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# Outpost

## TNC Message Manager

### Release Content Description For Version 1.2

**Version:** 1.2

**Date:** May 2004

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# 1 Introduction

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## 1.1 Purpose of the Document

This Release Content Description document provides information about new or changed functionality that will be found in Outpost TNC Message Manager Release 1.2.

Existing functionality from the original release is not described here. For current information on Outpost, refer to the following documents:

Name	Release Date
Outpost TNC Message Manager User Guide, Version 1.1	March 2004

## 1.2 Organization

The information in this document is organized under the following headings:

- New Features
- Minor, Internal Changes, Bug Fixes
- Changes since Version 1.1

## 2 New Features

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“New Features” are changes to Outpost that were identified as significant functional changes needed to support the response mission. The following changes were implemented in this area.

### 2.1 #235: Associate a TNC with a Comm Port

The TNC and Comm port are closely linked together, with one TNC connected to one Comm Port. Currently, the Comm Port configuration is separated from the TNC configuration. This means, if a user had multiple TNCs attached to their computer, it is a 2-step process to (i) select the new TNC, and then (ii) reconfigure the Comm Port for that TNC.

This enhancement now ties these to configurations together. The Comm Port setting is no longer a stand-alone setting. Instead, when the user configures the TNC, they now can select the Comm Port setting, with these settings now saved with the TNC. Once configured, when the user changes to a different TNC, that TNC's previously defined Comm Port settings will be loaded with that TNC.

Configuring the Comm Port for the Interactive Packet Window can be still be configured from that form from the File -> Comm Port Settings menu.

### 2.2 #238, 253: Online Reports

Several ARES/RACES organizations have developed standard report formats for collecting and transmitting packet information. In some cases, automated tools have been used to generate reports using pre-defined forms that could be interpreted for efficient processing.

This enhancement implements Online Reports. An Online Report consists of a form that is developed off line and saved as standard ASCII file. Once it is loaded into an Outpost message form, the form first updates a series of <tags>, then guides the user to the information on the form that needs to be filled in.

A tag is a form variable that is substituted at load time. To support Online Reports, three categories of tags are defined. Automatic tags include date, time, message no, BBS, and station call sign. Local tags can be defined for the local environment (city, state, county, etc). Three custom tags provide customizable string substitution (text1, text2, text3). In all cases, tags can be defined in a new form under the “Tools->Report Settings” menu.

### 2.3 #257: Directory Management

There are several enhancements that now require directories for storing files, such as the Export and Reports features. Changes have been made to the File control forms so that the last used directory is used the next time it is selected.

Additionally, a new Tools form has been added so that these directories can be viewed or changed.

### 2.4 #258: SaveAll messages in one file

Similar to #255 Export Outpost Messages, there may be a requirement to store or print an entire folder or message database in a readable format.

This enhancement allows you to save all the messages in a specific folder to a text file that is printer or viewer ready. This file will be a lot easier to read than the Export Message File.

## **2.5 #259: Message numbering to subject line**

Most ARES/RACES assign a message number to all traffic passed between stations. By assigning a message number to a message, the originating and receiving stations can accurately identify and track a message throughout its life.

This feature gives the user the option to automatically place a unique message Identifier in the Subject String ahead of the subject. This is an optional feature. The message number can be either a 3 digit number or, if the 3-character Tactical ID is set, can be the combination of the Tactical ID and 3 digit number. Setups for these parameters are made using Outpost's "Tools->Report Settings" menu.

## **2.6 #260: Set default destination**

For field stations that primarily communicate with a single central station, the same destination address is used from one message to the next.

This enhancement gives the user the option to define a Default Destination call sign. Then, when a new message is started, the default destination call sign is placed into the TO: Field on the message form. The user can change the TO Field at message creation time.

## **2.7 #262: Selective Retrieval of Bulletin Messages**

Currently, retrieving bulletins with Outpost is an all-or-nothing proposition. That is, either all bulletins are retrieved or none are retrieved. This is fine when the BBS is exclusively dedicated to a Response Organization's mission, or when Bulletins are periodically deleted, or when private messages are exclusively used.

However, for the Response Organizations that rely on networked BBSs for their message traffic where operational and non-operational traffic may be present, or when a BBS is used to post a variety of bulletin data, retrieving ALL bulletins is not an efficient use of the frequency.

Most BBSs offer one or more commands that allow the user to retrieve messages based on the destination Call Sign or the message's category (category @ route). This enhancement adds the capability to selectively retrieve messages during a TNC Session. The user will identify the "selective retrieve" command (such as "L", "L>", etc) as part of the Outpost BBS setup. Up to three masks (to match a category or destination call sign) are entered on the Tools->Send/Receive Settings form. A 4<sup>th</sup> retrieve cycle is also added to the TNC Session Manager to retrieve the messages that match the filter.

## **2.8 #263: Canadian Postal Code Support**

Outpost's NTS message maker was implemented with support for the US 5-digit Zip Code format. Unfortunately, this format is not consistent with the Postal Codes used in Canada.

This change adds support for the Canadian Postal Codes. Canadian Postal Codes are in the format L#L #L# where "L" is a character and "#" is a numeral. Outpost now correctly interprets these codes (either 6 characters without the

space or 7 characters with the space) and formats the NTS destination address accordingly.

## **2.9 #264: Print messages on receipt**

One of the original features of Outpost was its ability to retrieve messages automatically from the BBS by configuring it to poll the BBS on a periodic basis. When Outpost is physically located in the radio room and configured with the call sign of a radio room operator, Outpost meets the requirement for having a control operator present.

When a message is retrieved and stored on Outpost, there is a simple annunciation to indicate a new arrival. However, it still requires an operator to review new messages, print them, and route them to the appropriate staff member in the EOC. This process may vary from one response organization to another.

This enhancement allows the Emergency Responder organization to configure Outpost to automatically print a message on receipt to a printer. This enhancement assumes that all in-coming messages are of importance to the EOC, and getting them to the EOC as quickly as possible is required.

## 3 Minor and Internal Changes, Bug Fixes

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The following are a list of minor and internal changes that should improve Outpost user experience. Additionally, changes that resolved application defects are also listed.

### 3.1 **#159: Remove Print Preview**

This was an idea with the first release. Subsequently, I've determined there is no valid requirement to preview a message prior to printing it (text is text).

### 3.2 **#237: INI file structure change**

Finally, this was bugging me since day one. This change implements an interpreted INI file structure that no longer requires it to be deleted from one version to another.

### 3.3 **#248: Message not saved (defect)**

Any change to a message being created flags the application that a change is made. This is used to determine if the "Message not saved" prompt is issued if the user tries to close the form without saving it. The correction fixes the case when the change is made by pasting something in from the clipboard.

### 3.4 **#251: Code efficiency changes**

This change replaced various string functions with more code-efficient functions. This change is transparent to the user.

### 3.5 **#252: Add "Sent: " label to message date/time**

Very minor issue, but cleans up the message look and feel.

### 3.6 **#256: Select message with Enter**

While the up and down cursor keys could highlight a message, it still took a mouse click to open it. This change allows you to remain "mouse-free" and open a message by pressing the Enter key.

### 3.7 **#265: IPW property changes (defect)**

This was more of a nuisance than a defect. When accessing the TNC with the Interactive Packet Window and you are connected, if you change the comm. port settings (part of troubleshooting), these settings were not applied unless you did a disconnect and reconnect. This change now forces a disconnect/connect to apply the changes.

### 3.8 **#266: Add printer setup menu**

Adds a standard Printer Setup menu for setting the printer for all Outpost printing. The menu is added to the Outpost main and Message forms.

### **3.9 #268: Print handling changes**

This is a variety of internal changes around print handling that should be transparent to the user.



## 4 Changes since Version 1.1

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The following is the list of changes that were released as part of the Maintenance releases that followed the release of Outpost v1.1.

### 4.1 Release 1.1.1

#199: resolves Printer problem for non-HP printers. Page number and page break were occurring on the top of the next page.

#202: added a user warning if a new message is closed without saving it. This prevents a user from creating a message, then pressing Close or "X", and losing the message.

#229: resolves NTS message handling during retrieves from the BBS. This was a problem since 1.0 with retrieving NTS messages you may have just uploaded to the BBS.

### 4.2 Release 1.1.2

#196: Corrects problem with sorting date and size fields in the message list.

#233: Fixes problem where the Interactive Packet Window did not remember its form settings.

#243: Corrects potential problem with the Interactive Packet Window where a user may have pasted a large message into the window that could have overflowed the TNC buffer.

### 4.3 Release 1.1.4

#255: Export Outpost Messages

On completion of an operational deployment where Outpost was used, it may be required to submit all necessary documentation and files that were generated during the event to support the served agency's or municipality's request for reimbursement.

Additionally, during an upgrade from one release of Outpost to the next (such as v1.1 to v1.2), the message database structure periodically changes causing any previously saved messages to be lost.

This enhancement allows the user to export the entire message database to a comma-delimited format, then imported into a future release. This feature was back-ported into v1.0.6 and v1.1.4. See the user documentation for a description of the fields.