

SANDRA Repeater Operating Guidelines

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Introduction

There are times when guidelines for doing various things in life must be established in order to keep things running smoothly. No one is perfect and we all need an occasional reminder!

Some newcomers to repeater systems want very much to do right in the eyes of their peers, so much so that some don't even get on the air for fear of doing something wrong. They sit back and listen to the more experienced operator and try to establish in their own mind what the correct procedures are. They know the regulations specify what is right and wrong, but nothing is mentioned about correct operating procedures.

The San Diego Repeater Association (SANDRA) has established the below procedures to be used when operating SANDRA repeaters. These procedures were written to establish maximum service for the greatest number of amateurs. The repeaters must be usable and listenable in order to have stations that are willing to monitor. Otherwise, we lose the opportunity to enjoy this part of amateur radio. We encourage you to use our repeaters and have an enjoyable time doing so. SANDRA is an ARRL Affiliated Club.

Setting An Example

From time to time, some of us unknowingly slip into some poor operating habits. Maybe it's time we all take a few moments to think of what we say and how we say it. Some become lazy and comfortable with sloppy procedures and don't even realize it. It becomes a subconscious action and things like shortened call signs, bad slang, cursing, etc., become part of our on the air vocabulary. Do we really need to express ourselves in this manner?

Many non-hams monitor amateur radio frequencies with scanners. Watch your language and your manners. Please don't bring disrepute on the Amateur Radio Service. Non-hams who ride in our vehicles, or listen on scanners, are unlikely to get excited about ham radio if they hear this unimpressive slang. People already know these words, and if they pursue this great hobby why should we give them the impression that language of this nature is commonly accepted? We reap what we sow. Therefore, the following points will make amateur radio a better place for all of us.

The Meaning Of "Break"

The word "Break" has several different and very specific meanings in amateur radio. Break should never be used when you simply want to join a conversation in progress. Use your call sign for that. The use of the word break can be used to terminate a message with one station and start a message to another during the same transmission. Example: "WB6XYZ, message received. BREAK. WB6WLV, have you arrived at your office yet?"

Break can be utilized to interrupt an ongoing conversation with traffic of a higher priority. The frequency should be released immediately to the station calling break. You should transmit "Station calling break go ahead with your priority traffic." You must not simply say "I acknowledge the break," then finish your conversation before relinquishing the frequency.

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The most critical use of break is when someone calls "break, break, break" or "break emergency". This indicates emergency traffic. All other stations must release the frequency immediately and stand by to assist if necessary.

Tactfully educate those who use "break" in an improper manner.

General Responsibilities

Use proper ethics of amateur radio when operating.

You are expected to know and adhere to all applicable FCC and SANDRA rules, regulations, procedures and guidelines. Be a courteous operator and lead others by your positive example. Use your call sign. "Break" has specific meanings. (See The Meaning Of "Break" above.) Kerchunking the repeaters are not appreciated. (Kerchunking is transmitting for a second or less without saying anything.) Wait for the courtesy tone before transmitting.

Most repeaters have a transmit timeout timer, usually set for about 2 1/2 minutes. You should be able to say what is needed in that time. The "just a minute while I drop it" every minute is very annoying to listeners. Many people listen to the frequencies, but do not enter the conversation, so be aware of what is being said.

Remember, our repeaters are open and available for use by all licensed amateur radio operators. SANDRA has a large membership base. Everyone should be given the opportunity to utilize the equipment. Do not monopolize the repeaters.

SANDRA discourages joking around or horseplay on its repeaters. Some people think it's funny, but in reality it is very unprofessional. If there is malicious interference, do not confirm, acknowledge, or discuss the problem. We ask that you check the repeater input for any station causing interference and forward the information to SANDRA. This can be done via telephone or e-mail.

Full call signs are to be used as per FCC regulations.

Make your conversations interesting. People turn their radios on for good conversation, not the same old problem from last month. Do not operate the radio if intoxicated.

Membership dues pay for repeater maintenance and other associated operating expenses. If you use a repeater regularly, please support us by joining SANDRA.

Using Repeaters

Repeaters are meant to be used for communicating with stations that are not close enough to each other to be properly heard by all on a simplex frequency. Peak repeater times in cities are normally during rush hour. During this time more stations are on during a very short time frame, so your transmissions should be kept shorter to allow everyone a chance to use the repeater. We encourage everyone to take advantage of our system and use the repeaters, but do so in a responsible and courteous manner.

Listen on the frequency for more than a few seconds before initiating a call. The repeater may be busy with someone momentarily standing by. If the repeater is not busy and you wish to establish a conversation use the phrase "(Insert Your Call) (mobile, if applicable) monitoring." After releasing the PTT anyone wishing to speak with you will come back with his or her call sign. If no one comes back to your call, do not continue repeating your call sign. This is redundant and can be very annoying. There may be many people monitoring who don't wish to speak at the time. You may try your call again later in case someone else comes on to monitor that may wish to engage in a conversation.

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Identify yourself at the beginning and end of a contact, and every 10 minutes during the contact. Remember to use full call signs. Partial call signs are illegal. In general, give mobile stations priority over base stations, especially during rush hour. The mobile station may be asking for directions or reporting traffic congestion.

Acknowledge and yield to emergency traffic immediately. Don't break into a contact unless you have something to add. Interrupting is no more polite on the air than it is in person. Interruption without identification constitutes malicious (and illegal) interference.

Wait for a "squelch-tail" or "go-ahead tone" after each transmission. This allows time for another person to join in the conversation as well as allowing for the repeater "time-out timer" to be reset. If you want to join an established conversation don't use the word "Break", which has specific meanings (see The Meaning Of "Break"). To enter a conversation, insert your full call sign between transmissions. Those using the repeater should then acknowledge this.

A repeater that is in use during a public service event or during an emergency situation should not be accessed while this is in progress. If necessary, contact Net Control for permission to call for your station and move them to another frequency. Keeping the repeater frequency clear during these events can make the difference during emergency situations.

Profane or obscene language is not permitted, and will not be tolerated by the San Diego Repeater Association and other radio amateurs. On voice repeaters, proper and accepted voice procedures should be used. This also applies to all voice frequencies within our amateur bands.

When checking into voice Nets, don't use the word "Break" unless you have higher priority or emergency traffic. Also don't use check, recheck, contact, etc. All that is required for getting the Net Controller's attention is a simple transmission of your call sign. Net Control will now know immediately who you are. Never check into a Net and then leave without first notifying Net Control of your intentions. Net Control may have traffic for you at a later time. It is most frustrating when Net Control calls you and you've left the frequency.

Please note that we co-channel / share repeater frequency pairs with other clubs and individuals throughout Southern California, Arizona and Mexico. Gone are the days of "clear channel" repeater frequencies. Be considerate of our co-channel users and always use the minimum power necessary to access our repeaters. If you are accessing one of our repeaters from out of the San Diego region, please be mindful of co-channel operations. Listen to the frequency and ensure you are not causing interference to other systems. It is important to be good neighbors.

SANDRA wants you to enjoy our amateur radio repeaters. They can become very useful during emergencies, Nets, rag chewing conversations, as well as bringing much enjoyment to amateurs traveling through our community.

Telephone Patch Protocol

The SANDRA Sharp Hospital repeater has a connection to the telephone system, allowing members to make a local phone call using their radio. Use of the autopatch, as it is called, is subject to SANDRA's rules and protocols.

The SANDRA autopatch utilizes a touch-tone access code, which must be used as a prefix to the telephone number being dialed. Key your transmitter, and at the same time enter the Access/Up Code followed by the telephone number you are calling. This is done with a single transmission. When you un-key, the system should respond "Autopatch." Immediately click your microphone button once to speed dial your number. When you have completed your call, hang up the autopatch by using the # key.

Telephone Interconnect / Autopatch is only in operation when a control operator is monitoring. There may be down times for the autopatch

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Phone patches should not be accessed on the repeater when it is busy with a normal conversation. It is rude to interrupt a conversation to use the patch. If you have emergency phone patch traffic then indicate this so that others will stand by while you make your call.

Before using the phone patch identify yourself with your complete call sign. Keep your phone calls as short as possible and to the point. Don't discuss personal issues, as many people are listening.

Phone calls of a business or commercial nature are strictly limited in scope by the Federal Communications Commission. You are expected to know Part 97 as it relates to business communications via amateur radio. If in doubt, don't make the call! Use other means for these types of calls. If you call one of the emergency services, when they answer, identify yourself with something like "This is amateur radio operator WB6XYZ calling through a radio phone patch," and then continue with your traffic. This will help the answering person understand the circumstances of your call.

Phone patch calls should be terminated with a statement indicating that you are clear with the patch along with your call sign, in full.

The autopatch is configured to speed dial specific agencies. Dial the three digit number listed below to connect with the desired agency. No Up Code is necessary. Disconnect the patch with the normal Down code (#).

- 110** CHP
- 111** San Diego Police Department
- 112** San Diego City Fire Department
- 113** San Diego County Sheriff
- 114** Chula Vista Police Department
- 115** El Cajon Police Department
- 116** n/a
- 117** National City Police Department
- 118** Auto Club of Southern California
- 119** U.S. Coast Guard
- 120** San Diego City Lifeguard
- 121** Beach Weather
- 122** California Department of Forestry
- 123** La Mesa Police Department
- 124** Montgomery Field ATIS

Autopatch dial-up abilities are unreliable in repeater fringe coverage areas. Certain telephone numbers and calling areas are locked out of the autopatch system. Please be aware that some of your calls may be toll calls. The autopatch access number is a Linda Vista telephone number.

The autopatch access or Up code is published on your Squelch Tales magazine address label. The disconnect or Down code is #. Autopatch access is for use by SANDRA members. Please do not broadcast the access code information over the radio. If someone is having trouble accessing the patch, access it for him or her. You may access the autopatch for a guest requesting to use the system.

Repeater Systems and Nets

- Sunday night SANDRA Net: Mt. Otay (146.640, 224.200 and 449.500). Newline immediately follows roll call.
- Wednesday night SANDRA Net: Mt. Laguna (147.150, 224.060 and 449.200)

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Emergency Operations

We have seen time and time again that Amateur Radio provides reliable communications in times of emergency. Fires, storms, floods, earthquakes and other disasters often disrupt normal modes of communication. Telephone and cable lines as well as electrical lines are often damaged. Cell sites become overloaded with incoming call attempts or become completely disabled.

SANDRA repeaters are used in times of emergency by San Diego Animal Rescue amateur radio operators, ARES and RACES operations, California and United States Department of Forestry amateur radio operators and for Public Service events. Our Mount Otay site has limited auxiliary power available on the VHF 146.640- MHz. repeater only. The site has approximately eight hours of back-up power. Our sites on Lyons Peak, Mount Laguna, Kearny Mesa and Sharp Hospital have emergency generators and are well suited for sustained emergency operations. As an ARRL Affiliated Organization, the Amateur Radio Emergency Services (ARES) Organization is given priority use of the SANDRA repeaters in times of emergency or disaster. This does not prevent SANDRA members from using the repeaters in times of emergency to contact family members, etc. with emergency traffic.