

N3KZ Network Policies

The following are policies specific to the N3KZ UHF repeater network. It is expected that anyone using the system will be familiar with these policies and will try to adhere to them.

Usage. The order of priority on the repeater system is, in decreasing order, as follows: emergency traffic, member traffic, non-member traffic. Emergency traffic has priority over anything else. This should go without saying. Members have priority on the system at all other times, and as such, non-members should avoid tying up the system for extended lengths of time.

Being a wide-coverage system, many transient non-members use the system to communicate over a wide distance while traveling, such as to keep in contact with a friend or relative while on the road, while vacationing, or for daily or weekly skeds where no other single-site repeater can provide the needed coverage. The N3KZ UHF network has been built at considerable expense and hard work to provide this wide-area service. The UHF network was not built to be a "local hangout" for non-members who could just as well carry out lengthy QSOs on a simplex channel or a local repeater. There is no reason to tie up 20 sites' worth of hardware covering tens of thousands of square miles to converse with someone just across town.

We realize that conversing on the system with a user a substantial distance away is interesting, maybe even fascinating to a newcomer until the novelty wears off, and by no means do we wish to discourage open QSOs on the repeater. However, non-members are discouraged from occupying the repeater for lengthy QSOs on a regular basis. As a general rule of thumb, non-members should try to limit their QSOs to 15 minutes during prime operating hours (roughly 7AM to 11PM). During drive time and during adverse weather conditions, non-members are asked to limit the length of QSOs even further if possible. If you find that your QSO has run long, please consider clearing off, at least for a while. *Please don't misinterpret the above! N3KZ is NOT a closed repeater system.* It is an open, user-friendly and visitor-friendly system, but there are usage policies and guidelines that are in place to ensure that members have access to the system that they have supported, while still allowing time for non-members to make good use of the limited resource as well.

If other amateurs are asking to make calls during a QSO, it is a very good indication that there are other users waiting to use the repeater. Even if there are not other stations asking to make calls during a QSO, or if other users are invited to break in but chose not to, there is still a very good possibility that there are other users waiting for the QSO to end so they can make a call. Many amateurs are reluctant to interrupt an ongoing QSO to make a call; they may feel that the call they want to make is no more important than the QSO already in progress.

There many, many, many good non-linked open repeaters on the air. Many have very good coverage, yet they go underutilized. If you are in a QSO with another station within 10, 20, maybe 30 miles of you, consider making use of a local repeater. Other low-usage repeater owners/sponsors may not object to lengthy ragchew conversations, they may even welcome it as a nice change from dead silence, hi! Repeater directory listings for Eastern Pennsylvania and Southern New Jersey are available at ARCC's Web site at www.arcc-inc.org. Repeater directory listings for Delaware and Maryland are available on TMARC's Web site at <http://www.tmarc.org>.

Crossbanding. Crossbanding has always been, and continues to be, not allowed on N3KZ/R. We do not allow users to crossband the system onto other simplex or repeater frequencies, nor do we allow other repeaters to remote-base into the system without prior consent.

Timers and Delays. Because there are multiple link paths between sites, each having some delay in terms of squelch opening and closing and PL tone detection, please wait half a second before speaking when you key your mike. Many recent radios add an additional delay between when you key the microphone and when the radio actually starts transmitting. Radio Shack handhelds and Alinco radios have the most delay; you can verify this by looking at a wattmeter while keying the mike and you will see there is a noticeable delay. Furthermore, it takes some time for the PL tone your radio transmits to be detected by the repeater receivers. So, you should always pause briefly when keying up before speaking. Quick "Yes" and "No" responses will often not be audible to other users if you quick-key the mike.

The repeater has a time-out timer of 3 minutes during normal operating mode and 2 minutes during nighttime mode. Daytime mode is when the normal three-tone courtesy tone is heard. Nighttime mode is when the courtesy tone is a single "boop" sound. If you exceed the time-out timer length, the repeater will announce "Repeater Time Out" and shut down. It will automatically come back online when you unkey, at which time it will announce "Repeater Time Out Cancel".

The repeater has a "hang time" of 5 seconds. This is how long the repeater transmitter stays keyed after the courtesy tone sounds. Users should NOT let the repeater carrier drop during the QSO; simply start speaking after the courtesy tone sounds. The time out timer resets when the courtesy tone sounds, not when the transmitter drops out. Allowing the transmitter to drop completely only serves to add wear and tear to the relays, power supplies, and other electronic and electromechanical hardware that is most stressed when the transmitters are first keyed up.

Always wait for the courtesy tone before responding. If you fail to let the courtesy tone sound, the time out timer will not get reset. Also, it will prevent other users from breaking in during the courtesy tone interval, which is the reason for having a courtesy tone in the first place.

Control Operators. The control operators have been entrusted with maintaining decorum on the system and ensuring operation within Part 97 regulations. If a control operator interrupts a QSO and identifies himself as "control", please allow them to pass whatever messages they need to or perform any control functions. The control operators have the final say in what is/is not appropriate on the repeater. If a control operator makes a comment or suggestion, take it as constructive criticism. If you disagree with what a control operator says or does, that is your prerogative, but it is not justification for contesting the control operator on the air.

Shutdowns. A control operator may shut off the repeater either due to a violation of the N3KZ network policies, violations of FCC regulations, or flagrant disregard for "good amateur practice". A shutdown should be taken as a hint that something was wrong, either with the conversation or with the operating practices. Shutdowns are often done in lieu of direct personal intervention by a control operator as it avoids the situation from becoming a personal confrontation.

Comments and Suggestions. We welcome your comments and suggestions; we are always open to constructive criticism. Please send an email to Jeff WN3A at the email address listed on the Contact Us Web page.