

Net Control Station Essentials

By K6YR 7/29/2011

A Net Control Station (NCS) has a big, often complicated job running an effective CW traffic net session, particularly in difficult band conditions, under time constraints, and when there are a number of stations with, or waiting for traffic from different time zones. We are familiar with some of the common NCS factors: commanding signal, crisp and well organized operating style.

And here are a few, more subtle tips:

- Structure session work so that those in the more easterly time zones can QNX as fast as possible. They may also be faced with little time before their late region net meets.
- Carefully match and send stations off frequency when you are confident they can both copy each other well. It can really slow the session down for everyone if time is wasted (a QNB station or QSY frequency is often a faster option). Resist "stacking" more than one station off frequency -- it is sure way to lead to confusion.
- Tune up with a dummy load or on another (clear) frequency - not on Net frequency. Confirm that the Net frequency is clear before call-up. Check your clock for correctness. Also check the likely off-net pairing frequencies to see if they are busy or clear.
- Avoid or limit use of superfluous prosigns and abbreviations that only take up time (like: FB, STN, PSE, TU).
- Be courteous when attempting to keep the Net frequency clear before a Net session. Avoid joining in any 'pinging games' before Net.

But, more importantly, Net Control Stations set the premier example to those on the net (and others listening). It is harder to break someone of a bad habit after they have heard it coming from those presumed to be experienced (and

good) operators. In the upcoming articles, let's delve into NCS essentials.

An essential quality of an effective NCS is the prudent use of QN signals, particularly the four (4) designed to pair off stations for relaying listed traffic. Note that only one (QNY) can be used to direct either the **sending** or **receiving** station; the other three should be used only to direct the **sending** station. The NCS QN signals for pairing stations are the focus of this article.

RECEIVING OR SENDING STATIONS: "Shift to..Clear with.." **QNY**

Both Stations on Net Frequency for pairing directions

"W7IZ NN7H **QNY** DWN 5 RN7 3 K"

[Notes: Sending pairing callsigns together in direction should help assure both stations get the direction. Listen for acknowledgement from both stations. Use this QN signal when fairly assured both stations can hear each other.]

Only One Station on Net Frequency to get directions

"W7IZ **QNY** DWN 5 NN7H RN7 3 AFTER K6IFF K"

[Notes: Avoid "stacking" more than on station off net frequency for pairings, particularly in bad band conditions. Again, use this QN signal when assured both stations being paired will hear each other.]

SENDING STATIONS ONLY: "SEND..FOR/TO.." **QNK**

Both Stations on Net Frequency for pairing directions

"N6AWH **QNK** AD0A ONE EAN UP 5 K"

Notes: This direction works well when band conditions are good and the pairing callsigns are close together in the direction. Listen for direction acknowledgment from both stations.]

Both Stations on Net Frequency (Bad Conditions)

"N6AWH **QNK** AD0A ONE EAN HR K"

Notes: This direction may tie up the net frequency momentarily, but may save time in the long run if NCS (or another station) can serve as a relay (hearing both paired stations).

or

"CONTACT../MOVE..SEND.." QNV

"K7BFL QNV K1VA DWN 3 TWN 2 K"

[Notes: The sending station (K7BFL) should acknowledge direction by calling and establishing contact with receiving station (K1VA), then repeat the frequency direction. NCS should monitor this exchange to be sure the pairing will work as directed.]

Receiving Station off Net Frequency

"MOVE../WAIT FOR../SEND" QNQ

"W7ZIW QNQ K0TER UP 3 AFTER K6YR CAN 3 K"

Notes: This direction presumes the sending station (W7ZIW) can be heard by the receiving station (K0TER), and that K0TER and K6YR are really up 3 and still passing traffic. If NCS waits too long to send this direction, the sending station may miss the receiving station, setting off wasted time and effort. QNQ should not be used to direct a receiving station off frequency to find the sending station.]

The effective use of these NCS QN signals takes practice, patience and a degree of discipline over time. As a off-frequency pairing is being set up, take a few seconds to map out who is needed where and why, pick the best QN signal for the direction, and only then send the direction to the pairing stations. Remember: keep it simple and have fun!