

MAARS Quarterly Newsletter

Vol 1, Number 4

December 2020



Welcome to the last Newsletter of 2020! What a year its been! For Ham Radio operators, a year without swapfests might have been more than some could bear! No club meetings, no tower parties, not even browsing in our local radio store! What is the world coming too!! On the other hand, I'm hoping that many of us found a little more time to spend with family. Maybe you had a chance to show your children or grandchildren just what ham radio is all about? At the very least, here's hoping you got on the air a bit more frequently. While 2020 wasn't good for many things, it was good for dedicated shack time. As

I look back on my time, I think of all the things I should have done! Sadly, they're still on my bucket list! Like studying to upgrade my license for example. Like installing a new antenna. Like cleaning up my shack. (Oh wait, I did do that at least! Ok, I did that several times, always trying to make it more efficient and easier to use). Better still, like making sure the bluetooth connection on my motorcycle headset works with my Yaesu 400 XDR. I know this year has kept me busy, but to tell the truth, I'm shaking my head wondering what I did! If you're anything like me, you too have come to the end of 2020 with much yet to do. I remember my parents saying they couldn't see how they got everything done before they retired. Now, at the tender age of – well, old enough – I understand EXACTLY what they meant. Where did the time go? So, let's agree that 2021 will be even more productive! Maybe as we're saying goodbye to 2021, we can also look back with a smile of satisfaction and remember all we accomplished. Maybe!

Tech & Tower

Last month we received a letter from UWM informing us they are going to make some major changes to the Sandburg tower. We are in talks with them about what our future status will be at UWM. The board is exploring all of our options to see what makes sense for the future of the repeater. By our next newsletter, we hope to have a solid plan for our future.

Our Midtown receive site appears to be having some issues. The site is still working however I noticed many stations don't seem as strong into the site as they should be. We will schedule a visit with the site management to see what is going on.

Now for some good technical news. The new tower for the Northwest site was erected just before Thanksgiving. The tower is owned by Ethoplex who is wireless internet and data services provider. I want to thank Keefe K3EFE, Jack K9JAC, and Robert W9RCG for making this site happen. We anticipate the coverage of this site will help fill in any gaps we have towards the West and Northwest.

Site specifications

Receive Antenna	Andrew DB-264 at 200 feet
Radio Hardware	GE Delta VHF
Link Transmitter	GE Delta UHF
Link Antenna	Maxrad 5 element Yagi at 80 feet.

MAARS is now on Broadcastify.com. Broadcastify is “The World’s Largest Source of Public Safety, Aircraft, Rail, and Marine Radio Live Audio Streams”. There are many apps for Apple and Android that will allow you to stream your favorite scanner audio feeds.

Chris KC9GJY volunteered to host the stream of our repeater. I want to thank Chris for putting in the effort and getting this done. Here is a link to the site <https://m.broadcastify.com/listen/feed/34195>. We will also have a link to it on our website.

Dave KA9WXN

Trivia

From Last Newsletter: When did the 145.130 repeater add its first two remote sites?

Answer In August of 1982 MAARS installed and activated her first remote receive site, the first one in Southeastern Wisconsin. The antenna and feed line was located at Glen's WB9BCP house, purchased from a repeater club for \$300. In 1986, the second remote site installed at Newburg went online.

Trivia for next newsletter: How many Control Operators does the MAARS system have and do you know who they are?

CTCSS, Encode & Decode For Dummies

I was recently asked what is the difference between Encode and Decode. Using my "salesman skills", I quickly gave an answer but also followed it up with "I think" that is the explanation. After the phone call, I realized I really wasn't sure I understood the difference, so rather than my educated guess, I set out to find the real answer. (thanks Dave, KA9WXN for the education!)

Encode/Decode remains a common practice in Commercial Land Mobile radio service. Each company had its own tone even though they shared the same frequency. When people from company A transmitted, the folks in company B didn't hear the conversation because they were using a different code. Their radios had an encode set differently from other companies. Those radios would have had a decode set as well. This allowed conversation to remain "blocked" from other companies using the same frequency. Often called Selective Access, Wisconsin Association of Repeaters adopted this some time back according to Dave KA9WXN.

In today's ham radio, we often set an encode tone because the repeater we are accessing is listening for the sub-audible tone. When it hears that, the signal is repeated so all other radios, with the same encode, can hear the transmission.

If I wish to set up a group, or, only listen to transmissions from specific users, I would/could set a decode tone as well. By assigning a decode, my radio will only listen for other radios sending the same tone. I will not hear anything else. (just like multiple companies using the same frequency)

Under most situations, our ham radios are not using a decode tone. By not instructing the radio to listen for a specific decode tone, the radio will listen for all transmissions from that frequency.

In more isolated examples, a repeater could have an encode frequency as well as a (different) decode tone. (Split tones). In the case of the 145.130, we only use an encode tone of 127.3.

The question of creating GROUPS within our radios is sometimes asked about and frankly, I've never really given them much thought. Perhaps that's something to play with next time?

Dave – KA9WXN – sent me an interested You Tube link that explains this in much greater detail than I ever could. If you wish to explore further, just click: <https://youtu.be/BMchVbmQDug>

Continuous Tone-Coded Squelch System (a/k/a CTCSS) is often misunderstood and is the basis for all this encode/decode business. Keep in mind there are two types of SQUEECH. One suppresses receiver audio. The other is user squelch; performed via the embedded TONE.

I hope this helps to better understand your radio and why/how repeaters function. But, if I've muddied the water even more, let me know and we'll get the pros to chime in next newsletter!

Meetings

We continue to monitor and evaluate issues with regard to COVID-19. As soon as appropriate, we'll schedule a membership meeting and get our lives back on track!

We hope you and your family stay safe during these uncertain and difficult times. For those of us "stuck" at home more than normal, get on the air and let's get re-acquainted!

Be aware the Miller Valley ARC received permission from MAARS to hold their monthly Club Meetings on the Mighty 5.13. Although they have not used their Tuesday night slot (6PM – 7:30PM) in a few weeks, we should be aware they may start again as our weather returns cold and meetings outside become more uncomfortable!

Swap Net

MAARS provides a Swap Net every Wednesday night beginning at 9 PM local time.

NgFSE (Steve) and I wanted to know what you think about the propagation reports that he provides following the Swap Net. A present, those reports are quite detailed, and, they take a bit of time to report. On occasion, there's reporting on the VHF/UHF bands as well. **So, we need FEEDBACK!** We think there are a few options – which include: report any VHF/UHF first, or, continue as we are, or, report using summary data instead of detailed. Let us know what you'd prefer!

With Swap Fests having gone the way of the Covid-19 bug, I must assume there are many of us ready to rush out the door at an opportunity to buy, sell or trade. So, why not utilize the Swap Net? You can list your item(s) for sale, and/or list the equipment you'd like to purchase/trade. Like many nets, there are ALWAYS more people listening than talking, so your chances of landing a buyer are pretty good!

New News!

We were asked if more pictures could be incorporated into the newsletter. My immediate answer is YES, but, I'm not using fancy publishing software, just simple Microsoft Word. So – keep the resolution reasonable and send me what you have – amateur radio related of course, and I'll do my best to fit them in.

I can share a few pictures of the new Northwest Receive site under construction. Not sure I'd be willing to take the same ride these two guys did via the Crane Express!



Thanks to Jim, KA9ZYW for these photographs!

Thank you for taking the time to read this newsletter about our organization! Please help it along by asking questions, submitting articles and thoughts so we can all grow together!

KB9JMH@513repeater.org

Board Officers:

President	Dave Schank	KA9WXN@513repeater.org
Vice President	Barry Sprifke	W9BLS@513repeater.org
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Control Operators:

Bob Widdish	N9PSN
Jim Goelden	KA9ZYW
Steve Sundquist	N9FSE
Greg Wolff	K9ZZZ
Dan Workenaour	N9ASA
Dave Schank	KA9WXN
Pat Riordan	N9LKH

RENEWAL OF MEMBERSHIP

Milwaukee Area Amateur Radio Society, Inc.

ALL MEMBERS WHO JOIN ED BEFORE JUNE 1 ST
MUST RENEW THEIR MEMBERSHIP BY JUNE 30TH

*****FILL IN ALL INFORMATION PLEASE*****

NAME: _____ CALL SIGN: _____

(As you want it to appear on the roster)

ADDRESS: _____ LIC CLASS: _____

CITY: _____ LIC EXP: _____

STATE: _____ OCCUPATION: _____

ZI P CODE: _____ E-MAIL ADDRESS: _____

HOME PHONE: _____ WORK PHONE: _____

[] Check here if you don't want your phone number listed on the society's roster.

MAIL BOX: IF YOU DON'T NEED YOUR MAIL BOX. INITIAL HERE _____ TO RELEASE IT FOR OTHERS TO USE.

CHECK HERE: ___ IF YOU WANT TO BE PUT ON THE MAIL BOX WAITING LIST

CHECK HERE: ___ IF YOU WANT THE CLUB NEWSLETTER EMAILED TO YOU?

CHECK HERE: ___ If you are an ARRL member

*****FAMILY MEMBERSHIP *****

A family member ship includes the individual applying and all members of such person's immediate family residing in the same household who possess an Amateur Radio license.

NAME: _____ CALL SIGN: _____

LIC CLASS: _____ LIC EXP: _____

*****TOTALS *****

[] Membership Renewal (\$20.00 Regardless of Month)

[] Family Member ship Renewal (\$25.00 Regardless of Month)

[] Senior (60 years old or above) Member ship Renewal (\$15.00 Regardless of Month)

Donation to the MAARS Equipment improvement: \$ _____

Date of Application _____ Amount Enclosed \$ _____

Make Check Payable To: MAARS

(Milwaukee Area Amateur Radio Society)

Or Visit

www.513Repeater.org to use pay by PayPal.

MAIL TO:

Milwaukee Area Amateur Radio Society, Inc.

PO BOX 13604

Milwaukee, WI 53213-0442

FOR MAARS OFFICE USE ONLY

Treasurer Received/ Date: _____

Sec. Add Roster/Date: _____

System s Manager Notify MB/Date: _____

Call Sign Checked: _____ Date: _____