

Southwest Florida Traffic Net Update

The SWFTN had a steady showing for August, despite what this author perceived as a general slowdown in the NTS. Thanks to all of our local traffic handlers who continue to set an example of excellence for the NTS.

This month, we take a multi-part look at the radiogram format. We'll break down the radiogram section by section and describe how each item should be filled out and transmitted.

A radiogram has four sections: the preamble, the addressee, the text, and the signature. This month we'll focus on the preamble. Sometimes this section might be referred to as the "header". Below is a snapshot of a radiogram preamble to help you follow along.



The American Radio Relay League
RADIOGRAM
Via Amateur Radio

Number	Precedence	HX	Station of Origin	Check	Place of Origin	Time Filed	Date
704	R	C	N26S	14	CHESTER NJ	1830	JUL 2

We always start with a message number. Every radiogram must have a number as a way to track it. Message numbers can be anything you want them to be, with the exception of no leading zeroes and no letters. The number should be something that makes sense to you so you can easily keep records of what you do. Message numbers should always be transmitted by digit (e.g., Seven Zero Four) and a zero should always be said as such, not as "oh".

The next item is the precedence. There are four radiogram precedences: Emergency, Priority, Welfare, and Routine. The latter three are written in the radiogram with their respective letter (e.g., "R" for

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<u>SAR</u>	<u>AUG</u>
W2PAX	293
W4CMH	168
KM4OWA	124
KR4ST	75
K4FHR	53
W2ARP	40
KR4PI	25
KN4JAG	12
W9GPI	8
KE4CB	7
K4SJC	7
NK4AA	6

* SAR = Station Activity Report

<u>PSHR</u>	<u>AUG</u>
W4CMH	130
W2PAX	105
W2ARP	91
KR4ST	80
K4FHR	75

* PSHR = Public Service Honor Roll (In points)

<u>MONTHLY NET</u>	<u>AUG</u>
<u>STATISTICS</u>	
QNI	399
QTC	224
QND	979
SESSIONS	26

* QNI = Total Check-Ins

QTC = Total Messages

QND = Total Time (in minutes)

Routine). “Emergency” precedence is always written out. Regardless of the type, when transmitting on the air, the precedence word is always spoken. In other words, “R” is written, but “Routine” should be said.

Emergency and Priority traffic is rarely handled in the modern traffic system, as more efficient modes have taken hold. Routine and Welfare traffic are most common. Remember that Welfare traffic should only be handled into and out of declared disaster areas, and Routine traffic to active disaster areas should be avoided while short term recovery occurs.

Next is the handling instructions, or “HX” in the preamble. This is the only section where the section title is spoken during transmission. In the example above, it would be transmitted correctly as “Hotel Xray Charlie”. There are seven handling instruction options for the radiogram, although only five are common in the modern traffic system. Charlie (C) tells the delivering station that you want a “delivery receipt” radiogram sent back to you. Delta (D) tells each station that handles your radiogram along its journey to report back to you the time and date they handled your radiogram. Echo (E) tells the delivering station to get a reply from the addressee, and send that reply back to you. Foxtrot requires a number after it (e.g., F14, or “Foxtrot One Four”) – it tells the delivering station to not deliver the message before that date (this is a great HX for birthday radiograms). Golf (G) tells the delivering station that if there is any cost involved to deliver your message (e.g., postage, long distance charge, etc.) to cancel the message, and send you back a service message letting you know that occurred.

The complete list of handling instructions can be found here: [Chapter Six: ARRL Precedences and Handling Instructions](#)

The Station of Origin is simple: it is the callsign who puts the message into the traffic system. The check is also simple: it is the word count in the text of the message. The check is used just for that reason: to “check” against the text you received to make sure your word count matches. Remember, accuracy is a cornerstone of the radiogram.

The Place of Origin is where the radiogram was written. If you are creating the radiogram, then it would be where you are. However, if your non-amateur sister in Fort Myers calls you on the phone in Naples and gives you a message to send by radiogram, then the place of origin would be...Naples or Fort Myers? Answer: Fort Myers. Why? Because the message was your sister’s in Fort Myers.

Time Filed should only be used for messages that are truly time sensitive. This is rarely used. As an aside, the radiogram format always assumes that time and date are UTC (a/k/a Zulu). Anything else should be qualified, such as L for local (e.g., “1830L”, or One Eight Three Zero Lima).

Date should be written using the accepted three letter month abbreviation and the numerical day. Year is never used! The date should always be transmitted saying the month and digits (September One Two).

So how do you put all this together? Using the example above, the properly transmitted preamble would be: “Please copy message number Seven Zero Four, Routine, Hotel Xray Charlie, November Two Golf Sierra, One Four, Chester, New Jersey, One Eight Three Zero, July Two.” One final reminder: how long did it take you to write all that? That’s the speed you need to say it when you transmit it.

Remember, the person on the other end is writing it as you are saying it.

Next month, we’ll talk about the addressee and delivery operator notes. Until then, keep the traffic moving!

Southwest Florida Traffic Net Update

Our net once again remained consistent in the face of a general slowdown within the National Traffic System, still meeting our benchmark of 200 messages handled in the month. But there is a trend developing that bears mentioning. While our traffic base remains consistent, our number of check-in's has dropped by about 25% from the beginning of the year. Further, September had a whopping 30% drop from August, and was the lowest number of monthly check-ins since I took over as net manager in October 2018. What does this mean? Our traffic handling base is continuing to check in, but those without traffic are not. If you are next to your radio at 10 AM Monday through Saturday, please take the time to join us. All are welcome, with or without formal written traffic.

As many of you are aware, Robert Ficarelli KM4OWA regularly sends out radiograms to new amateurs welcoming them to the hobby. Robert recently received an email from an operator who had delivered congratulations to a new ham who was disabled. The new ham was overjoyed that someone they didn't know had taken the time to welcome them to the hobby. This is a great example of why we send traffic. Not only are we exercising the NTS, but we are exposing new hams to something they may not be familiar with and engaging new hams in the hobby. Outreach is a hallmark in our hobby and the NTS. I encourage other traffic handlers to follow Robert's lead.

With the administrative items out of the way, we continue our multi-part look at the radiogram format. This month, we talk about the addressee portion of the radiogram. While this may seem very simple, it is an area where many procedural words ("Pro-words") come into play. We will address several of the most common scenarios.

Most importantly, a radiogram must have a name, city, state, and zip code, to be accepted into the system at all. Without this bare minimum of information, there simply isn't enough to get the message started moving. Names should generally be given however they are most likely to be found in a phone look-up.

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<u>SAR</u>	<u>SEP</u>
W4CMH	184
W2PAX	179
KM4OWA	112
KR4ST	87
KR4PI	71
KN4JAG	52
K4FHR	50
W2ARP	20
NK4AA	11
W9GPI	11
K4SJC	9
N5KFR	7
AA4JS	2

* SAR = Station Activity Report

<u>PSHR</u>	<u>SEP</u>
W2PAX	105
W4CMH	100
KR4ST	80
K4FHR	74

* PSHR = Public Service Honor Roll (In points)

<u>MONTHLY NET</u>	<u>SEP</u>
<u>STATISTICS</u>	
QNI	356
QTC	216
QND	961
SESSIONS	26

* QNI = Total Check-Ins

QTC = Total Messages

QND = Total Time (in minutes)

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Obviously, the more information you can provide, the more likely the message is to make it to its destination. If a recipient has an amateur callsign, that should always be provided. Other components such as street address, phone number, and an email address should also be provided whenever possible.

The example below is a correctly formatted radiogram addressee:

**DAVE SHEPPARD W2PAX
591 18TH STREET NORTHEAST
NAPLES FL 34120
239 250 0282
W2PAX ATSIGN ARRL DOT NET
OP NOTE DELIVER VIA SWFTN**

Let's talk about some specifics above. While the postal service would abbreviate "NORTHEAST" to "NE", the radiogram format should always spell out directions. The letters are not used. (Note: there are instances where the rules allow for direction initials, but not for the purposes of this article.) Streets, lanes, avenues, etc., can be abbreviated using the standard postal abbreviation or spelled out. This writer recommends spelling them out, as they need to be transmitted however they are written. I do not encourage sending "Sierra Tango" as a "street" abbreviation.

States should be written using the standard two letter postal code, but said in their entirety when transmitted.

Email addresses become interesting, in that any punctuation contained in them needs to be spelled out (see example above). Why? Punctuation is not permitted in the radiogram format with the exception of the forward slash. All other punctuation must be spelled out for clarity.

Finally, an operator's note ("op note") regarding delivery instructions can be included here. Op notes are sometimes thought to only be placed after the signature, but this is not the case. Op notes regarding delivery instructions should be given at the end of the addressee before the break for text. Op notes regarding reply instructions should be given after the signature.

Once again, let's pull all this together, and properly send the example above. (The commas are typed to indicate a logical pause in speech – they are not actually transmitted.)

***“Going to Dave Sheppard, amateur call whiskey-two-papa-alpha-xray
Figures five-niner-one, mixed group one-eight-tango-hotel street, direction northeast
Naples Florida, figures three-four-one-two-zero
Phone figures two-three-niner-two-five-zero-zero-two-eight-two
Email amateur call whiskey-two-papa-alpha-xray at sign arrl dot net
Op note deliver via initials sierra-whiskey-foxtrot-tango-november.”***

Please take note of the use of multiple pro-words: "amateur call", "figures", "mixed group", "direction", and "initials". These are all used to give the receiving station a "hint" of what they are about to receive.

This was an in depth column this month, but I hope it offered some understanding of what is often thought to be an "easy" section of the radiogram.

Until next month, keep the traffic moving!

Southwest Florida Traffic Net Update

This month, we continue our multi-part analysis of the Radiogram (hereby abbreviated as RG) format. You may recall we've already discussed the Preamble and Addressee parts of the Radiogram. Now it's time to talk about the heart of the RG, the formatting the actual text of the RG.

In theory, a station should be able to convey almost any information one could imagine into a RG. In practice, there are several guidelines needing consideration to fit the content into the proper format.

For this exercise, let's consider two examples, one as an ARL numbered radiogram and one as an ordinary RG, which we will address first.

When composing text for RGs, never use contractions, such as "isn't" or "could've." There is no authorized punctuation in the NTS (National Traffic System) for the apostrophe, so you would have to say, "it is," or "could have." Other contractions such as possessives would need their own necessary rewording.

Another point is to avoid overly complex words or phrases. Rather than to say a reference was "incomprehensible," it is better to say it was "unclear." Remember, a receiving station must write incoming messages quickly, and not always under ideal conditions, so brevity and clarity is key when composing messages.

Still another point to remember is the proper use of the Xray character in your text. Xray is NOT a period! It is used to separate complete thoughts from each other. It is standard and expected NTS practice that RGs are not ended with an Xray, because your final thought needs no separation from the "BREAK for signature." Similarly, coded phrases such as 73 and 88 are commonly understood to be self-contained complete thoughts so they need no Xray between them.

Now let's try an exercise. Suppose you would like to develop a RG with the following thoughts. "Can't wait 'til you're here in MO. Please rendezvous with us at the deli at 6pm our time on the 27th. Best

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<u>SAR</u>	<u>OCT</u>
W2PAX	226
W4CMH	137
KR4ST	124
KM4OWA	87
K4FHR	60
KR4PI	51
KN4JAG	48
W2ARP	48
AA4JS	11
NK4AA	8
W9GPI	7
K4SJC	4
WG4K	3

* SAR = Station Activity Report

<u>PSHR</u>	<u>OCT</u>
W2PAX	105
W4CMH	100
KR4ST	80
K4FHR	75
W2ARP	75

* PSHR = Public Service Honor Roll (In points)

<u>MONTHLY NET</u>	<u>OCT</u>
<u>STATISTICS</u>	
QNI	385
QTC	226
QND	1001
SESSIONS	26

* QNI = Total Check-Ins

QTC = Total Messages

QND = Total Time (in minutes)

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Wishes”. Using the guidelines above, your RG text may look like this:

**I CAN NOT WAIT UNTIL
YOU ARE HERE IN MISSOURI
X PLEASE MEET WITH US
AT THE DELI AT 1800L
ON NOVEMBER 27 X 73**

This RG with a Check figure of 25 would be read as follows, (with pro-words in italics): “I can not wait until you are here in Missouri *initial* Xray please meet with us at the deli at *mixed group* one eight zero zero Lima on November *figures* two seven *initial* Xray *figures* seven three.” At this point you would “BREAK for signature”, give the name and callsign (if available,) any OP Notes as needed. The content of your RG is now complete.

Now let’s look at an ARL numbered RG, specifically my favorite, ARL Forty Six, the Birthday RG. Suppose a station wants to send a birthday greeting to another station. The Birthday RG template on our FMARC.NET/SWFTN website can be used. The entire text of this RG template is:

ARL FORTY SIX X 73

And would be read as follows: “*Letter group* Alpha Romeo Lima FORTY *with a Foxtrot* SIX *with a Sierra Initial* Xray *Figures* seven three”

Let’s break this down. “*Letter group* Alpha Romeo Lima”. *Letter group* is the pro-word phrase indicating the next field will contain letters, in this case ARL.

“FORTY *with a Foxtrot* SIX *with a Sierra*”. We always spell out the numeric portion of an ARL numbered RG either phonetically, (Foxtrot Oscar Romeo Tango Yankee) or preferably just by the first letter, (FORTY *with a Foxtrot*, etc.). This is in keeping with established NTS guidelines.

“*Initial* Xray *Figures* seven three (not *Figures* Seventy Three).” *Initial* is the pro-word indicating the next field is a single letter, in this case an X, which designates the end of a thought. *Figures* is the pro-word indicating the next field contains numbers.

The last consideration for ARL numbered RGs is that the “Check” field in the prolog is prefaced with ARL to indicate the RG contains an ARRL designated code. In our example, the check would be “ARL5”.

There’s a list of ARL numbered radiograms at [ARRL Numbered Radiograms – Eastern Massachusetts ARRL](#).

And that is the lesson for this month, entering the content of a Radiogram into the proper fields on the form using NTS guidance and good practice. Please contact anyone within the SWFTN for help with the Radiogram format.

Until next month, keep the traffic moving!

(And many thanks to David Chakmakian KN4JAG for lending his NTS knowledge and writing skills to this month’s article!)

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*Dave Sheppard W2PAX SWFTN Manager
David Chakmakian KN4JAG SWFTN Asst. Manager*

Southwest Florida Traffic Net Update

We start this column with recognition of Rich Schnieders KR4PI. As most of you are aware, Rich has been our Friday net control for quite some time. What you might not be as aware of is that Rich became an NTS Digital (NTSD) station a few months ago. While Rich's current capabilities only extend to VARA (much of NTSD is still using PACTOR), he has been a great asset to our net serving as outgoing liaison. By connecting to an NTSD VARA capable outlet, Rich can take our outbound traffic from SWFTN and put it directly into the Eastern Area via NTSD. Rich's November traffic count shows just how busy he was for us. Thanks Rich, and keep up the great work!

This month we conclude our multi-part breakdown of the radiogram. We have talked about the preamble, the addressee, and the text. The final part is the signature and any operator notes ("op note") with regard to replying to the message.

You have come to the end of sending the text of your message. The next step is to say "break for signature". Unlike the break that precedes the text, you do not stop or unkey at the "break for signature". Simply saying it lets the receiving station know that the text has ended and they can expect the signature next.

Give the signature. Typically if the originating station is signing the radiogram, they would use their first name and callsign. Remember that callsigns should be given phonetically and prefaced with the

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<u>SAR</u>	<u>NOV</u>
W2PAX	308
KR4PI	82
W4CMH	67
W2ARP	66
KR4ST	58
K4FHR	55
KM4OWA	43
KN4JAG	22
NK4AA	10
KJ4WPV	8
W9GPI	4
K4SJC	4
W1RSC	4
AA4JS	3

* SAR = Station Activity Report

<u>PSHR</u>	<u>NOV</u>
W4CMH	105
W2PAX	105
KR4ST	80
K4FHR	75

* PSHR = Public Service Honor Roll (In points)

<u>MONTHLY NET</u> <u>STATISTICS</u>	<u>NOV</u>
QNI	374
QTC	196
QND	921
SESSIONS	26

* QNI = Total Check-Ins
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QND = Total Time (in minutes)

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pro-word “amateur call”. If you are originating a message for a civilian, then the signature should be their name, and should be first and last name for clarity.

Any information about an individual can be part of a radiogram signature: name, callsign, address, email address, title, served agency name, etc. Closing salutations such as “regards” or “love” should not be part of the signature – they should be in the text. Remember to be mindful that the more information you attempt to include, the longer it will take to transmit and the more chance there is for error. Radiograms should always be as clear and concise as possible.

Op notes following the signature should be information about how to reply to the message. Examples would be an address, phone number, email address, or traffic net through which the originator can be reached.

An example of signature procedure would be as follows: “Break for signature, Dave, amateur call Whiskey Two Papa Alpha Xray, with an op note, reply via Southwest Florida Traffic Net.” As always, remember to say everything at writing speed – the receiving station is writing this down as you are saying it.

Once you have reached the end of your signature (and op note if applicable), you have reached the end of your radiogram, and you need to indicate that to the receiving station. You do this by saying, “end of message, no more.” If you have additional traffic (messages) to pass, you would replace “no” with the quantity of remaining messages. (“End of message” may be shortened to just “end” – this is acceptable within the NTS voicing procedures.)

We hope this multi-part breakdown of the radiogram format will help your skills, and encourage you to bring traffic to our net.

By the time you read this, the holiday week will be upon us. From all of us at the SWFTN, we send ARL SIXTY ONE, and remember the reason for the season.

Keep the traffic moving!

73,
Dave W2PAX SWFTN Manager
David KN4JAG SWFTN Asst. Manager