

South Coast Amateur Radio Service Net Control Station Operations Manual

A Guide to Aid in Uniformity and Consistency

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Net Goals

South-Cars has been in existence for more than 50 years, and like just about everything else, has evolved over the years and will no doubt, continue to do so. We have an NCS for each of the 35 hours, per week, that the net is in operation, plus several alternate NCS's. We have over 11,700 members as of this writing. It is understood that consistency in our operation is of prime importance. If we each do not conduct our net sessions in a similar manner, then our net members can easily become confused as to our procedures. This, in turn, leads to disenchantment and eventual "fading" away on the part of our members. We need to make them feel welcome. We need to be sure that information pertaining to first time check-ins is forwarded to our data base manager in a timely fashion.

We realize that folks, hams, hate to read, or refer to the manual unless, or until, all else fails! However, we ask that you PLEASE thoroughly read this manual and that you work with us in following the procedures and guidelines accordingly. Each one of you, and the service you provide to the success of South-Cars, is greatly appreciated. Without each of you, we wouldn't have a South-Cars Net! We do ask, in return for the fun, satisfaction, and enjoyment that you receive as a net control station, that you help us by adhering to these guidelines.

This manual is for all of us, "old timer" NCS's, Alternate NCS's as well as new NCS's and anyone else interested in knowing, and understanding, our preferred guidelines in our everyday net operations. Unbelievably, in the past, we have had some net control stations that NEVER submitted the first new member's information. This resulted in the new member wondering what is going on and if we really care. We also have net control stations that are giving out, from time to time, erroneous, and/or completely outdated, information. We have means in place for each of you to stay up to date on changes in procedures. We don't want to change your personality. Everyone has his, or her, own unique personality. We do, however ask that we all be consistent in our procedures, hence the issuing of this manual. Please keep this manual handy for your reference; keep up on changes and updates.

Remember, if you allow deviations while other NCS properly adhere to the rules, you are not being fair to your fellow NCS, as deviations will probably propagate hard feelings, by the members, towards those NCS who are following the rules. Your help, your cooperation, and your willingness to take time out of your busy day to conduct your net sessions are appreciated!

No Pre-list!

For the same reason, if you are opening the first hour in the morning and hear others on the frequency waiting for the net to start, do NOT put them on your check-in list. Let them check in

along with everyone else when you have opened the session and start your first list. If asked to do so, just indicate that, in fairness to all, we don't take pre-list.

Stations with a schedule and Birthdays:

At the top of each hour we should ask if there are any stations on frequency that have a schedule and wish to call their station to move off frequency for a contact. You are NOT taking a check-in list at this point, but only giving them the opportunity to call another station to move off frequency. Please do NOT add them to your check-in list. Let them check in, again, with everyone else. They will take advantage of this to get on board if you let them. If they make contact and move off frequency for their contact, acknowledge this. If they don't then simply indicate that you are sorry their "station wasn't there" and move on with your session. Then follow by asking if there is anyone celebrating their birthday. If so, check them in at this time and wish them a very happy birthday.

Finally, if propagation is "long" and you are not hearing stations close to you, try to, at least once during your session, pick another NCS located far from you to take a list of Mobiles and then a list of "anyone, anywhere", thereby affording more people the opportunity to check in. Be clear to the assisting NCS as to what you want him, or her to do, so that you don't lose control of your session.

8AM and 12PM Eastern Time Sessions:

A) Prior to Your Session Check your e-mail for net related messages, and the South-Cars Website at www.southcars.com. If you have e-mail "blocker" settings, be sure to allow SCARS E-mails. If, for some reason, you don't have internet and/or e-mail capabilities then we ask that you find some way through the buddy system (having someone do it for you) or possibly over the phone, to stay current on changes, updates, announcements, etc. This really is important! Have a copy of the Preamble for opening this session and don't forget your note pad and pencil or pen.

B) Starting and Running Your Session: Check to be sure the frequency is clear! Note: South-Cars does not own 7.251 MHz!

C) If the frequency is occupied: Here is the preferred procedure, if the frequency is in use at the time the net is to open: Identify yourself to them. Excuse yourself for the interruption. Let them know that the South-Cars net is about to start up and that normally it is conducted on 7.251 MHz. Tell them that since the frequency is in use, you will move up 3 KHz or so to conduct the net, (I don't advise you're going down 3 as you will probably plop in on the 7.248 group!) Ask them to inform anyone that should try to check in with them that the net is "up 3", or whatever, and ask them to please come on the temporary frequency when they are through with their QSO, and inform you, so that you can shift the net frequency accordingly, we can TRUTHFULLY say, we have never had anyone fail to offer to move their QSO, under these circumstances. If so, thank them for their help and cooperation. Be genuinely appreciative.

D) Read the preamble. Please read the actual, up to date, preamble and don't try to wing it. There is information in there that is designed to be informative to the newcomer. The preamble is NOT read at the close of the first hour, since you will be turning it over, immediately to another NCS.

1) Ask if there are any stations that have a schedule for the top of the hour that wish to contact another station to move off frequency for a QSO. Announce that you are NOT taking a list for check ins currently. If a station responds, then tell them to "Go ahead and call your station". Help them by repeating the call of the station they are looking for. If no reply, state that "the station was not heard" and move on to the next step. Do NOT add the calling station to your check-in list. If you do this, they will soon be popping up all over the place, so they can easily get in on the check-in list. This is not treating others fairly!

2) Check to see if anyone is celebrating their birthday. If so, welcome them and let them check in, and wish them a Happy Birthday. You may choose to have everyone on frequency say, "Happy Birthday", followed by their complete call (Keep'em legal!). Do this "in mass"! The bedlam created usually impresses the birthday celebrant!

3) Always ask for check-ins by "suffix only, phonetically, one time only and spread them out!" If you hear someone checking in with their full call, repeat your request and emphasize the SUFFIX ONLY. If we all are consistent on this, they will, or SHOULD, soon get the point. Remember! Short timers and QRP are no longer given priority. Everyone is taken in the order in which they are heard. Always read back the list you heard before you start checking folks in. Let them know who was heard. Not everyone can wait to see if they "made it or not" as they may well have other things they can be doing.

4) Start by asking for "Mobiles and mobiles only." After taking the mobile list do NOT repeat it until after you have taken a list for anyone, anywhere. Now alternate back and forth between mobiles and anyone, anywhere. We have heard NCS's take 3 or 4 mobile lists at the start and it's 30 minutes into the session before the first "anyone, anywhere list" is taken. Again, this will contribute to stations indicating they are mobile, when they aren't! Let's PLEASE alternate.

5) If during a check-in, or while you are running your list, you hear someone say "check-in' or they give their call, trying to get on the list, it's best to simply state you are "not taking a list at this time but will be taking more lists shortly. Please stand by". Move on with your regular list.

6) If people are talking to you or anyone else on the frequency prior to your starting up the net, do NOT add them to your list at the start of the net. They should check in just like everyone else. Again, consistency is required. If one NCS deviates from the normal, then you make others upset, or worse.

7) Always be aware of, and record, the necessary information on first time check-ins. (See the First time Check-in section in this manual).

8) Remember to announce our need for NCS's and alternate NCS's. Also, announce the Traders Net. Announce and refer everyone to our website www.southcars.com.

9) Remember, you have a relief station coming on for the next hour. Be aware of the time. Don't take a list that can last past the top of the hour when you get near that time. Keep your lists short, even one or two. Turn your session over in a timely fashion to the oncoming NCS. Treat him, or her, as you would be treated! After your session conditions may prevent you from communicating directly with your relief station. If this is the case ask another station who is hearing you well, to call for the relief station to be sure he, or she, is there. Do NOT continue with your session until you have exhausted every effort at turning it over to the incoming NCS. We have heard NCS stations try to make contact but failed. They proceeded on with the net under the assumption the other NCS wasn't there when they were present! This is REALLY frustrating to the incoming NCS.

10) When you turn over your session let the incoming NCS know if you have any "carry over's".

11) Remember, we are taking suffixes only. This IS legal. HOWEVER, we are required to identify every 10 minutes, maximum. Therefore, when you take a list mark down the time by the first one on the list, watch your clock and when you get near the 10-minute mark, indicate that you will be calling on a given station next and that you want the following stations to identify with their full call. Then read the suffixes off (the entire remainder of the list!) And ask that they ALL ID now. This speeds things up. It takes a long time to go through them one by one. All we need do is read the list and let them do it all at once. That keeps them legal. Note the time and proceed on through the list. Obviously, remember to ID your own station!

12) If you note intentional, or malicious, interference on the frequency the worst thing you can do is comment about it. This just eggs them on because they know they are accomplishing what they have set out to do! If others comment about it ask them not to do so. They (the offending perpetrator) will usually go away. If conditions warrant, (i.e. something occurs time after time for multiple days, or sessions), then notify the enforcement officer of the FCC. We realize that not everyone is set up to record these events, so you might wish to communicate an ongoing event to one of our members. There are several out there capable of making recordings and burning the CD's to be sent to the FCC.

13) A previous Net Manager eliminated, to some degree, the use of relays. Well, it is the intent of our current Net Manager to re-institute the use of relays. However, the Net Control will enlist the help of other Net Controls or substitute Net Controls, who may be on frequency, to conduct the relays. If there are no other NC's on frequency, then the NCS will ID a person on frequency that they feel in his or her opinion, is proficient in conducting a relay and only that person that is ID's, will perform the relay. This is to prevent having two or more people trying to relay a station in to the net at the same time. With band conditions the way they are, relays do become a necessity from time-to-time; remember, you as the NCS, are always in control of the Net; in accordance with the guidelines as set forth by the Net Manager.

14) When you have a station that says "contact", this should be used strictly for contacting the station that you are currently checking in. This should not be a means for them to get onto your check-in list. Politely discourage this process.

15) One last suggestion. It would be strongly recommended that you check in on various other sessions. This helps to keep you aware as to what is going on. We have some NCS operators who we never hear from except on their net session. You are MUCH appreciated as an NCS, but we sure would like to see all NCS participate in other net sessions. This is obviously somewhat more difficult for those who work but try it. Get to know your fellow NCS ops.

Last Hour Session - The final session of the day mirrors the operation of the preceding sessions with just a few minor differences. The differences are simply that the preamble needs to be read again at the start of the 12PM session. Solely at your discretion, you can keep the net running longer than the posted hour should you choose to do so. If one stops to think about this, there is no other NCS to turn the net over to, and in many cases, you might be very surprised at the number of additional stations that will participate. This holding the net open is by no means a requirement and is only suggested if you feel so inclined and have the time to do so. It is requested that you do, at the top of the hour, (12PM), further recognize any stations requiring contact for schedule purposes, and birthdays. Once these have been handled, the net should be conducted in the manner described above.

Traders Net

South-Cars operates a Traders Net. Although you probably, as an NCS, won't have anything to do with the operation of this Net, you should be able to answer queries from other hams about it. The Traders Net is every Wednesday immediately following the close out of the 8 to 10 a.m., Eastern Time, regular session. It is on 7.251 MHz. The NCS runs the net until there is no further check-ins or listings. Hams can list ham radio related gear.

Other "Car" Nets:

As most of you know, there are several other similar nets on the 40-meter band, such as North Cars, East Cars, and Mid-Cars. We get quite a few inquiries from folks checking in regarding these nets. Therefore, you should keep this information handy to help them out. Additionally, often someone will want to move another station off the SCARS frequency to another frequency that is on, or close to, one of the other nets. It is a good idea to let them know so that they might pick another frequency, hopefully, without wasting a lot of net time. The "biggie", (other than SCARS!), is Mid-Cars. They operate on 7.258 MHz and usually start up at around 7:00 a.m. Eastern time. They operate until "around" 3 p.m. unless conditions dictate a shorter, or sometimes even a longer period. Their geographical area is the Midwest but, like us, their operations can extend well beyond the Midwest. ECARS or East Cars meets all day every day on 7.255 MHz., starting at approximately 7:30 AM East Coast time (conditions permitting), and continuing until around 3 P.M. or until the frequency gets over-run by Foreign Broadcast Stations. North Cars seems to be among the disappearing. They normally have, in the past, operated on 7.240 MHz and then started varying with most operations centering around 7.225. It appears they have evolved into the Nighthawks (6:30 to 7:30 p.m., eastern on 7.225 MHz) and seemingly have disappeared from the daytime North Cars operation. If anyone can come up with any other operations info regarding them, let one of the administrators know. Some queries have been raised about West Cars. They were, at one time in operation and went away, following some legal battles, several years ago. I've heard some indications that someone is trying to start them up again, but no confirmation as of this writing.

NCS Responsibilities to Others:

We, as net control operators, have agreed to assume the responsibility of being dependable, both as to our sessions (showing up!) and to the time (showing up on time, starting on time) and, turning it over in timely fashion to your relief NCS. Obviously, there will no doubt, be times when you just can't make your session. However! PLEASE use your NCS listings and call another NCS to take your session and then notify the South-Cars Net Manger or the Scheduling Manager to inform them of the change. Those NCS's that are paired up, when one is going to be absent, then the other NCS will run the complete hour session. If this is a problem, then the NCS that is going to be absent shall call another NCS to fill his session. If time does not allow for this, then contact the Net Manager or Scheduling Manager and advise them of the situation. As soon as you know you are going to be "out of pocket" follow these procedures so the team can find a temporary fill-in. If something happens that you find at the last moment you can't make it (thunderstorm??), then pick up your phone, get your NCS Roster and call one of the alternates to see if they can pick up your session. At the very least, please call the South-Cars Scheduling Manager or the Net Manager. All contact information is available on the NCS Contact list.

When your hour is close to winding up be SURE to keep your lists short (take them one, or two at a time!) so as NOT to run over into the relief NCS's time. After all, if he, or she, can be there in timely fashion then it surely isn't very polite to keep them waiting while you continue. Please turn it over in timely fashion! All that is necessary is to let stations "out there" that it's time for a "shift" change and do it. They will understand. Asking the incoming NCS to "Stand by" while you continue your session is strongly discouraged as they most surely will agree to it, but we wonder how they really

First Time Check-Ins:

We have definite procedures for first time check-ins. We receive inquiries from hams, far too often, regarding their having checked in before and still not on the roster. Many of these folks really enjoy their participation in the net activities and we are remiss if we don't follow the procedures below.

- 1) At least once (preferably more) during your session announce that any first-time check-ins please "let me know that you are a first timer".
- 2) When you get a first-time check-in, make them feel welcome!
- 3) Ask them for their date of birth, month, and day only. Not the year. Let them know that this is for being able to wish them a happy birthday on their day, when they check in.
- 4) Then ask them if their mailing address is good in the QRZ and FCC databases. This is for our roster information and kind of helps to remind them to update the databases in the event of a change of address.
- 5) Quickly inform them of our hours of operations and about our website. Let them know that most likely within 7 to 10 days, they should be able to go to southcars.com and get their member number from our on-line Membership Roster

Remember to Submit New Members:

Everyone forgets to do something occasionally. Lots of us forget to do something often!

Therefore, develop a method that works for you, to prevent forgetting to submit new members.

As soon as you finish your session submit all new members to the Database Manager. It has been found that in more cases than not, some of those requesting membership have already in the past become members and have forgotten about it, so to this end, and to help our Database Manager take a quick review of our published roster to see if this call is already listed.