and can be used for a variety of purposes, such as sending health and welfare messages to family members outside the area.

To initiate an outbound e-mail, use Outpost or the command line and specify the destination address the same way you normally would with any e-mail application. Just as with packet messages, keep your message short. The gateway is not intended to be a substitute for your normal e-mail application, so please do not abuse the service.   But it does provide a way to send an email from virtually anywhere in the county using your packet station.

Inbound connectivity is more complicated and is still being developed. Beyond the obvious concerns about SPAM, viruses and other abuse, we also have to make sure we don't violate Part 97 regarding third party communications. As usual, we will test this thoroughly on a test gateway before deploying to the county network.

Action Items

No action is required. If you are interested in learning more about the AMPRnet, a good starting point is: www.ampr.org.

If you are interested in trying out the outbound e-mail gateway, simply connect to one of the W6XSC BBSs and send a message to your normal Internet e-mail account.

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. URL: http://groups.yahoo.com/group/scc-packet