

+



THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE WESTON MOUNTAIN DIGITAL RADIO ASSOCIATION

August 2025

Introduction

Greetings to one and all, and once again welcome to the Pickle Barrel Review! As in the previous issues, you'll find this issue filled with the latest happenings not only of the W7NEO system, and the NE-OREGON room, but System Fusion, Allstar, along with GMRS. All that said, as always, we invite others to contribute with articles, or if your club or organization is having an event such as a tailgate, swap meet, VE testing, or whatever, you can list it here as well. The only thing we ask is that your contribution be nonpolitical (unless it's a government action that directly affects Ham, or GMRS Radio), respectful of others (no personal attacks), and relatively family friendly. We realize your pretty darn proud of it, but we really don't want to hear about your new tattoo, let alone just where exactly it's located on your body. And just to be clear, we apologize, but unfortunately your brother-in-law's bachelor party still doesn't qualify as an upcoming event. So, all that said, feel free to reach in the barrel, grab yourself a pickle, pull up a chair and have ah sit for a spell as we discuss the latest happenings in Fusion, Allstar, GMRS, and Personal Radio Communications in general. And for the record, you can rest assured that

every line of the PBR is a 100% AI free zone, and will remain so (As proof just look at all the mistakes!).

A word from our sponsor

Vern's Varmint Eradication and Reloading supplies:

Are you lying awake in bed at night from noises in the attic? Have you got critters in your crawl spaces? Or are gophers performing a total re-do on your yard without your permission? Then it's high time to call on Vern's Varmint Eradication service. Vern has years of experience in the removal of pesky varmints, and can guarantee results with his uniquely specialized, and expedient methods for clearing out all manner of critter infestation that is occupying your home.

Vern also offers a wide selection of re-loading supplies, including bulk quantities of black powder to satisfy all of your re-loading and pyrotechnic needs.

Vern would like to make mention that rumors of events at the old Johnson place a couple of weeks back where not entirely his fault, and that the house should have been condemned years ago anyway.

As a disclaimer, Vern can't help you out with door-to-door salesmen, or unwanted relatives who over stay their welcome.

So, the next time you find yourself with way too many critters in your crevices, or low on ammunition, call on Vern's Varmint Eradication and Reloading supplies. You'll be glad you did!

A note of passing

N7ACW – SK



On the morning of July 12th, we lost a truly great Ham, and an equally great individual overall within our community. Keith Carlin, N7ACW, left us after a long battle with kidney disease. He eventually succumbed to complications attributed to injuries sustained from a severe fall he had experienced one evening while attending a local community meeting.

Unfortunately, since he was already weak from the dialysis, his body was unable to sustain the burden of one last and final battle.

Up until his passing, Keith had led a remarkably full life, filled with many professional, and personal accomplishments. Having grown up in California working in his father's repair shop, he eventually earned his Amateur Radio license, where he held the callsign WA6AOM. After having retired from The Boeing Company in 2005 working as an Engineering Technician, Keith and his wonderful wife Mary of 67 years, moved to College Place WA. As any of you that knew Keith could attest too, he wasn't one to simply sit on his laurels for very long, and soon became active in the local Amateur Radio community in and around Walla Walla. Keith was very active with not only the local Walla Walla Ham Radio Club (W7DP) as their club treasurer, he also dove into the local Amateur Radio Emergency Services (ARES) group with both feet, and soon became their Emergency Coordinator for Walla Walla County. Keith was exceptionally well suited for this role, having been active in Emergency Communication in the Puget Sound area in years past. This didn't go unrecognized, as many sought out his advice on various matters regarding emergency communications.

Keith was also very active in a small local television station through his church, applying his diverse technical, and leadership skills as their project manager. During that time Keith managed to advance the station to a high-definition broadcast format.

As with most of the local community whose lives he touched, Keith was loved and respected by all who were fortunate enough to cross paths with him. You may not always have agreed with Keith, but you knew you could count on eventually finding common ground, or simply agree to disagree. But to either end, one thing for certain is that you could always count on is still remaining friends, and ending with a warm handshake.

Needless to say, Keith leaves behind an impressive legacy by having set the bar just that much higher in order for us all to attain too. For that, we will forever admire and appreciate all that he did for not only the local Amateur Radio community, but the local community as a whole. Fairwell, and 73 my old friend, where ever you are. And know that we will all miss your positive attitude, seemingly endless energy, warm smile, and you're ever friendly personal demeanor.

Lynn Wilson, K7LW

My sincere thanks to Timber Burton (N7DJE), and Mikel Potts (KB7POT) for their invaluable input.

Emergency Preparedness



For some of our readers, September of 2020 was an absolutely devastating fire season here in the Pacific Northwest, and in California as well. So much so that entire towns in Oregon and California were burned to the ground similar to what was witnessed in 2018 during the Camp Fire in which the entire town of Paradise CA was destroyed by fire.

Add to that, there were crippling power outages over much of the west side of Oregon due to exceptionally high winds wreaking havoc on power lines. This was compounded by numerous additional fires caused by downed power lines, causing power to further remain out for extended periods. All this chaos left residence without electricity in affected areas for several days. This also had an effect on Ham Radio repeaters in the affected areas. Many were off the air, or simply left burned out entirely, and of those repeaters that were lucky enough to escape the fires, many of those were left running off strictly backup power for several days. As a result, traffic taking place on these repeaters was restricted to emergency traffic only.

In the nightly news we kept hearing about communities being in different levels of evacuation. Many of us have no real clue as to just what the different levels are, let alone what actions are to be taken should we find ourselves

under a level of evacuation. Fortunately, the Benton County Washington Emergency Services did a pretty good job of explaining it:

Level 1: READY – *Level 1 evacuations are an Alert.* Residents should be aware of a danger that exists. Now is the time to “Get Ready”. Residents with special needs, or those with pets or livestock, should take note and prepare for relocating family members, pets and livestock. Refine your evacuation plans and gather the things you will need if you must evacuate.

Level 2: SET – *Level 2 evacuations indicate there is a significant risk to your area.* Now is the time to be set for immediate evacuation. Residents should either voluntarily relocate to a shelter or designated area or with family/friends outside the area or be ready to leave at a moment’s notice.

Level 3: GO! – *Level 3 means there is immediate danger. GO NOW!* You are advised to evacuate immediately.

During an emergency such as a wildfire these evacuation levels would be issued to local media and various social media sites. In Richland Washington, located on the edge of Benton County WA, these warnings are disseminated through a system known as “Code Red.” Code Red is a free emergency notification system which individuals residing in Benton County can sign up for. When signing up for Code Red the individual chooses how they would like to be notified of an emergency (text, phone call, email, etc). For more information on Code Red you can call Benton County Emergency Services at (509) 628-2600, or visit their [website](#).

Since those fires of 2020 there have been additional counties installing similar systems as Code Red. Contact your local emergency services office to see whether or not they have a Code Red system in your county. If they don’t, encourage them to install one, it might just save a life one day.

Given that during these fires many residents were given only precious few minutes to evacuate, the question becomes obvious; “Just how prepared are you in the event the unthinkable happens and your told you only have a few minutes with which to escape to safety? As with everything else it always pays to have a plan.

Here are some things to consider when drafting up your plan:

1. How will I receive [emergency alerts and warnings](#)?
2. What is my [shelter](#) plan?
3. What is my [evacuation](#) route?
4. What is my [family/household communication plan](#)?
5. Do I need to update my [emergency preparedness kit](#)?

A big part of your plan should also include a “Go Kit” with various items you might need when you get to wherever it is you’ll be spending time until receiving the “all clear” and (hopefully) returning to your home. Below are some suggested items you might consider including in your Go Kit:

- [Water](#) (one gallon per person per day for at least three days, for drinking and sanitation)
- [Food](#) (at least a three-day supply of non-perishable food)
- Battery-powered or hand crank radio and a NOAA Weather Radio with tone alert
- Flashlight
- First aid kit
- Extra batteries
- Whistle (to signal for help)
- Dust mask (to help filter contaminated air)
- Plastic sheeting and duct tape (to [shelter in place](#))
- Moist towelettes, garbage bags and plastic ties (for personal sanitation)
- Wrench or pliers (to [turn off utilities](#))
- Manual can opener (for food)
- Local maps

- Cell phone with chargers and a backup battery
- Five days of clean cloths

[FEMA](#) has an excellent suggested check list of items well worth printing out.

Last, but certainly not least, are our furry companions, and what to do if you become separated from your pet during the process of evacuating from wildfires. The Oregon Humane Society (OHS) has some excellent suggestions:



* **Make a plan for your pet.** Have an emergency kit prepared for your pet in case you need to evacuate. Consider placing your pet's crate out now so they can get more comfortable with it.

***Sign up for emergency alerts.** Know when an emergency is happening in your county. Getting info quickly gives you the power to take immediate action.

If you have lost your pet check your local animal services website to file a missing pet report, or to search for pets who have already been found. The Oregon Department of Agriculture has a [resource list](#) of all the local animal services agencies in Oregon. They have also launched a new [search tool](#) to help you find your lost domestic animal or livestock.

Always remember that in an emergency first and foremost your primary responsibility is to your family, and keeping yourself and those that mean the very most to you safe should always be your number one concern. Once you are satisfied that they are safe and secure then you might consider, if you're

not already involved, availing yourself as a skilled radio operator to one of the Ham Radio groups providing emergency communications such as ARES, RACES, or one of any number of local Ham Radio clubs, or EMCOMM groups. Take it from one who has been there, the more the merrier when it comes to skilled radio operators in an emergency!

In closing, I realize that the topic of climate change can be a point of contention for some, and there are those that still refuse to believe it's even happening at all. For me, I've seen far too much proof of its ongoing consequences, with massive floods, devastating tornadoes, rising temperatures, and shrinking ice packs just to name a few. Each year wildfires get worse, and more towns are burned out of existence with record levels of devastation as a result. So now more than ever we need to prepare ourselves, and recognize the warnings, and how to react to them. Like everywhere else in our federal government, deep budgets cuts aimed at the very resources fighting wildfires, and providing trained personnel, and equipment are being severely reduced. So, their finding themselves in a situation of having to do more with less. That said, it's important to stay safe, and be ready just in case the smoke does find you.

Lynn Wilson, K7LW

Some useful links:

*Pacific Power Outage Map – [Click Here](#)

* Northwest Interagency Coordination Center (NWCC) map – [Click Here](#)

*Oregon Humane Society – [Click Here](#)

Tools in an Emergency



While we're on the subject of emergency notification, in recent years an application which I highly recommend, has made its way into the spotlight. The application is called; "[Watch Duty](#)," and since its arrival it has increased in popularity by leaps and bounds, even among many first responders. That alone should speak volumes for its usefulness, and overall value in itself. On their website the Watch Duty team portray themselves as a non-profit, non-partisan, and non-government organization focused on disseminating public safety information in real-time from verified sources. They're even listed as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit. The application is funded primarily by donations, with 15 full-time employees, and just over 200 volunteers.

Watch Duty began life in 2021 in response to the many frustrations of living in wildfire-prone areas and the lack of timely, reliable wildfire information. John Mills, co-founder of the Watch Duty app, first experienced a wildfire near his home in Sonoma County in 2020. During that time, he realized that critical information was anything but centralized and instead was randomly scattered over numerous platforms. That inspired him to envision an app that would consolidate all of this information into one central space, making it easily accessible, and actionable for the average person.

The 2020 Walbridge Fire in Sonoma County, which eventually forced Mills to evacuate, was the motivation for the beginning of Watch Duty. During this time, Mills noticed that most everyone was relying on a variety of sources such as radio scanners, social media, and community groups for wildfire updates. As you can imagine, the reliability for this sort of information sharing fell far short of anything creditable. So, Mills set about gathering a group of volunteers who were already in the process of monitoring fire activity and reporting their observations on social media. Taking all this into consideration, Mills set about building what would eventually become the Watch Duty app as a more centralized platform, essentially creating a common space for these same volunteers to share information, and make it available to the general public. The app initially focused on Northern California, starting with Sonoma County, before expanding to other areas.



Watch Duty founder John Mills at his property in Sonoma County

For me personally, I was first introduced to the Watch Duty app by a very good friend of mine, Jason James (KI7ICB), who happens to also be a 28+ year veteran fire fighter. Jason serves as a Captain in the local Volunteer Fire Department stationed nearby in College Place WA. His wife, Jennifer (KK7ZDX), has been deeply involved in the group that produces Watch Duty from its inception, having first began by administering her own social media page dedicated to local wildfire notification. Jennifer, who is now a full-time employee, is the primary reason why most of us in the area now have Watch Duty on our phones as a primary early warning tool for tracking local wildfires.

Since its original launch, Watch Duty has grown significantly, currently covering 22 states, with plans for further expansion. So, it's no surprise that it's fast becoming a primary go-to resource for wildfire information, especially during major events like the January 2025 Los Angeles wildfires. The app's success is attributed to its focus on real-time, on-the-ground updates from a broad, and ever-growing network of volunteers. This just adds to its ability to efficiently provide targeted information to specific geographic areas. A free version of the app is available for download from most common sources where folks normally get apps for their phones, with a paid version available which contains even more features. Donations also support Watch Duty tools such as the [Echo Project](#).

Lynn Wilson, K7LW

The Legal Corner

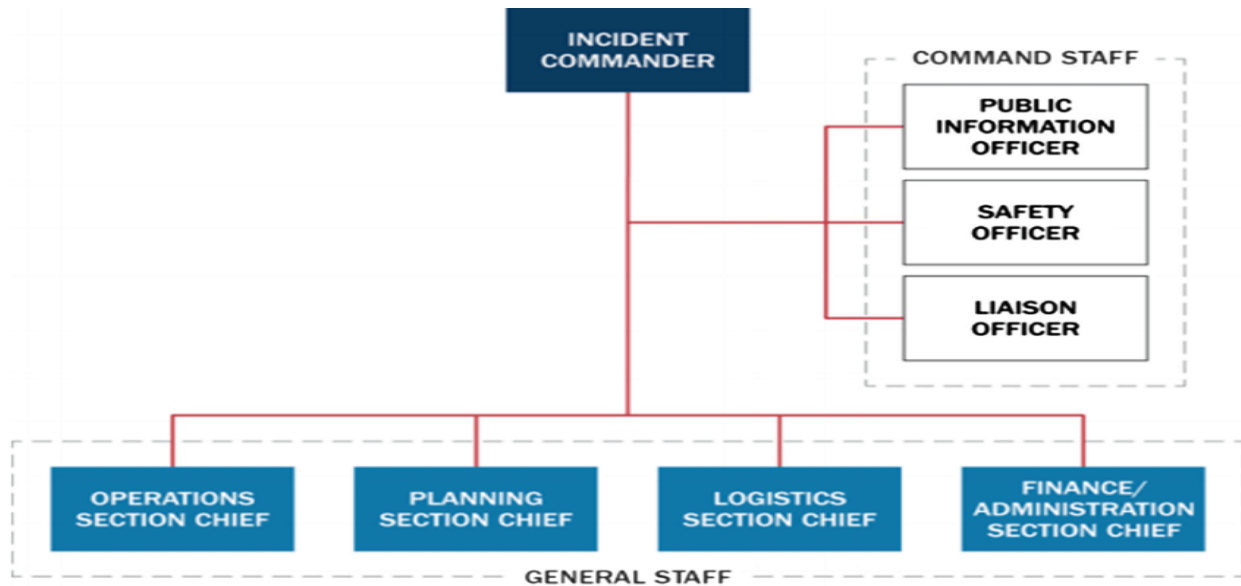


In the past I've touched on the National Incident Management System, or more commonly known simply as "NIMS." In this article I'd like to get a little deeper into NIMS and what it means to not only Amateur Radio as a Non-Government Organization (NGO), but to EMCOMM in general.

So, what exactly is NIMS, and just where does it fit in you ask? Well I'm glad you asked, let's get right into it shall we.

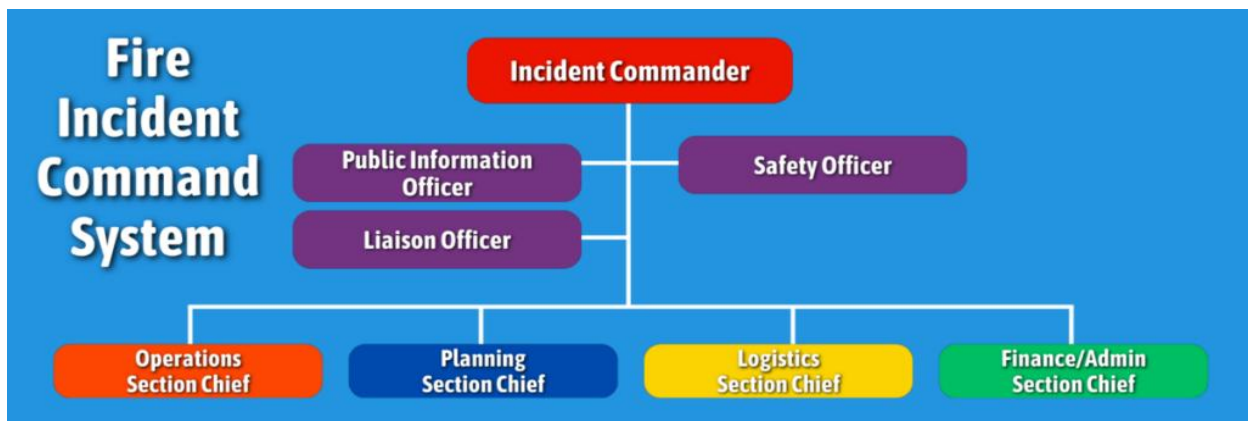
The National Incident Management System (NIMS) manages incidents across both government, and non-governmental organizations, as well as the private sector. Part of this is the Incident Command System (ICS), which is the tactical communications system used to manage emergencies on the ground.

The Incident Command System (ICS) is a standardized, on-scene, all-hazard incident management concept. It provides a common organizational structure for managing incidents, regardless of their size or complexity, ensuring effective and efficient incident response by integrating facilities, equipment, personnel, procedures, and communications. ICS is a core component of NIMS.



General ICS organization structure with a single Incident Commander.

ICS courses 100, 200, 700, and 800 cover the basic overall ICS structure in considerable detail, and are a requirement by FEMA in order to participate in most all emergency responses. So, if you're looking for additional information on ICS in general, I highly suggest taking the courses. After all, there free, so why not?



ICS organizational structure for a Fire Incident Command System.

FEMA's National Incident Management System (NIMS) is a layered emergency response plan that includes support from Amateur Radio operators among others. NIMS recognizes the role of Amateur Radio in providing communications support to emergency management, public safety, and other government agencies. In most all cases Amateur Radio response, along with EMCOMM in general, is governed directly by NIMS response guidelines.

The primary mission of NIMS is to provide a consistent nationwide template in order to enable partners across the nation to work together to prevent, protect against, respond to, recover from, and mitigate the effects of incidents, regardless of cause, size, location, or complexity. This is a shared responsibility between Federal and local agencies in order to work with community responders encompassing six elements as outlined within the Presidential Policy Directive ([PPD-8](#)). In the event we as an NGO would be called upon, in cooperation with various Federal, State, and local agencies during times of emergency, we would adhere to the guidelines as stated within the National Incident Management System Section IV Communications and Information Management.

The six elements of the PPD-8 are:

1. **Policy Statement:** A clear and concise declaration of the President's policy on the issue at hand.
2. **Key Principles:** Guiding principles that will govern the implementation of the policy.
3. **Responsibilities:** Designation of specific agencies or individuals and their roles in carrying out the policy.
4. **Timelines:** Deadlines for specific actions or phases of implementation.
5. **Implementation Mechanisms:** Procedures and strategies for putting the policy into practice.
6. **Evaluation and Reporting:** Mechanisms for assessing the effectiveness of the policy and reporting on progress.

Basically PPD-8 with regards to National Preparedness includes: a national preparedness goal, a national preparedness system, guidance for planning, organization, equipment, training, and exercises, and an interagency operational plan. NIMS provides a standardized approach to incident management, including organizational structures, resource management, and communication protocols. It serves as a template for all levels of government, as well as private and non-governmental organizations, in order to work together effectively during emergencies. Basically, what this is all saying is that NIMS puts us all on the same page. In an emergency clear, concise communication is critical. So, by all of us following the same protocols communication becomes considerably smoother, and efficient. Which enables

us all to perform more efficiently, and coherently as a team in times of emergency.

Lynn, K7LW

Current events



Radio in the Park

It's summer, and as Ham's this is an opportunity to pack up the radios, and head out to your local state, or city park for a little radio fun. Being the Ham's that we are, we really don't require much in the way of an excuse to go play radio, so allow me to offer up this suggestion. How about this upcoming weekend consider activating a POTA, or "Parks On The Air?"

Even though this all started fairly recently, it has since grown exponentially in popularity. For those that aren't all that familiar with POTA, it's an international radio sport award program that encourages licensed Amateur Radio operators to visit, enjoy, and operate portable equipment in a variety of parks and public lands. POTA issues awards to participants based on a wide range of criteria including the total number of radio contacts made, number made on each Amateur Radio band, and for different modes of communication including voice, Morse code or various digital modes.

As I said, POTA is fairly new on the Amateur Radio scene, having first evolved from the "Summits On The Air," or "SOTA," which first began in the UK around 2002. Later on, around 2016 the ARRL ran a one-year event called "National Parks on the Air" (NPOTA). It was so popular that an organization was formed in 2018 in order to make it a year-round event.



Ah yes, a loaf of bread, a jug of wine, and thee, it just doesn't get any better!

Nowadays, POTA is a worldwide event with participation occurring around the clock, in locations as diverse as the Caribbean, India, China and Europe. Park locations can range from large national parks covering many square miles to small urban locations, and even islands.

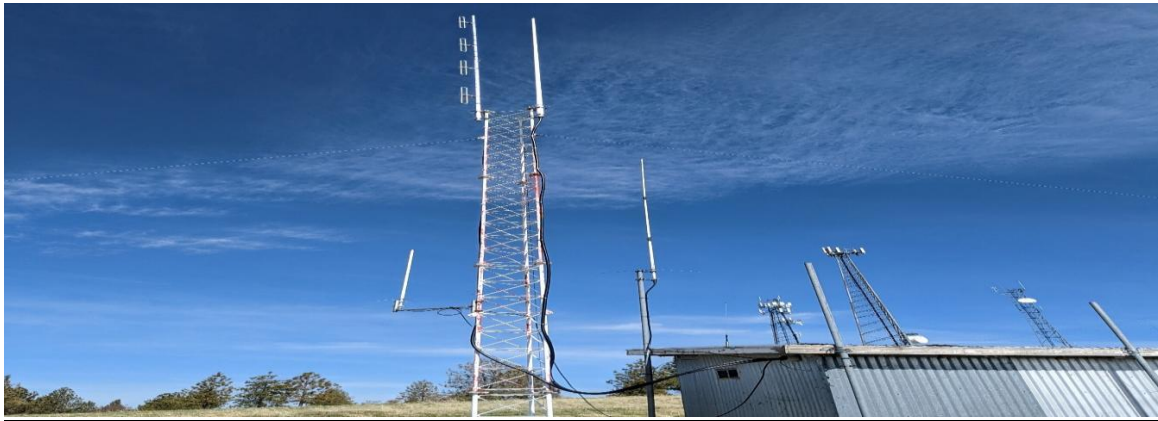


Tell me this doesn't look like fun? Anthony Wiese (KG6LHW) and company working POTA at the John Day Fossil beds in central Oregon.

For more information on just how to get started, and register your POTA activation, visit their [website](#). You were going to visit a park this summer anyway, so why not pack a radio or two along the way.

Lynn, K7LW

Repeater Updates



Weston Mt Repeater site.

This month we're still continuing work on improving the system before Old Man winter returns. The focus this month is on improving antennas, and laying the ground work for a MESH system connecting not only all of the W7NEO repeater sites, but also opening up the door for some of our local friends to join in the fun while further improving upon emergency response.

In recent conversations with the La Grande folks, we all agreed upon a combined desire to establish a common intranet network between our two systems. This would provide a means with which to not only link our individual repeater sites through a network independent of the internet, but to also efficiently pass vital traffic, control our repeaters remotely, and to provide a variety of resources in the event of an emergency. We're still in the planning stages, but little by little it's starting to come together, so stay tuned.

Also, we're getting ready to upgrade the current antenna on our Weston Mt GMRS repeater. This should provide excellent, and reliable GMRS service by covering not only much of Umatilla County, but the entire Walla Walla Valley, including Milton-Freewater, along with parts of the Tri-Cities. We have the antenna, we just need to plan a day, and gather up a working party to install it.

Along with further expansions to our GMRS system, there are plans once again beginning to come together in order to bring the GMRS users more into the EMCOMM world. The goal is that this will eventually provide a valuable resource in times of need. Initial enthusiasm is high so far, so hopefully we'll get something started that will eventually benefit our local community.

And finally, recently I was able to connect up with the Yeasu Regional Sales Manager, John Kruk (N9UPC) for his paper on bridging the digital side of the Yeasu DR2X with other analog systems. Apparently, he had sent the paper to me months ago in response to my original request, but somehow it was sidetrack to my SPAM folder. At any rate, moving on, this would effectively enable DR2X digital voice and analog repeaters to operate in an efficient cross-mode fashion. Thereby effectively bridging the Fusion digital with other analog systems such as Allstar, and visa versa. Eventually, the goal is to integrate the ability to combine both the Allstar and Fusion sides of the W7NEO system in the event of an emergency, which would greatly enhance system capabilities overall. If you would like to check it out yourself, the paper is now posted on our website in its entirety as part of the Articles and Info section.

That's about it for now. As always, we're continually looking for ways to improve the W7NEO system in order to make it just that much better for everyone. So, if you have any ideas, let us know. We may or may not use your idea, but we greatly appreciate your contribution, and letting us know what's on your mind regarding our system.

Lynn, K7LW

Ham Radio Nostalgia



Joe Walsh (WB6ACU), a musical Legend and Licensed Ham Radio Operator.

Back in the day, like many other teenagers of the time, I grew up listening to Joe Walsh, and the rest of the Eagles, and even before that when he played with The James Gang. Later on, in the 80's I had the opportunity to attend some of the live Eagles performances, an experience I will never forget. Of course, back then I didn't realize that Joe was into Ham Radio like I was, and was equally passionate about it. Rumor has it that there's a picture of Joe in front of his massive radio station with the caption; "Life's Been Good to Me So Far." I wasn't able to find the picture, but this is a quote from one of the lyrics to his song by the same title which seems to fit pretty well, off his "But seriously folks." Album. It was also featured on the soundtrack to the 1978 film "FM."

While living in New York City, Walsh began a lifelong interest in Amateur Radio. He holds an Amateur Extra Class Amateur Radio License, and his callsign is WB6ACU. As a long time ARRL member, in 2006, he donated an autographed guitar to the ARRL in Newington, Connecticut, for its charity auction. He has also been involved with the group's "Big Project," which brings amateur radio into schools.



Joe Walsh in front of one of his vintage Ham stations.

Joe is also a life member of the ARRL, and has been a big supporter of the organization for many years. In 2018 he released a set of ARRL audio and video public service announcements promoting Amateur Radio through the

ARRL. Walsh, who visited ARRL Headquarters in 2017 for the taping, wanted to deliver two main messages in his PSAs: get involved in Amateur Radio, and become a member of ARRL. The messages highlight the tremendous service that radio amateurs provide to communities, and convey how ARRL advocates on behalf of Amateur Radio on a wide range of legal and political issues.

Joe continues to be a contributor to both the music community, and the Amateur Radio community. Additionally, he contributes, and is a member of various wildlife conservation efforts, along with numerous other charities such as halfway houses for displaced adult women. Thank you, Joe, for all of your generosity, and your many contributions. 73's, and keep on rock'n!

Lynn, K7LW

VE Testing

There is no VE testing going on that we're aware of, but if you check the Links section of our website, there may be information on some of our friend's websites as to where you might find a test session going on near you.

But in the meantime, if you do have a regular test session taking place, feel free to let us know, and we'll post it here in the next issue of the Pickle Barrel Review.

The End

Well, that's about it for this edition of the Pickle Barrel Review, I hope you enjoyed it. We'll continue to work to keep it informative, fun, and interesting. So, until next time, we here at the WMDRA (W7NEO) hope everyone is enjoying the warm summer weather, along with some relaxing quality time on the air. In the meantime, feel free to reach in the barrel, and grab another pickle. There's plenty to go around, along with plenty of great conversation!

73,

Weston Mountain Digital Radio Association,
W7NEO

Dilbert

By Scott Adams



“Two things are infinite: the universe and human stupidity; and I'm not sure about the universe.”

— Albert Einstein