Ham radio best practices

At our first club meeting of the year we had a group discussion about ham radio etiquette and best practices. The participation and response were both helpful and encouraging; it told us that you really care about keeping our air waves friendly, civil, and accommodating. Noji and I divided the topic into two sub-sections: Radio Etiquette and Personal Etiquette.

Radio etiquette

- When speaking into your microphone, try talking across its face, rather than blowing directly into it.
- Place your hand microphone about two or three inches from your mouth when transmitting, but stay within an inch of your built-in microphone.
- When using a handheld radio with a whip or duck antenna, try and keep the antenna pointed upward when you're transmitting.
- When announcing your call sign along with that of another ham, the rule is to put yourself last, as in K7XYZ, this is K7ABC if your call sign is K7ABC.
- While it's customary to call out CQ on HF (SSB) bands, it's best practice on the FM (2-meter and 70-cm) bands to announce your call sign instead.
- If another ham points out a problem with your transmission (you're sounding a little scratchy), always assume the problem is with you (location, orientation, power too low, etc.) or your equipment first, and always admit your mistakes.
- If you'd like to jump into an ongoing conversation, avoid using the word break; instead, say your call sign between their transmissions.
- After your contact releases his PTT button, allow one or two seconds before you press yours, in case another person wants to join the conversation or has an emergency.
- Be considerate of your contact's time, and minimize dead-air time by at least thinking of what you're going to say before keying up (and while it's fun to use your PTT button, don't forget that it's also an RTL button).
- Avoid kerchunking, which is repeatedly pressing and releasing your PTT button without announcing your call sign; it's not only illegal, but irritating to others, especially those listening on a repeater.
- When speaking through a repeater, try and keep your conversations to under a few minutes.
Brass Tacks

continued

Personal etiquette

- While it’s not always possible, try and make your conversations positive and upbeat; sounding positive attracts friends, while negative comments tend to turn other hams away from you, even if you mean well.
- Don’t react like you’re offended just because another ham can’t remember your name or call sign.
- Avoid making insulting or disparaging remarks about others on the air; what people hear you say about others, they’ll also believe you’ll say about them.
- If you feel you must correct the behavior of another ham, do so off-air, tactfully, and out of earshot of others.
- Within reason, avoid burping, coughing, sniffing, clearing your throat, smacking your lips, and making other bodily or disgusting noises on the air.

There were a number of other good mentions by you at our January club meeting, but I didn’t write them all down, and I don’t remember them, so if I’m missing some of them here, why not send me a line (preferably to uvarcshack@gmail.com) and let me know what I can add?

Please keep in mind that 1) these are not UVARC or repeater policies and 2) they are not hard, fast rules, but merely guidelines, suggestions on how to help make the airwaves a more friendly and familiar place to hang out.

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