

Central Texas Amateur Radio Club

Weather Net Guide

Weather Net Operating Procedures

The Central Texas Amateur Radio Club (CTARC) Weather Net serves the Central Texas area in cooperation with the National Weather Service (NWS) and various local agencies using the wide area repeaters, W5BEC and N5ZXJ. The repeaters cover all or part of twenty Central Texas counties.

This net is strictly organizational in nature. It is primarily a coordination effort and in no way imparts any authority, privileges, or responsibility to its participants.

Participation Requirements

1. An Amateur Radio License, Technician Class or higher.
2. A willingness to volunteer your services.
3. An understanding of net operating procedures.

Weather Net Frequencies

Primary Repeater Eddy W5BEC	147.140 MHz, PL Tone 123.0
Secondary Repeater N5ZXJ	145.310 MHz, PL Tone 123.0
Alternate Repeater Lampasas KB5SXV	147.220 MHz, PL Tone 88.5
Alternate Repeater McLennan W5ZDN	145.150 MHz, PL Tone 123.0
Alternate Repeater Milam KE5URD	147.020 MHz, PL Tone 123.0
Alternate Repeater Bosque W5BCR	147.180 MHz, PL Tone 123.0
Alternate Repeater Coryell N5DDR	146.960 MHz, PL Tone None
Simplex Frequency	147.555 MHz

Operational Guidelines

The **CTARC Weather Net** provides information to the National Weather Service Regional Office located in Fort Worth and various local authorities. The information is also made available to local media by serving as the "eyes and ears of the National Weather Service." Our goal is to help protect the people of Central Texas and provide ground truth data to the National Weather Service.

When severe weather threatens our protection area, the National Weather Service will alert local public safety officials and the CTARC Coordinator. The Coordinator will then contact the necessary personnel to initiate the **CTARC Weather Net**. The Net Control Station (NCS) operator shall activate the Net at his or her pre-assigned location, and the Liaison operator(s) shall respond to the Emergency Operations Center (EOC), located in the Bell County Communications Center.

The CTARC net will usually maintain communications with the NWS via the EchoLink connections (W5BEC, node 99000 and/or N5ZXJ node????)

Safety

Spotter safety is paramount! The Net Control Station operator will not dispatch or send spotters to any area. **If spotters wish to go to a particular area, they take full responsibility for their own safety and well being.**

If, however, spotters encounter situations that are threatening to their life, property or safety, they should alert net control of the situation and their location by breaking into the net with **"BREAK - BREAK."**

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Net Control Station Responsibilities

1. **Prior to Net activation** prepare the paperwork that you will be using. You should have log sheets, a repeater directory sheet, scrap paper, and writing utensils. Make note of all bulletins, and log all remarks from reporting stations as well as the liaison station (s) during the Net. An Excel spreadsheet is available to designated net control operators to assist in spotter identification and location.
2. **Activate** the Net and read the Preamble as listed below.
3. **Coordinate activities** with the Liaison station(s) to meet the needs of NWS personnel.
4. **Log and assign stations** to contact additional repeaters. Priority should be given to contact Coryell, 146.960; Lampasas, 147.220 pl 88.5; McLennan, 145.150, pl123 County repeaters.
5. **Enter** the call sign, location, and weather information from all reporting stations on the log sheet.
6. **Maintain control of the Net.** Advise listening stations of current status, and remind stations of severe weather criteria and current areas where reports are needed. *Courteously* discourage weather traffic on the net that is not severe in nature when in **Active** or **Severe** activation levels. Active or Severe activation levels is when the NWS is connected.

Liaison Station Responsibilities

Net Preamble

"Attention All Stations. This is [your call, name and location]. The CTARC Weather Net is now in a [select appropriate mode]. In the event the repeater should go off line, The CTARC Weather Net will be switched to the 145.310, pl 123, or 147.555 Simplex sequentially as necessary."

Read script from selected mode. [Note: Severe weather criteria (listed below) should be announced in Standby and Active Modes as time and circumstances permit.]

Standby Mode - "The repeater is free for use. However, a CTARC Weather Net Control Operator will be standing by for any severe weather reports. Please pause briefly between transmissions to allow for any necessary weather related traffic."

[Note: This mode is used when severe weather is expected but has not arrived, or when severe weather has cleared an area. This mode is normally used during watches. Announce "Standby Mode" on the hour and half hour as necessary. **Maintain ACTIVE mode if the NWS is connected!!!**

Active Mode - "The repeater is under the control of the NCS operator. All traffic should be directed through the NCS operator. Severe weather is occurring within our coverage area. We are currently requesting reports from _____."

[Note: List the affected areas. This mode is used when severe weather is occurring within the coverage area. This mode is normally used during warnings. If no information is received or needed by NWS, the NCS can elect to downgrade to Standby.]

Emergency Mode - "The repeater is under the control of the NCS operator. All traffic is restricted to emergency traffic only. Extremely severe weather is occurring within our protection area. We are currently requesting reports of severe weather only from _____."

[Note: List the affected areas. This mode is reserved for extreme weather such as tornado warnings. This mode should only be in effect for short time intervals. **Revert back to Active Mode as soon as possible.**

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Any stations experiencing severe weather please contact Net Control."

At this time, contact (or assign) the liaison station (s) and if applicable, the liaison stations should read any watches, warnings, or bulletins from the NWS. Following any announcements from the liaison (s), request severe weather reports again.

Severe Weather Reporting Criteria

1. Wall clouds, Funnel clouds, Tornadoes.
2. Hail of any size and/or extremely heavy rain.
3. Winds of 50 MPH or greater.
4. Flash flooding (including rain rate 1 inch or more per hour), water running (NOT PONDING) over roads, fields, or leaving stream banks.
5. Storm damage: downed trees or power lines.
6. Any other information specifically requested by Net Control.

Net Operations

Log all information and coordinate additional requests from NWS with the Liaison station (s). Determine areas affected by severe weather watches and or warnings, and dispatch stations to contact repeaters in areas affected.

In **Standby** Mode during periods of inactivity, announce Net activation, severe weather criteria, back up repeaters, and description of Standby Mode (**recommended every 30 minutes - at the top and bottom of each hour**).

In **Active** Mode during periods of inactivity, announce Net activation, severe weather criteria, affected areas, and Mode (**recommended every 15 minutes**).

In **Emergency** and **Active** Modes, politely maintain control of the frequency. **If no reports are received from the field or requested by the NWS, the NCS may downgrade to Standby Mode. If the NWS is connected keep chatter to a minimum.** The NWS is monitoring other repeaters in the North Texas CWA and our unnecessary chatter might cause them to disengage from us.

This Operational Guideline has been established to assist the Net Control Station operators and the Liaison stations in running an effective Net. This is only a guideline, and you may deviate from it as necessary. You were chosen as an operator (NCS/Liaison) because you have shown the dedication and ability to "run the show" and act as a leader of our organization. **Enjoy the Net!**

After the weather has passed through our area and you have been released by the NWS, close the Net and file the necessary documentation.

To Close The **CTARC Weather Net:**

"This is [*your call*]. The **CTARC Weather Net** is now closed and all stations are officially checked out. On behalf of *the CTARC Weather Net* we would like to thank the amateur community for giving severe weather traffic priority. I am now returning the repeater to normal amateur use. [*your call*] clear."

Unexpected Weather Events

Surprise Severe Weather

If without warning you find yourself in what appears to be severe weather, check on the 147.140, 145.310 or 147.220 repeaters to see if a Net is in progress. If you hear nothing, identify yourself and wait for a response. If a Net Control operator is monitoring, he will acknowledge. If acknowledged, give your location, your severe weather report and sign with your call. If you are in range of one of the repeaters AND YOU ARE HEARING A RETURN FROM THE REPEATER (**VOLUME TURNED UP**) BUT NO ACTIVITY ASSUME NET CONTROL RESPONSIBILITIES!!!!