The Pickle Barrel Review

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE WESTON MOUNTAIN DIGITAL RADIO ASSOCIATION

September 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

Tom's totally organic house flies' eradication service:
Tom uses no harmful pesticides, instead his team is highly skilled in the art of "Ty quan swat." Once called, Tom's professional fly eradication team will have your home totally free of house flies in just hours without the tell tail smell of nasty pesticides afterwards.
As a precaution, Tom advises that if you have any delicate items on display that you might want to box them up for the time being, just in case.
So, the next time you find yourself with a house full of unwanted flies, call on Tom's Totally Organic House Fly eradication service.

A note of Passing

K7KRF – SK

Clarence Aaron Gross, K7KRF, was born on January 27, 1929, in South Fork Arkansas, which currently boasts a population of just 382. Clarence was a fighter from day one, with his mother helping him through a respiratory illness while holding him in her arms when he was still very young.

Later on, Clarence had learned the value of hard work at an early age; a personal value which he kept throughout his life. Clarance was also extremely proud of his service in the Army, and if he knew someone that had stopped by to visit was a Veteran, he would share his many photo albums showing a much younger man proudly standing in his army uniform, and relate his many stories of his time serving in the Army. While serving in the Army, Clarence received many commendations for his attention to detail, and dedication to duty. One of his duties that he was most proud of was having been selected as the base commander's personal driver while stationed in Alaska. He would relate with a certain degree of pride in his words of how him and the Commander had shared many private conversations about how each viewed the world, and life in general.

His wife, Carlie Nichols of Tacoma, Washington, sadly passed away in late 2007 at the age of 80 after her declining health had necessitated that she spend her remaining years in a care facility. This was a tough period for Clarence, but being a deeply religious individual, he was convinced that this was only temporary, and that they would be back together eventually someday. This greatly helped to keep him going over the course of his remaining years.

Later on in life he suffered a severe stroke, which left him unable to speak properly, and robbed him of much of his clarity of thought. Not one to simply roll over and give up, and being every bit the fighter that he had always been, Clarence would read books, and maintain an inventory of electronic parts, which he would count each day in order to regain his ability to speak, and organize his thoughts. He also worked diligently at various other therapies that were offered up to him in order to further improve his health, both physical and mental. One activity in particular he did was to write a fair amount of personal history down in his own words. Through dedicated determination, and perseverance, he was eventually successful at healing, and regaining his own personal independence.

Clarance worked many jobs over the course of his lifetime, including, milling, repairing and maintaining communication equipment for the military. He also worked for the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) at the Eastern Oregon Regional Airport, in Pendleton Oregon as a technician for many years.

To his credit, he also started a chapter of a youth organization in Springfield, Missouri which was patterned after the Boy Scouts of America. He continued working as a leader within the organization for many years afterwards.

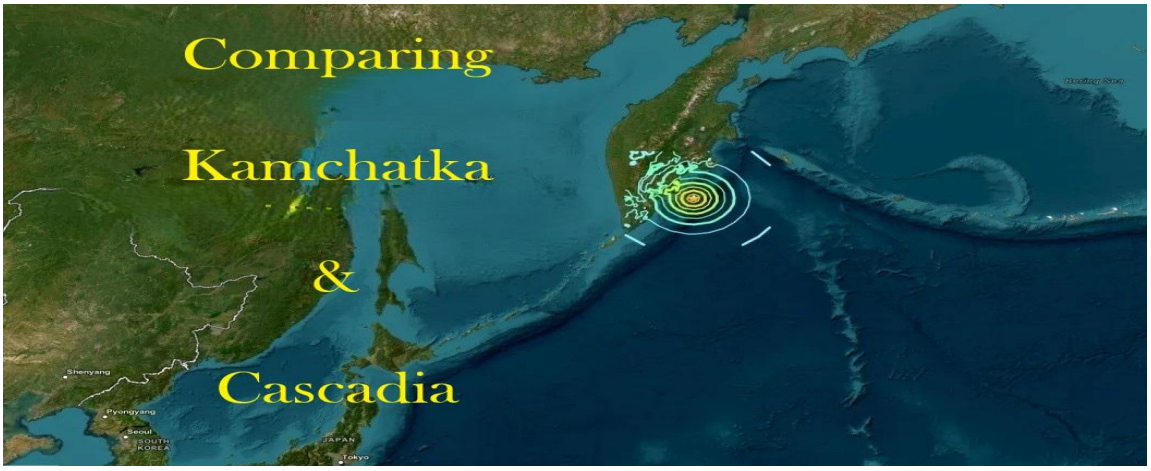
Clarence was known locally for his always friendly, easy going demeaner, and quick wit. He was not only a regular on the Social Net sponsored by the Spout Springs Repeater Group held nightly on their Spout Springs repeater (146.8 MHz), but he was also somewhat of a celebrity with the local township of Adams Oregon where he lived. Many of the locals living in Adams would tune in each evening with their scanners just to listen to Clarence checking into the net, and get a dose of his friendly joking wit, and ever-present compassion for others. Needless to say, he was highly thought of in that little town, and nearly everyone in the town kept a close eye on Clarence making sure he was doing okay.

Clarence was, and always will be a local icon that I'm certain will be looked back upon with deep fondness. His friendly, and welcoming personality will continue to inspire folks that knew him for years to come, I'm sure.

Farewell, and very best 73's my dear old friend. I hope where ever you are now, that "Someday," has finally come to pass, and that you and your lovely wife Carlie are together once again…..and hopefully they allow you to keep a radio handy close by with you...

Lynn Wilson, K7LW

Emergency Preparedness



On July 30th, 2025, at 11:24:52 local Kamchatka time (23:24:52 UTC), an 8.8 magnitude "Megathrust earthquake" struck off the eastern coast of the Kamchatka Peninsula in the Russian Far East region. The epicenter was centered approximately 74 miles east-southeast of the coastal city of Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky. At the time it was said to be the most powerful earthquake recorded worldwide since the 2011 Tōhoku earthquake, and is tied with both the 1906 Ecuador–Colombia, and 2010 Chile earthquakes as the sixth-strongest earthquake ever recorded.

The Tōhoku earthquake and tsunami, also known as; "The Great East Japan Earthquake," was a magnitude 9.1 earthquake that struck off the coast of Japan on March 11, 2011. The earthquake triggered a massive tsunami that not only caused widespread destruction resulting in over 18,000 deaths and disappearances, it was also responsible for the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear

disaster. This caused the meltdowns of three of its reactors, the discharge of radioactive water in Fukushima, and wide spread contamination on numerous associated evacuation zones affecting hundreds of thousands of residents. The earthquake was the most powerful ever recorded in Japan, and the third largest in the world since 1900 when seismographs first began recording seismic events. As of June 2021, the official death toll included 19,747 people who lost their lives in the tsunami.

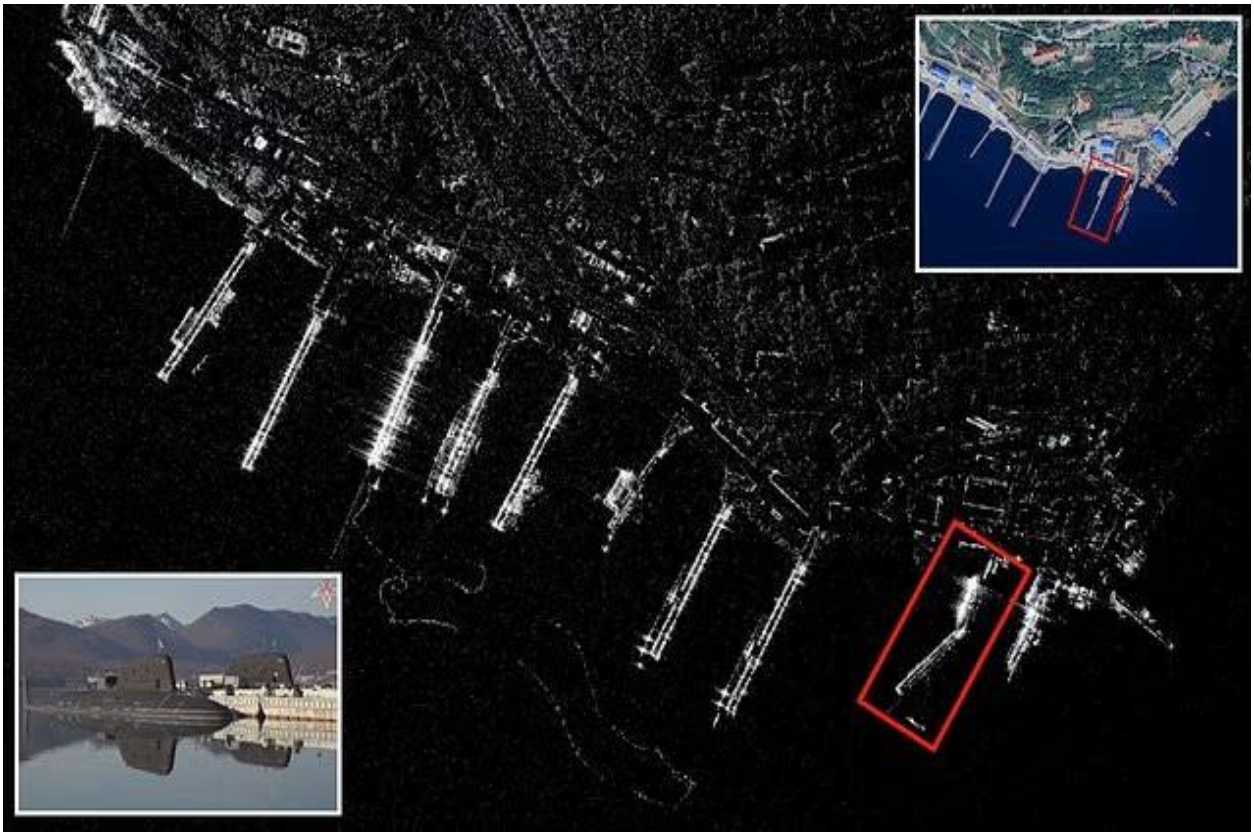
The Tōhoku earthquake caused a massive tsunami that devastated communities along Tohoku coastline, and across many municipalities.

Another similar earthquake was the 2010 Chile earthquake and tsunami which occurred off the coast of central Chile on February 27th 2010, and had a magnitude of 8.8.

For the sake of clarity, a megathrust earthquake is classified by seismologist as the most powerful type of earthquake of them all. These earthquakes occur at subduction zones where one tectonic plate slides beneath another. Specifically, a megathrust earthquake occurs when stress builds up between the two plates to a point that it is released in a massive slip, which often causes the overlying plate to thrust upwards. This is actually what creates the tsunami. I've got your attention now don't I.

Fortunately, the Kamchatka earthquake caused a minimal amount of damage compared to other earthquakes of similar magnitude. This was mostly accredited to the relatively sparse population living on the peninsula. The

earthquake however was responsible for moderate damage and multiple injuries in Kamchatka Krai, and Sakhalin Oblast regions. Damage was reported to some buildings, with one casualty being attributed to the roof of an airport terminal collapsing, and taking one woman's life in the process. There were also power outages, and loss of mobile phone service reported. Additionally, the Russian submarine base located in Avacha Bay was damaged by the earthquake and tsunami, according to satellite images. The base, which houses Russia's Pacific submarine fleet, saw at least one of its piers damaged by tsunami waves.



Damage to Russia's Pacific nuclear submarine base after the tsunami caused by the 8.8-magnitude earthquake struck.

On the Russian island of Kataoka Baikovo (Shumshu), part of the Kuril Islands chain, a locally high storm surge of 62 ft as a result of a 13 ft tsunami wave was recorded. While in Japan there was one indirect fatality, and 21 injuries attributed to tsunami-related evacuations.

The Russian Island of Kataoka Baikovo experiencing flooding after a storm surge of 62 ft resulting from a 13 ft tsunami wave.

Even after the magnitude 8.8 Kamchatka earthquake, the region still continued to experience numerous aftershocks, some even exceeding magnitude 6.0. The USGS reported that there was a 2% chance of aftershocks of magnitude 8 or greater within the first week after the initial earthquake, and a 24% chance of magnitude 7 or greater aftershocks following that. Although the aftershocks were expected to gradually subside in magnitude and frequency over time, it's possible that they could continue for weeks, months, or even years to follow. If that wasn't bad enough, there have been six volcanoes in the region erupt as a result of the massive quake. Up until now, one in particular hadn't shown any signs of activity in over 500 years. With a seventh volcano (Mutnovsky) showing signs of heating up. So, the residents of Kamchatka might want to hold off putting the family heirlooms back on the display shelves for just a little while longer.

One of six eruptions on the Kamchatka Peninsula, with a possible seventh volcano threatening to erupt.

Experts are warning that even though the volcanic eruptions themselves pose a minimal threat, the potential hazard to aviation due to ash clouds presented a considerably more serious threat.

Volcanic ash clouds, such as this one from the Chile eruption, which grounded aircraft as far away as Australia, and New Zealand could create problems worldwide.

Fortunately, here on the west coast of North America, the subsequent Pacific-wide tsunami that was expected turned out to be considerably more

lackluster than was originally expected. With waves approximately 3 ft or less in most places.

Closer to home, as far as our neck of the woods here in the Pacific Northwest, the Pacific Tsunami Warning Center (PTWC) located on Ford Island, Hawaii, along with various other agencies, issued an advisory for British Columbia and the rest of the Pacific coastline. The advisory included potentially strong currents and surges, with waves under 12 inches. You laugh now, but just wait until one of those (cold) waves were to come lapping its way up your swim trunks!

The entirety of the U.S. West Coast (California, Oregon, and Washington states) was also placed under alert, as were portions of coastal Alaska and the Aleutian Islands. Additionally, vessels throughout the Hawaiian Islands were ordered by port authorities to leave port immediately. In California, the Central Coast, and the San Francisco Bay Area were all placed under advisory by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). A warning was also issued covering the coast from Cape Mendocino, California, all the way to the border with Oregon.

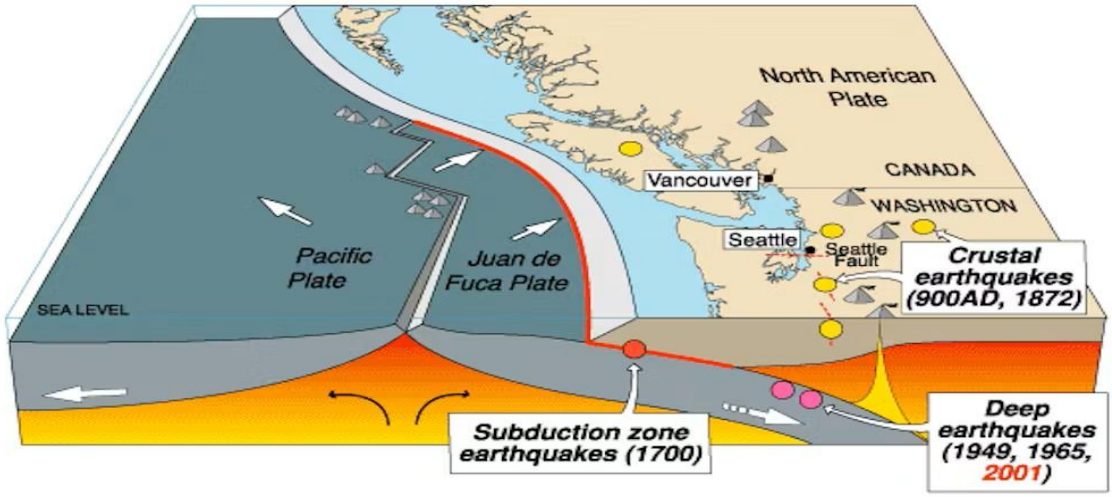
Even the Mexican Navy warned of strong currents at ports along the Pacific coast from Baja California, to Chiapas along the area bordering Guatemala. The Mexican government also urged residents to stay away from beaches.

Elsewhere further down the Pacific coast, in South America, Alerts were issued in Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Peru, and the Galápagos Islands in Ecuador.

So, as you can see, this was all taken quite seriously by the rest of the countries located in and around the Pacific rim.

By now you should be drawing a comparison in your mind to our own Cascadia subduction zone, and the megathrust earthquake that it's expected to unleash upon the Pacific Northwest someday. That said, let's examine the differences of what actually just happened on the Kamchatka Peninsula, and compare it to what is predicted to happen here along the west coast, and examine the effects of each.

The Kamchatka and Cascadia earthquakes, are both classified as mega-thrust earthquakes, and with that share numerous similarities as they both occur along subduction zones where one tectonic plate slides beneath another. Where the differences lie, is that the Kamchatka earthquake, specifically the one we've been talking about here, was an 8.8 magnitude event on the other side of the Pacific Ocean from our location. However, the Cascadia Subduction Zone earthquake is a potential 9.0 or greater event predicted to take place here in our own backyard along the Pacific Northwest coast of North America. While the Kamchatka earthquake triggered tsunami warnings across the Pacific, its impact on the U.S. West Coast-thankfully-was minimal. Scientists predict that a similar magnitude earthquake, such as would be in the case of the Cascadia subduction, has the potential for a significantly larger tsunami that would effectively inundate the coastlines of Washington, Oregon, and Northern California.



Map of Cascadia Subduction Zone, showing the fault between the eastward-moving Juan de Fuca plate and the North American plate parallel to the PNW Coastline.

But unlike the Kamchatka earthquake, the Cascadia Subduction Zone with its history of producing large earthquakes, and tsunamis, along with its relatively close proximity to densely populated, and thriving economically developed areas, paints an entirely different picture. So, if we were to examine a scenario involving the Cascadia subduction here on the west coast, casting it in the sense of a similar event as Kamchatka today, it would most assuredly result in

considerably more widespread devastation, loss of life, and immense economic losses.

Road damage from the 2001 Nisqually Earthquake in Thurston County, Washington.

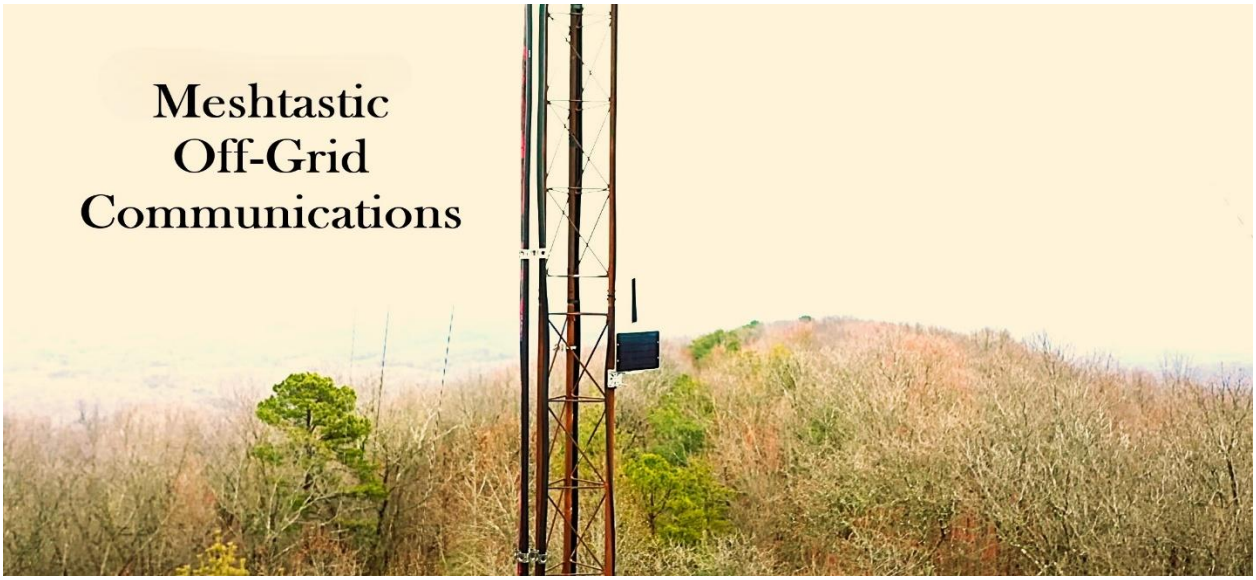
In comparing the two events, the Kamchatka earthquake provided us with an actual event with measurable impacts, while the Cascadia earthquake is still a potential future event with projected impacts based on historical data and scientific modeling. The Cascadia earthquake still remains the gorilla on the block, since it is predicted to be significantly larger than the Kamchatka event, with a significantly greater potential for widespread devastation, as I mentioned.

So, in essence, the Kamchatka earthquake has served as a stark example of the large-scale damage resulting from a subduction zone earthquake, and the resulting tsunamis. While a Cascadia earthquake, for now anyway, still only provides speculation with regards to the significant threat being posed to the U.S. West Coast. On the upside, the Kamchatka earthquake has served to put all of the modeling, and scientific speculation of a Cascadia earthquake into a

more realistic perspective, while serving to continue to create a more logical scenario for us here in the Pacific Northwest. One which allows us to examine, and further tweak our expectations, planning, and (hopefully) will allow us to be just that much more prepared when our own mega-quake hits.

Lynn Wilson, K7LW

The Tech Corner

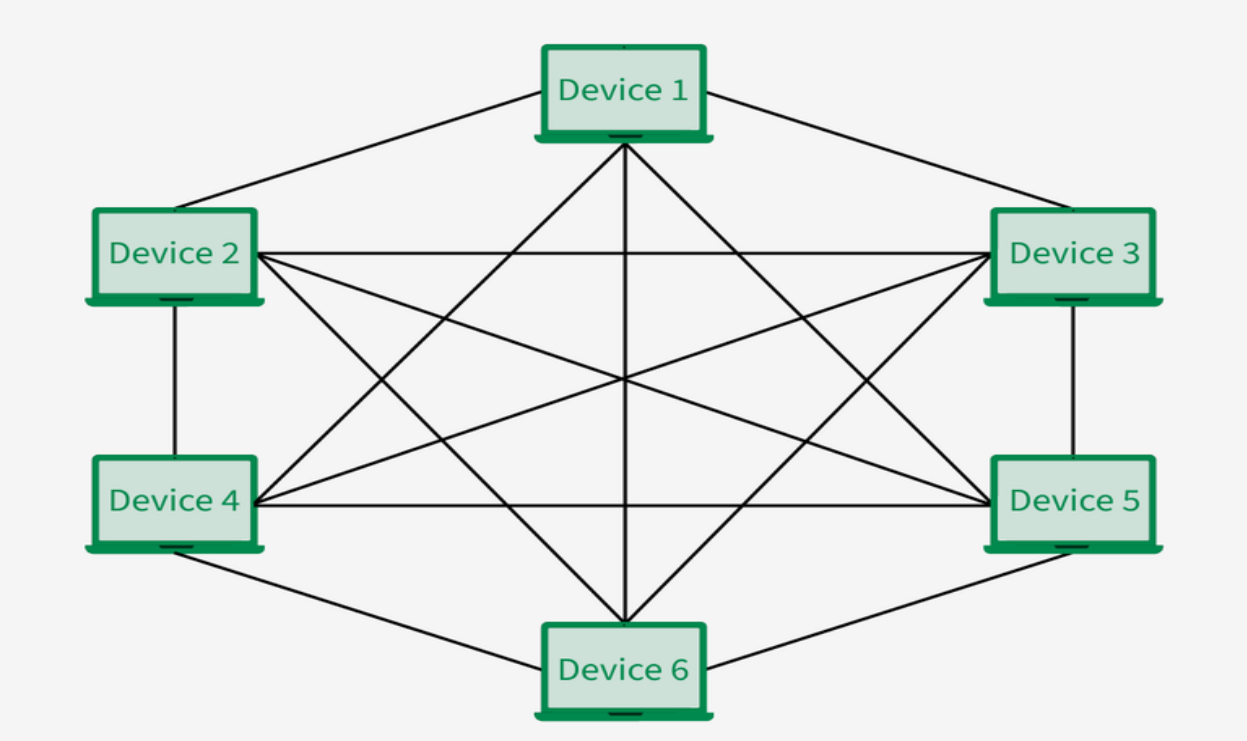


Recently I was introduced to a system of low cost, no license required equipment, comprising a highly efficient MESH network system, which is totally independent of the grid. This all sounds too good to be true right? Well, it's real, and fairly efficient, and all with a relatively short learning curve. So, now that I have your curiosity peaked, let's get right into it shall we.

A while back I had heard a long-time friend of mine discussing a cheap, and easy to use MESH network system over one of the local repeaters. To be honest, at the time I really didn't give it much thought, since I was already working on a MESH network for the W7NEO system. But recently I heard another friend of mine in Seattle talking about something that sounded very similar over another repeater. So, I thought to myself; "Here's a couple of guys that are both pretty tech savvy seemingly talking about the same thing, maybe there's something to this." So, I decided to look a little deeper and find out just

what this network system was all about. As most of you that follow the progress of our system on a regular basis are aware, we've been working on integrating a MESH network into the W7NEO repeater system for a while now based on the Amateur Radio Emergency Data Network (AREDN). That idea is still very much in play, but we're still fine tuning it to determine just what is best for our system. However, as a go between, and to perhaps provide a resource to both Hams and Non-Hams in our community, particularly in the event of an emergency, this particular system caught my attention.

For those that don't know exactly what a MESH network is, a MESH network is a network topology where each node (device) connects to multiple other nodes, creating multiple redundant paths for data transmission. The term MESH actually is not an acronym, but is a descriptive term for this particular type of network topology. This decentralized approach enhances network reliability and fault tolerance. The original concept was developed by the US military for network field operations. One of the main features of a MESH network is its ability to essentially be self-healing. In other words, if for whatever reason one of the nodes fails, the system will automatically re-route the data through another available node, and all independent of commercial power, wi-fi, or cell service.



A basic MESH network system.

Specifically, the MESH network system we'll be talking about in this article is called Meshtastic, and was originally developed by an engineer and entrepreneur by the name of Kevin Hester, who also happens to have a background in software development and hardware design. Kevin's goal in developing Meshtastic was to create decentralized, long-range, and low-power communication networks using open-source software and readily available hardware. Meshtastic is an open-source project with hundreds of contributors participating in its development, maintaining a strong DIY (Do It Yourself) ethos. The platform itself utilizes LoRa technology, which is a Low-power, Long-Range, wireless communication technology which enables communication between devices without the need for cellular or Wi-Fi infrastructure. Meshtastic is widely accessible in most regions without the need for additional licenses or certifications, unlike ham radio operations.

Typical Meshtastic Base station/repeater.

These radios are designed to rebroadcast messages they receive, which forms the mesh network. This setup ensures that every group member, including those at the furthest distance, can receive messages.

Additionally, Meshtastic radios can be paired with a single phone via Bluetooth, allowing friends and family to send messages directly to your specific radio. It's important to note that each device is capable of supporting a connection from only one user at a time.

So how does all this work in order to form a network. When you send a message on your Meshtastic companion app, it is relayed to the radio using Bluetooth, Wi-Fi/Ethernet or serial connection. That message is then broadcasted by the radio. If it hasn't received a confirmation from any other device after a certain timeout, it will retransmit the message up to three times. When a receiving radio captures a packet, it checks to see if it has heard that message before. If it has it ignores the message. If it hasn't heard the message, it will rebroadcast it. For each message a radio rebroadcasts, it marks the "Hop Limit" down by one. When a radio receives a packet with a hop limit of zero, it will not rebroadcast the message. The radio will store a small number of packets (around 30) in its memory for when it's not connected to a client app. If it's full, it will replace the oldest packets with newly incoming text messages only.

At the radio level a Meshtastic MESH is a set of nodes that share the same LoRa spreading factor, center frequency, and bandwidth. A node can only be in one radio mesh; it will not see or respond to messages from nodes using different values for these settings. For a mesh to form, nodes need to share the same values. These values are grouped into "Presets" that can be easily chosen in the LoRa configuration section. Presets make it easy for nodes to configure the same radio parameters.

Sitting on top of this radio mesh are Channels. A logical mesh is formed by a Channel with a particular name and encryption key. The default channel in a radio mesh is Channel 0 with a blank "Name" and an encryption key.

Nodes can belong to a maximum of 8 Channels in the radio mesh. A custom Channel can be created for use by a specific group. Only nodes configured with

the same Channel name and encryption key will be able to read and display messages on that Channel. However, all nodes in the radio mesh will receive and may retransmit messages (depending on their Role) regardless of the Channel settings for the message.

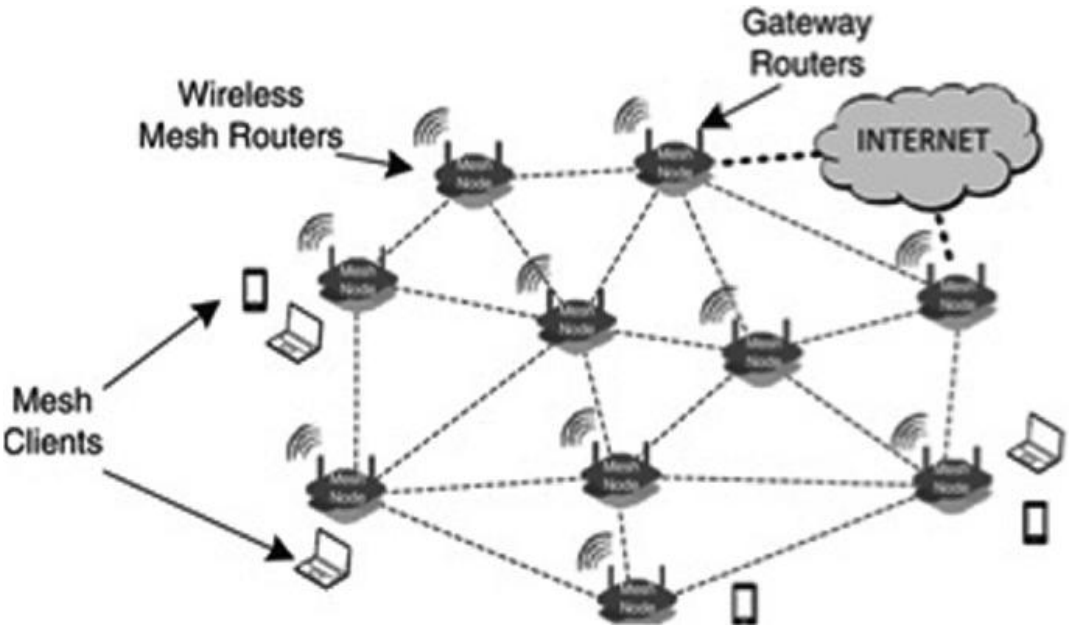
All data is converted into LoRa symbols which are sent to the radio for transmission. As in the case of .AX25 network protocol, there is always a preamble at the beginning of each and every packet. This sets the synchronization, packet length, and the rest of the parameters. Remember, each node network will only talk to other networks with the same settings. Think of it like the old military movies where soldiers would exchange secret code words to let the sentry know that they were actually a friendly. This preamble allows receiving radios to synchronize clocks and start framing. Typically, a preamble length of 16 is used, which is longer than the minimum preamble length of 8. The primary purpose of this is to let SX126x LoRa receivers sleep for a while, which lowers power consumption. It's worth also noting that packet headers are always sent unencrypted, which allows nodes to relay packets they can't decrypt as well. If you really feel the urge, this feature can be disabled by setting a different rebroadcast mode.

Another feather of Meshtastic which we briefly touched on earlier, is that unlike what is considered illegal with other personal radio services such as Amateur Radio, or GMRS, is its ability to encrypt messages legally. It should be noted that should you select "Ham" operation in the setup, IAW FCC Part 97.113.A.4 the use of encryption is illegal on Amateur Radio, and as such, this feature is disabled. But on the flip side, it does allow you to use more power (10 watts) and higher gain antennas. Also, given that in many countries relaying messages across the same frequency from unlicensed stations to licensed stations is also illegal this might be something to consider when setting up your node. For me personally, I would just go with the non-Ham mode, and save the hassle.

So going with the "Non-Ham" mode, direct messages to a specific node are now encrypted using Public Key Cryptography (PKC). Each node is equipped with a unique public/private key pair, and direct messages are encrypted with the recipient's public key. This ensures that only the recipient can decrypt the message using their own private key. Additionally, messages are signed with the sender's private key, allowing the recipient to verify the sender's identity and ensuring the message's integrity.

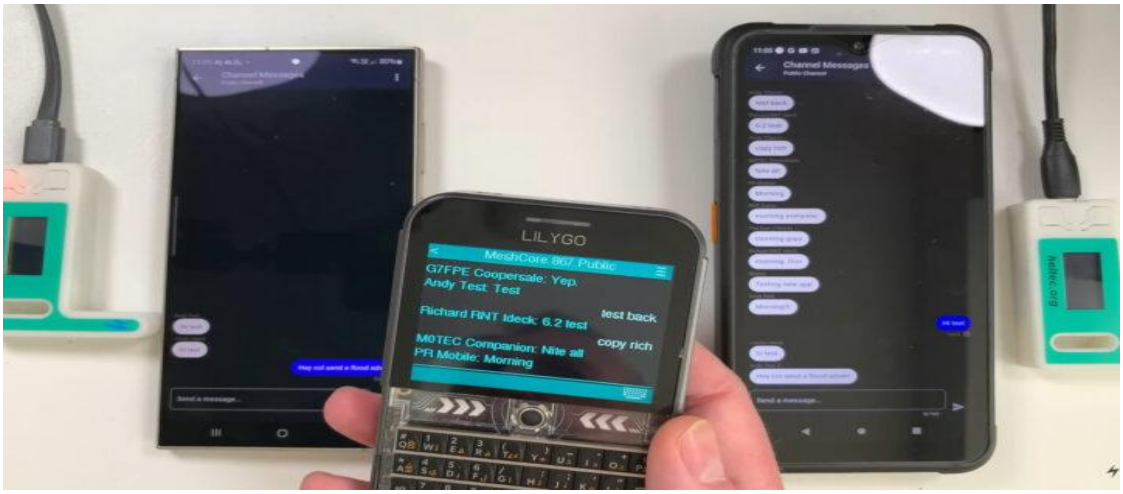
All periodic broadcasts (position, telemetry, traceroutes, etc.) that the devices send out are sent over the primary channel and thus encrypted.

As far as the Meshtastic system itself goes, it's a mix of nodes, repeaters, gateways, and repeaters.



Basic Meshtastic network.

When choosing a terminal communications device, there are many to choose from, along with simply pairing your node with your cell phone. So, I won't get into that part of it, even though I realize it's an important part of it all, this article isn't about product reviews.



Some examples of Meshtastic terminals

Unlike other MESH networks such as ARDN, or any number of others, Meshtastic, for the moment anyway, is limited to text messaging, and for those nodes that are so equipped, GPS, and limited weather observation data. But given that this software is public domain, I'm sure we'll be seeing more and more features as Meshtastic continues to catch on, and grow in capabilities.

As with most technologies today, we could dive much deeper into this. But since we only have so much room in our newsletter, we'll have to leave it here for now. Hopefully the equipment remains immune from the tariff wars going on, and stays at a reasonable cost keeping it well within reach of everyone's budget. In the meantime, I hope this has sparked some curiosity among the readers to want to know more, and perhaps put up a node or two of your own someday soon.

Lynn Wilson, K7LW

Legal Corner

Recently, in an article published in the July issue of National Communications Magazine, it was brought out that the FCC had recently been petitioned by a long time GMRS user to reallocate the VHF low frequencies of 30 ~ 50 MHz in order to be made available to GMRS/FRS users. The petition argued that these

channels offer superior propagation characteristics compared to current UHF frequencies used by FRS and GMRS. What's more, there are many frequencies located in the lower portion of VHF that have long since been abandoned, and are no longer utilized.

In reviewing through some of the forums, it's clear that most GMRS and FRS users are greatly in favor of this. The most common reason being that UHF frequencies where GMRS/FRS radios are currently assigned lack the quality of coverage typically afforded by VHF. The most notable example given in particular was in the case of mountainous areas where the terrain varies dramatically, thereby hindering normal line of sight communications.

Once upon a time long before trunking, and satellite communication systems were employed, these frequencies were very popular among public service agencies. Currently, most public service agencies are now operating on 150 MHz and above. With most utilizing UHF, Fiberoptic, and microwave trunking systems which greatly extend their coverage area.

The feeling of many GMRS operators today seems to be that since the FCC took away the ability of GMRS repeaters to link with one another over the internet, that an alternative is needed in order to fill the gap left behind, thereby at least partially restoring the lost coverage. The argument that the GMRS community is presenting in trying to convince the FCC to restore linking capabilities, is primarily one of public safety.

Recall that the FCC originally justified doing away with linking on GMRS frequencies citing that the original intent of GMRS was for "limited" coverage. The FCC doesn't specify a single range limit for GMRS radios, but rather a typical range of 5 to 25 miles for direct communication, which can be extended significantly by the use of repeaters mounted on high terrain. The linking of repeaters extends this coverage even further in order to better utilized a limited radio resource. The crux of the idea being that FCC discourages GMRS repeater linking in order to maintain GMRS as a localized, shared spectrum service for short-distance, appliance-based communication, rather than a wide-area, complex technical network service. Among some of the Key reasons include preventing interference, and avoiding spectrum overcrowding. The FCC's argument states that this serves to preserve GMRS

for its intended use by families and groups, and distinguishes it from Amateur Radio, which encourages complex technical experimentation such as linked systems. The FCC further goes on to clarify that while networks can be used for remote control, the direct interconnecting of repeaters in order to carry GMRS (voice) traffic is not permitted. The FCC's argument continues stating that linking many repeaters together, especially over networks like the internet, can create a widespread system where a single transmission from one user is heard over a large area through multiple linked repeaters. It's felt by the FCC that this increases the potential for interference and congestion on GMRS channels. Currently with a limited number of repeater channels (only eight pairs), widespread linked systems can saturate the band quickly, thereby limiting the remaining usable spectrum for other users.

Overall GMRS is billed as a simple, "appliance-based" service for basic communication. This means users operate commercially available, "Off the Shelf" radios without needing complex technical modifications or experimentation.

One consideration that was brought up was that by opening up the lower VHF section of the spectrum to the GMRS/FRS users, it may serve to remind those of us that have been in the hobby for a few years of the old Citizen's Band days (26 ~ 27 Mhz). Many of us in that group recall the decline of eleven meters into a radio version of lawless chaos. I should point out that up until 1958 eleven meters (Citizen Band) was actually a Ham Band. A fact that still strikes a nerve with some of the old timers of Ham Radio to this day.

Although in listening to the GMRS band lately it seems that, although there are still plenty of bad apples as with anything else, for the most part, it's a pretty civilized place to operate radio. The W7NEO system operates two GMRS wide area coverage repeaters, and to date has experienced no problems whatsoever. One other thing worth considering, is with more space available the FCC might just be persuaded to reconsider their stance on the linking of GMRS repeaters someday. It's a nice thought anyway.

So, with all things considered, who knows, perhaps this opening up of lower frequencies does have its merits.

Lynn Wilson, K7LW/WRYF803

Repeater Updates

Chandler Butte Repeater site.

This month with summer, and as such the warmer weather, drawing to a close, we're still continuing work on improving the system before Old Man winter returns, bringing with him the snow. Although we have a fairly well stocked inventory of repeaters, duplexers, antennas, etc. much of the antennas, and tower accessories that we use are shipped from our Canadian friends up North. So, thanks to our current administration's tariffs, the price on most all of that has tripled. Hopefully, from watching the news, that's about to change, but in the meantime further expansion of the W7NEO system has been scaled back considerably. We'll still be looking for ways to improve the system, just not quite as aggressively as in the past.

Also, as promised in the last PBR, we've managed to significantly upgrade the antenna system on our Weston Mt GMRS repeater. We accomplished this by installing a Celewave DB408 Collinear antenna on the tower, and feeding it with lower lose feedline. This should provide greatly improved, and significantly more reliable GMRS service over much of Umatilla County, in addition to the entire Walla Walla Valley, including Milton-Freewater. We're even hoping for an added bonus of being able to cover various parts of the Tri-Cities area as well. So, feel free to give it a try, and let one of the W7NEO team know how the signal check went. We'd love to hear from you!

One last item, we're currently looking into installing Meshtastic nodes at our repeater sites. The idea being that this will provide not only an opportunity for folks to experiment, but also provide a valuable resource in the event of a natural, or man-made disaster. So far since talking to some of our friends in other local repeater groups, we seem to have not only sparked interest, but as I type this, we have two local groups that have generously offered tower space on their sites in order to install some of our Meshtastic nodes. Hopefully, with any luck we may just have started a trend, so stay tuned.

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 Wilson, K7LW

Ham Radio Nostalgia

Walter Cronkite (KB2GSD), long time fixture on the CBS evening news, and all-around Ham Radio operator.

For any us who grew up in the 60's, and 70's we remember one voice in particular every evening who gained the title of "Most trusted man in America." The man was Walter Cronkite, and was the voice of the CBS nightly news broadcast for 19 years. He was most known for ending each broadcast with; "And that's the way it is," immediately followed by the current date.

Walter Cronkite had an impressive career in news broadcast stretching over two decades, from the Kennedy assassinations, the Civil Rights movement, the Apollo XI lunar landing, Vietnam and the Vietnam-era protests, the Arab-Israeli Six Day War, Watergate and the Begin-Sadat peace accords.

He also made many contributions to the Ham Radio hobby as well. As a life time member of the ARRL, he was a prominent voice in support of amateur radio. In doing so, he appeared in the ARRL's promotional video; "Amateur Radio Today" in order to explain, and further promote the importance of the Ham Radio hobby and its role in emergency communications.

Walter was born in St Joseph, Missouri on November 4, 1916, the only child of a Dentist father and homemaker mother. After reading an article in Boy's Life magazine about news reporters traveling all over the world to report on the stories that mattered, he was hooked. Although he attended the University of Texas at Austin, he never graduated. Instead, he took a job at the Houston Chronical. And the rest, as they say, is history.

Walter first became associated with Ham Radio after having been surrounded by several Hams working at the CBS studio in New York City at the time. The biggest influence being the stations radio engineer Steve Mendelsohn, W2ML. Gradually, Cronkite's interest in Ham Radio increased, and eventually with the help of Steve, and other Hams at the CBS studio, he obtained his Noice License with the callsign KB2GSD.

On February 14, 1980, Cronkite announced that he intended to retire from the *CBS Evening News.* At the time, CBS had a policy of mandatory retirement by age 65. Although sometimes compared to a father figure or an uncle figure, in an interview about his retirement he described himself as being more like a "Comfortable Old Shoe" to his audience. But retirement didn't slow Cronkite down, instead, he continued doing numerous broadcasts, interviews, and even the occasional CBS spot.

In 2006, Cronkite was asked in an interview with Gail Shister if he ever thought about death. His response was typical Walter Cronkite, simple, and strait up; "When you get to be 89," he said, "you have to think about it a little bit, but it doesn't prey on me, and it doesn't keep me awake nights. Occasionally, when I'm upset about something else, I think, 'My gosh, I don't know if I should do this or that because I'm not sure I'll be here that long to enjoy it.'"

In June 2009, Cronkite was reported to be terminally ill. He died on July 17, 2009, at his home in New York City at age 92. He is believed to have died from Cerebrovascular Disease.

So, we shall bid farewell to Mr. Cronkite, (KB2GSD – SK), and thank him for his many contributions to Ham Radio, and the information society in general.

And that's the way it is…

Lynn Wilson, K7LW

VE Testing

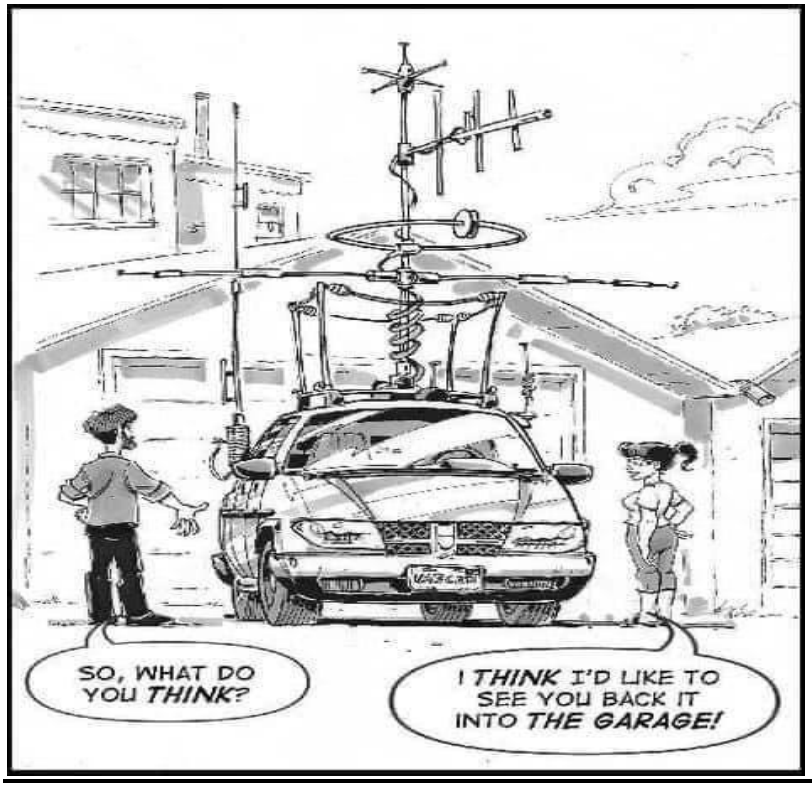
There is no VE testing going on that we're aware of, but if you check the Links section of our website, there may be information on some of our friend's websites as to where you might find a test session going on near you.
But in the meantime, if you do have a regular test session taking place, feel 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 dog days of summer, along with some relaxing quality time on the air while the kids are all back in school. In the meantime, feel free to reach in the barrel, and grab another pickle. There's plenty to go around, along with plenty more great conversation!

73,

Weston Mountain Digital Radio Association,
W7NEO



"I have not failed. I've just found 10,000 ways that won't work."
— Thomas A. Edison