HIGH DESERT AMATEUR RADIO CLUB

MEGA-LINK SYSTEM

CHAT SHACK NET

Net-Controller Guidance

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INTRODUCTION

The Mega-Link Chat Shack Net is an amateur radio chat session sponsored by the High Desert Amateur Radio Club (HDARC). It is a New Mexico State-wide chat activity, that also has RF reach into neighboring Southwest States

The purpose of the Chat Shack Net is to:
1. Maintain documented usage of the HDARC Mega-Link repeater system,
2. Sustain a potential emergency communications network for the State, and
3. Bring various amateur radio operators, experts, and organization into a common meeting place for sharing of information and news among the Southwest HAM community.

The Chat Sack Net meets every Saturday of the month currently at 10:00a, except on the 3rd Saturday, which is the in-person meeting of the HDARC. A radio repeater system operating on Sandia Crest, NM provides linked VHF and UHF operating frequencies at:

1. **145.29 MHz PL 100Hz - 0.600000, and**
2. **444.325 MHz PL 100Hz + 5.000000**

Chat Shack Net Controllers

HDARC has multiple volunteer net controllers who alternate hosting of the Chat Shack sessions according to a published scheduled found in the HDARC Dispatch newsletter at https://NM5HD.org.

HDARC encourages the participation of new controller participation in order to spread HAM communications skills among HDARC members and to infuse familiarity and continued excitement into HAM community and the growth of its membership

Credits

HDARC would like to thank past and current leadership for the sustainment of the Chat Shack Net. In particular, many thanks are extended to the work of Mike Smith (KI5NBP), Mike Chirin (NM5MC), John Gleason (K5JVG). Ken Ham (AG5UY), and David Ham (N6SIK), and to the loyal Chat participants.

NET CONTROLLER SCRIPT

Necessarily, the discussion during the Chat Shack follows a scripted presentation to comply with its mission objectives. Potential free-form activities may be undertaken following the scripted sequence, but there are several points in the session's checklist which we are obligated to satisfy. Modification of the established script can be approved by HDARC leadership, given suggestion discussion with HDARC leadership and our net-control manager.

As currently implemented, the Chat Shack lasts about 30 minutes of scripted activity to accomplish its weekly objectives. However, the controller should expect the session to potentially extend up to an hour or longer, since it is a State-wide outreach.

As a net controller, you are expected to maintain a log of check-ins as offered in Appendix A. Please take detailed notes of any QST's or announcements, other than a summary of those provided by the HDARC president.

Please keep in mind that this chat net operates across multiple repeater and sites, which are linked into a single chat network. This requires synchronization of the multiple repeaters for anyone's conversation to be heard or responded to. Therefore, a good practice when wishing to speak is to hold down your PTT, wait P2-3 seconds, and speak. When concluding, keep the PTT depressed an wait another 2-3 second before releasing the PTT. Short keying can make communications inaudible.

Also, keep in mind that many user radios and repeater systems impose a 90-second timeout against long transmissions. So, please practice a transmission habit of speaking for a short time, followed by a "Break" statement and a PTT-release pause, before continuing with further transmission. A little practice will make perfect.

A second sound practice is to slowly state callsigns phonetically, or any short transfer of critical information. This not only provides clarity in your conversion but encourages the participants to do the same. NATO phonetics are great, but let the folks speak to what is comfortable for them. As a net-controller don't be reluctant to request a speaker to repeat their last with this request, or just to request a repeat of a transmission you didn't understand. Remember, if you could not understand what was said, then likely it is the case for everyone else on the chat.

Text

The following provides a scripted text for net-controllers of the Chat Shack. Italics script indicates voice instructions to the net-controller. Parenthetical normal text or bolded normal text (non-italics) indicates guidance for the net-controllers presentation. Interspersed with the text are suggested points to call **Break**, which means you are briefly unkeying the mic but intend to continue talking, as well as, when it is necessary to **Unkey** to allow others to talk. You'll get the hang of it. Just do what is comfortable.

Introduction

At the assigned start time, begin with:

1. *Good morning, all!*

2. *The High Dessert Amateur Radio Club (HDARC) welcomes everyone to our Statewide Saturday Chat Shack Net.*

3. *My name is (first name) (callsign) and I am your net-controller for this (date) session.* **{Break}**

4. *First of all, I need to ask, is there any emergency traffic for this frequency?* **{Unkey}**

   a) **If there is emergency traffic then all bets are off for continuation of the chat session.**

   b) **Identify the person with the emergency statement and the nature of their emergency traffic.**

   c) **Follow basic emergency response protocol and ascertain what further immediate 911 actions need to be undertaken.**

   d) **Get the name of the caller, and their contact information.**

   e) **Please be aware that there is the likelihood (hopefully, small), that a participant declaring an emergency, etc, may be a hoax call. In particular, if you cannot verify their name, callsign, location, of nature of their emergency, exercise caution.**

   f) **Regardless of whether is a valid emergency or a hoax, not the time, caller's name, and any other descriptive information need to locate the caller or the emergency.**

   g) **Cease net operations and contact 911.**

Continuing (assuming no emergency broke into the chat session):

5. *We will begin today's net chat with the Pledge of Allegiance. Please stand, remove your hat, place your hand over your heart, and follow along with me*: (**See Figure 1.**)

Figure 1: Pledge of Allegiance

6. *Except for the third Saturday of the Month, the High Desert Amateur Radio Club's Chat Shack Net meets every Saturday morning at 10:00 AM local time on the Mega-Link System, for the purpose of passing club information and sharing general ca-ma-ra-de-rie (5 syllables) within the Ham Radio Community. The third Saturday is reserved for our Club meetings in Albuquerque.* {**Break}**

7. *The Mega-Link repeater system network covers a major portion of the State of New Mexico, as well as portions of all the surrounding States. Currently it consists of 37 repeaters on 35 mountain tops.* **{Break}**

8. ***One should wait before speaking approximately 2 to 3 seconds from the time you push the mic button****. This gives the system the time it needs to link all machines. The Mega-Link is essentially one repeater with a huge area of coverage.* **{Break}**

9. *The American Radio Relay League, the ARRL, a non-profit organization, is the largest membership association of amateur radio enthusiasts in the United States. The ARRL represents the interests of amateur radio operators before federal regulatory bodies. The ARRL provides technical advice and assistance to amateur radio enthusiasts. It also supports a number of educational programs, and sponsors emergency communications service throughout the country.* **{Break}**

10. *It is very important that every amateur radio operator support this worthy cause and become a member of ARRL. The ARRL logo is in the upper-right corner of the HDARC web page, and when you click on it you will be taken directly to an ARRL application page. You will receive many benefits with your membership.* **{Break}**

11. *If you have any questions please contact us.* **{Unkey}**

Message from the HDARC President

1. *We will continue today's Chat Shack Net with a message from the President of the High Desert Amateur Radio Club, KITNBP Mike Smith. Over to you, Mike.* **{unkey}**

(The President will make announcements new or as published in the HDARC Dispatch newsletter. It's a good idea to jot them down in case there are any questions later in the Chat, and the President is not available to answer them.)

Participant Check-In

1. *All stations are now invited to check into the Chat Shack Net. Everyone is welcome to check in. You do not need to be a member of the High Desert Amateur Radio Club to check into this net. To make it easier for **me** to understand **you**, please give your callsign slowly and phonetically. (**Break.**)*

2. *For example,* (give your callsign – that is, you the net controller – slowly and phonetically.) *As you check in, please give us your name and where you are located. There is no need to report a membership status*

(Have your pencil and piece of paper/log ready to write down the check-ins.)

3. Any stations wishing to check into the Chat Shack Net, please call now. **{Unkey}**

(Build your list of check-ins with short thanks. When completed loop back to the beginning of the list to engage them in conversation. This first check-in should be no more than 20-30 seconds. When you loop back to the participants certainly let them speak longer with any messages or information they have to share.)

Discussion with the Check-Ins

(When finished with identifying the group of participants, ask)

1. *Are there any late check-ins for the Chat Shack Net? Please call now…*

2. *Are there any other Club announcements or items the group wishes to share?*

(When you are sure that everyone has had a chance to check in and speak)

3. *OK, nothing more heard, so let's wrap up today's Chat Shack Net.* **{Break}**

Concluding Remarks

1. *If you'd like to become a member of the HDARC simply go to the "Become a Member" tab on our web page* www.nm5hd.org *and fill out the application.*

2. *I'd like to thank everyone who participated in our net today. Please check the High Desert Amateur Radio Club's website often for all the latest information about the Club. Again, the URL is* www.nm5hd.org.

3. *Members, please monitor your emails for messages.* **{Break}**

4. *A special thanks goes out to Paul Choc, WA5IHL, for his authorization allowing the High Desert Amateur Radio Club to use this System for weekly Statewide Net.*

5. *This is (***your name and callsign***) clearing the net _____: _____ local time and returning the frequency for other use.*

6. *Stay safe. Be well and 73 to all! This is (***your callsign***) and I'm clear.* **{Unkey}**

CONCLUSION

Thanks for your interest in reviewing or contributing to the participation of net-controllers in the HDARC Mega-Link Chat. Everyone has great ideas and something to contribute. If you are interested in participating in this activity, please contact John Gleason (K5JVG), our current net-controller chat manager by attending a HDARC monthly meeting or through the contact information provided below.

As previously mentioned, the HDARC website publishes a scheduled of Mega-Link Chat net controllers.

73, John KJ5KUF

High Desert Amateur Radio Club (HDARC) Contact Information:

- HDARC is a 501(c)(3) non-profit charity.
- Our website is https://www.nm5hd.org.
- Club officers' emails addresses are provided on our website.
- We are an official affiliate of the Amateur Radio and Relay League (ARRL).
- Our contact email is nm5hd@arrl.net.
- We hold in-person meetings on the 3rd Saturday of every month from 10:00a to 2:00p:
  - Please see the HDARC website for the "live" meeting location.
  - The last two hours is for extra activities, so don't worry about sticking around for the whole thing unless you want to, because we know everyone's Saturdays can be busy.
- We operate several radio repeaters and radio sessions, Mega-Link Chat being just one of them. Please see the website for repeater frequencies and a schedule of events.
- Sign up for the newsletter, *The Dispatch*, at our website.
- Everyone is welcome.
- Membership has its benefits and privileges.

APPENDIX A: Contact Log, Mega-Link Chat

Table 1 provides a sample format for collection of Mega-Link Chat Participant information. The format of this log is offered as a convenience for use by a session's net controller, who at the end of the chat compiles a brief contact report and forwards it to the Mega-Link Chat Manager, currently John Gleason (K5JVG). The manager prepares and forwards a monthly report to https://ARRL.org

Table 1: Sample Mega-Link Contact Log

No.	Callsign	First Name	Location	Messages/Comments
1	KJ5KUF	John	Albuquerque	In the words of Wayne Gretsky: " You miss 100 percent of the shots you never take". And there will be a Dr. Ed Fong antenna build this November at the monthly HDARC meeting requiring the following items….
2				
3				
4				
5				