

RADIO SOCIETY

of Great Britain

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To RSGB Members and Affiliated Societies, including RSGB Raynet groups. Club Secretaries, please feel free to copy and pass round your Group.

The **Public Services Portfolio** is new this year, and the idea is for the Society to provide support and assistance to individual members and Affiliated Societies in all areas where they provide a service to the community. Many groups are well established, but others are considering forming, and here we may be able to help. As a first step, we'd like you to identify areas where we can assist. Please contact us with your requests or suggestions, and if you think a visit would be useful, then we will try to arrange this.

The following are some examples of activities where we may be able to provide support:

1. **Demonstration stations**, such as those run during JOTA, Thinking Day on the Air, National Science week, Museums on the Air, etc.
2. **Radio communications for community events** - fun runs, and the like.
3. **Raynet activities** – RSGB groups, and non-affiliated groups. In addition to these there are groups affiliated to the **Radio Amateurs Emergency Network** – ‘**the Network**’, but these are well provided for by their own organisation. The Network itself is an Affiliated Society of the RSGB. Some groups affiliate to the Network and the RSGB, so have the best of both worlds.

The difference between activities 2 and 3 is subtle, and sometimes there is considerable

overlap. Put simply, Raynet groups are concerned with service during emergencies and to this end may participate in community events as a means of practice, testing equipment and the honing of skills. However, other groups do not wish to be involved in emergencies, but are happy to provide service to the public in other ways.

1. Demonstration Stations.

These are fun for the participants, but all too often the main object of the exercise, to educate and recruit members of the public, is overlooked.

- (a) Consider applying for a Special Callsign, using an acronym of the event or community association involved. This has two advantages – use of the initials can please the organisation, but the main one is that a unique callsign will probably attract more qso activity.
- (b) Make sure you understand the terms of the RSGB 3rd Party Insurance that covers all Affiliated Society events. These days it is perhaps unwise to undertake any activity that involves others without insurance cover.
- (c) Set up the station, test antennae, etc, *before* the public arrive.
- (d) Provide good quality graphics and hand-outs. HQ can provide posters and general leaflets, including a DVD on loan, but make up your own as well,

- explaining what the local amateur radio club(s) can offer. Consider either a looping presentation of this DVD and/or a repeating slide show of your activities.
- (e) Pay great attention to the station layout, particularly how many sets you will use. Consider their separation, giving plenty of room for the operator and members of the public. Don't rely on the small speakers inside sets, but use good quality extension loudspeakers, with audio filtering if you can. If the operators need to wear headsets, make sure the audio can also be heard via a speaker. Too many sets in close proximity can result in a cacophony of noise, which is completely off-putting to the uneducated ear! Consider erecting acoustic screens between stations.
- (f) Given the relative ease of copying good FM, consider asking club and other members to stand by at home to work the station (and handle greetings messages) either via simplex or through the local repeaters(s). Calling CQ endlessly into a 'dead' band does not impress! Sitting in a car outside the station may generate a qso but hardly distinguishes amateur radio from CB.
- (g) Consider using EchoLink or similar internet-linking mode, if available.
- (h) Check contest diaries in advance to see just who might be using the bands on the day – you may wish to avoid, or perhaps exchange a few points. Be ready and able to explain what contests are all about, including details of just what 'exchanges' are required.
- (i) If you can handle TV and data well, include these. If they are still in the experimental stage in your club, don't! A demonstration station is not an opportunity to test out gear – ensure that everything is working in advance. Data and code by keyboard/screen as well as key can be impressive, and a practice key / oscillator is usually a hit.

- (j) Provide plenty of 'guides'. Their main function will not be operating, but explaining to groups and individuals exactly what is going on, and what the hobby can offer. They are just as important to the success of the function as operators, and need to be well briefed and have given forethought as to what they are to say.

2. Community Events.

For the moment let's concentrate on activities handled by a group of members of the RSGB, perhaps an Affiliated Society, which does not operate as a Raynet Group. The modern licence conditions permit such actions, but despite the many relaxations in licence conditions, there is still a need for 'sponsorship' of the event by a User Service. Groups who ignore this put their licences at risk. It is important to remember at all times that the 'relaxations' allowing 3rd party traffic only came into effect having regard to emergency situations, and that this remains the sole reason for them – all other events are viewed by Ofcom as training exercises.

For example, if you are asked to provide communications for a marathon or horse event, etc., then you may want to ascertain who is providing First Aid cover – if Red Cross, St John or St Andrews, then you could ask if they will be your 'sponsor'. If so, you will be operating on their behalf during the event.

(Note: If a commercial First Aid organisation is used, they will not be able to sponsor you – the non-commercial nature of amateur radio involvement is paramount.)

Non-Raynet community radio is certainly growing. For example, recent requests from 4x4 Response Groups have been received, each wondering how they might use amateur radio to assist in their communications. One of these, Wessex 4x4, already works with Raynet, but wishes to expand, and approached Pam Helliwell, G7SME, Region 11 Manager. Another, in Yorkshire, have taken up an offer from Mario Brashill, M5EXY / G2DPA, the RSGB Deputy Regional Officer, to conduct RCF exams. They may eventually affiliate to

a Raynet group, or they may become one in their own right.

The problem in forming a new Raynet group is that you will, in a sense, be ‘re-inventing the wheel’. Procedures, voice and safety, etc, will have to be worked out from scratch, and not only you but the whole amateur radio movement will be judged by what you achieve, or fail to achieve in some cases. Membership of, or affiliation to, an existing group should be given serious consideration.

3. Raynet (RAYNET).

Raynet is the public face of emergency amateur radio, (*perhaps that most likely to catch the attention of the national or international media*). All involved must appreciate the need for a ‘united front’ and single point of liaison..... Raynet has its origins in the floods and gales that hit the east coast way back in 1953. The weather conditions were so severe that coastal radio stations, such as Humber Radio, went off air, and ships at sea were left without land contacts. Some radio amateurs breached the terms of their licence and tuned down to the shipping bands, then acted as relay stations. After the event, the authorities recognised how valuable their service had been. Soon afterwards the licence conditions were modified, and the **RAEN** was born – later becoming Raynet, a sponsored operation of the RSGB, with its own National Raynet committee reporting to the RSGB Council. In the early 1980s some groups left the RSGB, and by the early 1990s the independent ‘Network’ was formed – this Network always uses the capital letters, RAYNET, for consistency, whilst most other groups still use ‘Raynet’. The Network, to which the majority of Raynet/RAYNET members belong, has its own elected committee, with officers specialising in various aspects of their service, and operate a weekly newservice, accepting contributions from all groups, whatever their affiliation. They levy a subscription on members, paid through a registered group and thus keep an accurate record of ‘active’ members; provide detailed operation manuals;

maintain and stores of clothing and equipment; liaise with ‘User Services’; chair an HF EmCom group for international work, and provide not only 3rd Party insurance but also Personal Accident cover. They organise an annual conference, open to all groups.

The policy of the RSGB Board in recent years has been “to look to eventual unity of RAYNET activities”, under the direction of the Network. However, there are groups who wish to remain as RSGB Groups and object to any suggestion of Network affiliation, and yet others use the designation Raynet but wish to be completely independent – the amateur licence allows *any* amateur or group of amateurs to operate in this way. The role of the Public Service Board member is to work towards this eventual unity but also provide support as long as some groups wish to remain independent of the Network.

(‘Raynet’ and ‘RAYNET’ are registered trademarks of the RSGB, but permission to use them by independent groups will usually be granted).

Under a Memorandum of Understanding signed by the RSGB and the Network,

“The RSGB recognises the Network as the UK’s principal organisation comprising radio amateurs who provide voluntary radio communications in support of the activities of the User Services, and to local communities in times of disaster and emergencies, and in providing communications support to local community events. It is the main conduit of amateur radio representation to the User Services.”

“The Network recognises the RSGB as the National body representing all UK radio amateurs. It is the main conduit of amateur radio representation to the UK licensing authorities and the representative society of radio amateurs throughout the United Kingdom to the International Amateur Radio Union (IARU).”

Most sensible amateurs recognise that whatever the 'local politics', there will be times when groups need to work together, and normal operational boundaries cease to be important. There is a need to present a 'united front' to the User Services and the world at large, and this covers uniform, operational and voice procedure, etc. Currently the Network have a detailed manual covering all of the above, and discussions are taking place to see if this can be made available to all. Network groups have a common ID badge, but other groups wear a variety of designs. This is fine until one moves into another area to provide back-up, when the local User Service may not recognise a particular badge. Discussions are taking place to see if a uniform style can be adopted, in the hope that all User Services will recognise each amateur involved as 'belonging' to one service.

Network membership and capabilities are well documented. Not so for the RSGB and independent groups - HQ does not have records. To enable us to gauge the strength of current activity, it would help if non-Network clubs and groups could complete and return the questionnaire below either by post or electronically – some of the information will be used to update the Yearbook for 2009.

STOP PRESS:

As a 'taster' of things to come, in the interests of closer co-operation and harmony, the following points were agreed/discussed at the March RSGB Board meeting:

1. **The RSGB will adopt the designation 'RAYNET' (capitals), as used by Network groups, and urges all groups to do the same.**
2. **The RSGB will discuss with Ofcom when next licence conditions are discussed a further broadening of**

the definition' user services', possibly along the lines of allowing any non-profit organisation to call upon the services of amateurs.

3. **At the same time, the RSGB will raise the issue of Talk Through permits, in the hope of easing some of the current conditions.** (Note that the 'recent' provision to allow some unattended operation applies to an individual amateur and not to a talk-through unit.)
4. **A quotation for personal accident insurance cover is to be obtained, with a view to offering this to members, matching that offered by the Network.**
5. **The RSGB have accepted an offer by the Network to produce a common ID Badge. This is hoped to aid co-operation by groups when on joint exercises/operations, making it easier for user services to recognise a unified organisation. There will be a small charge 'at cost' for this service.**
6. **Similarly, the RSGB have accepted an offer by the Network to make available their detailed operation manual, in the interests of allowing differing groups to come together seamlessly by using identical voice procedures, etc.**
7. **An RSGB Public Service Committee is to be formed, to discuss all relevant matters. This will meet once or twice per year and conduct most of its business by mail.**

Please contact me if you wish to discuss any of the above.

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