

Outpost v2.2.2 Release Content Description

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1. Introduction

This Release Content Description provides information about new or changed functionality that will be available in Outpost Packet Message Manager Release 2.2.2. This information is organized under the following sections:

- **New Features:** A new capability that did not exist in any prior version of Outpost in any form.
- **Enhancements:** A change to an existing feature that further improves the performance or usability of the application. Enhancements include minor changes, internal changes (that may not be evident to the user, but contribute to improved supportability increased stability, or application performance) and bug fixes.
- **Changes since Version 2.2.1:** A list of the various changes that were introduced in maintenance or defect releases since the original v2.2.1 release.

2. New Features

2.1. ER#525: Message Drag and Drop

Finally... Message drag-and-drop between folders is now supported. One or more messages can be selected from the currently displayed folder, then dragged and dropped on the folder button of the destination folder. The use of the left and right mouse buttons, Shift, and Cntl keys provides the control over which messages are selected.

NOTE: This feature does not allow you to drag a message outside of Outpost to some other place, such as a folder or desk-top since this requires messing with the O/S to ensure the Outpost message object is properly recognized.

The specifics of mouse-selecting messages and dragging them will be described in a HOW-TO on Message Drag and Drop.

2.2. ER#709: Multi-Message Deletes

Currently, Outpost allowed you to delete one message at a time. This feature now allows one or more messages to be selected and deleted at one time. The use of the left and right mouse buttons, Shift, and Cntl keys provides the control over which messages are selected.

2.3. ER#698: Enhanced Channel Monitoring

Many users use Outpost's *ipserial.exe* program (Tools > Interactive Packet, Serial/Comm Port) as a means to monitor the traffic on a frequency in between Outpost Send/Receive Sessions. However, Outpost frequently complains when it attempts to access the Comm Port that is already open to *ipserial.exe*, or some other program.

This feature addresses this issue. Outpost now determines if *ipserial.exe* is running and, if so, directs that program to disconnect from the Comm Port. Outpost will then run its Send/Receive Session as usual. Once the session is over, Outpost tells *ipserial.exe* to reconnect to the Comm Port and resume monitoring.

NOTE: This feature works only with between Outpost and *ipserial.exe*, and with NO OTHER terminal emulator program on the market.

Details on correctly setting up *ipserial.exe* will be outlined in an Enhanced Channel Monitoring HOW-TO.

2.4. ER#682: TNC Initialization File

Until recently, Outpost assumed that the TNC was in a state that was usable to Outpost. However, several users have reported that other programs leave the TNC with settings in place that turn out to be incompatible with Outpost's operation. When this occurs, Outpost either cannot process the BBS messages, or ends up with a BBS disconnect or some other unexpected behavior.

In an ideal world, the state of the TNC is left resembling that of a TNC hard reset reflecting most if not all of its factory default settings. However, performing a hard reset on the fly is not practical since some TNCs require user interaction to complete the sequence.

This feature adds the ability for the user to define a list of TNC commands to be sent to the TNC both prior to a BBS connect as well as after a BBS disconnect. For instance, the following are some (NOT ALL!) TNC commands that have been known to resolve problems for the Kantronics family of TNCs.

```
INT TERM
LFADD OFF
MCON OFF
STREAMEV 0
STREAMSW OFF
```

Two separate command sets can be defined for pre-Send/Receive as well as post-Send/Receive. Sending TNC commands after the Send/Receive Session sets up the TNC for some other operating condition.

NOTE: This feature does not pre-populate the TNC command file. However, it is the hope that the Outpost user community will further identify what is the minimal set of TNC commands that must be set for a particular TNC that allows Outpost to work. Known configurations will be shared with the user community as they become available.

3. Enhancements

3.1. BBS Support

The following BBSs are now supported by Outpost with this release:

- ER#596: SNOS
- ER#604: TNOS
- ER#696: HAMSERV

ER#687: Accessing NOS Message Areas. Many BBSs support bulletins as a means for posting a message for a wide audience. However, the JNOS and TNOS BBSs do not support this concept and instead put messages in "areas" that can be selected and then read.

This feature supports Message Area access by detecting when one of these BBSs has been accessed, then using the existing Retrieve Filtered Messages option in Tools > Send/Receive Settings, Retrieving tab to identify which areas can be retrieved.

3.2. Send/Receive Sessions

ER#603: Expands the number of retrieval filters from 10 to unlimited. On the Tools > Send/Receive Settings, Retrieving Tab, when the user selects Retrieve Filtered Bulletins, only 10 fields are presented. This seemed like plenty at the original design time. However, there are some situations where there may be more than 10 that need to be retrieved. The 10 fields have been replaced with a single field where the user can enter an unlimited number of retrieval filters separated by commas. Then, at Send/Receive time, Outpost will process each filter similar to how it was previous done.

ER#634: Force Comm Port Echo to be On. While it is always nice to have options, this is one that has been problematic. Comm Port Echo must be ON for Outpost to process the BBS response correctly. This feature (i) forces Echo always to be on, and (ii) disables it from being changed at all.

ER#658: Expands the number of slot times from 4 to unlimited. On the Tools > Send/Receive Settings, Automation Tab (1st), when the user selects slot time automation, only 4 time slots are presented. Similar to ER#603, there are situations where there may be more than 4 times that need to be defined. The 4 slot time fields have been replaced with a single field where the user can enter an unlimited number of times separated by commas. Then, Outpost will initiate a Send/Receive Session based on the absolute list of minutes entered. This approach offers the user some compelling options for scheduling send/receive sessions over a longer time period. For instance:

5,20,35,50 S/R sessions are initiated 4 times an hour at 5, 20,35, and 50 minutes past the hour
5,5,5,5,10,20 S/R sessions are initiated 5 minutes past the hour for the 1st 3 hours, then 3 times during the 4th hour. Then this sequence repeats itself.

The Slot-Time HOW-TO will be updated to reflect this change.

ER#694: Default all notification options to ON. Notifications were introduced in v2.2.1, and produce a variety of messages indicating different situations (Tools > Send/Receive Settings, Other Tab) that persist beyond the Send/Receive Session. The original initial setup of Notifications set N0 (Application Errors) and N1 (Problems needing immediate attention) as checked. However, there were N2 (Unexpected BBS disconnects) and N3 (Other non-critical issues) messages that were not displayed thereby contributing to program confusion. All 4 options are now checked at first time installation.

NOTE: If you have previously installed Outpost, I recommend checking all 4 Notification options.

3.3. Message Handling

ER#207: Bring an already opened message to the front instead of opening a 2nd copy. This occurs if a message was opened, ends up behind other windows, and then is selected to be opened again. This change now brings a message that is opened, but not on top, back to the top of the Windows display.

ER#519: Add hot keys to bring up report forms. This is a user productivity enhancement that allows an organization to define up to 4 On-line Reports and associate them each with Function Keys F5, F6, F7, and F8.

Once defined, on pressing one of these F-keys, Outpost will open a new message, load the associated report form, and position the cursor on the form for data entry. This request was based on the requirement that, in some organizations, they primarily use one message template for their particular needs, such as a local ICS-213 Message Form.

ER#674: Allow submitter to retrieve his/her own NTS messages. Outpost always assumed that if you originate an NTS message, there would be no purpose to retrieve it. It was pointed out that there is a need to retrieve your own NTS message in the event the message is no longer relevant AND was never retrieved for servicing. This change now allows the user to retrieve his/her own NTS message, and is controllable by the option: Tools > send/Receive Settings, Retrieving Tab, and the check-box: "Skip (do not retrieve) NTS messages I sent to the BBS."

ER#685: Handle smtp email addresses. JNOS and some other BBSs allow users to enter a standard smtp email address (user@domain) for forwarding into the internet. With the addition of JNOS support with v2.2.1, the user@domain address condition was previously omitted, but is now handled with v2.2.2.

This change resulted in a rewrite of Outpost's Destination Address checking routine. Now, Outpost will validate the following types of email addresses:

callsign	Standard call sign address, used with most AX.25 BBSs and PBBSs.
callsign@bbs	Standard call sign address with BBS only; used when sending to a forwarding BBS, and that BBS supports "whitepages" to complete the balance of the hierarchical address.
callsign@hierarchical_address	Standard call sign address with full hierarchical addressing; used when sending to a forwarding BBS. The address has all the information that the BBS needs to complete the forwarding.
user@domain_name	Standard internet email address. Entered by JNOS, SNOS, TNOS, and other BBSs that support direct smtp forwarding into the internet.
SMTP:user@domain_name	Standard internet email address as used by Winlink. The "SMTP:" tag identifies the message for smtp internet forwarding instead of managing the message within the WL2K mail environment.

NOTE: Address validation is limited to confirming that the necessary elements of the address are present, not that the elements are correct. In short, this check is a format check, not a content check.

ER#705: Adds a new Subject Line number option of DateTime string. This 3rd option now pleases a new message identifier in a message's subject line, see Tools > Message Settings, New Message Tab. One of the best sequentially generated message ID schemes is the 12-digit DateTime format. This string is in the form: yymmddhhmmss and increments once a second (obviously). Besides being unique, it is also provides an embedded date of creation (not sent or saved time) in with the message. As before, this date string is also appended to the 3 character tactical ID set up in the Tools > Report Settings form.

3.4. Interactive Programs

ER#676: Adds menu option to read a file and dump the text into Interactive packet programs. This enhancement builds on the ability to paste text into the interactive packet form and now allows the user to find and load the contents of an ASCII file directly into the form. This feature works without constraint for the Serial interface, and is limited to the CONNECTED state for the AGWPE and Telnet interfaces.

3.5. Resolved Problems

ER#675: Ensure that the Message Number field is populated with a number at save time. If the message number field (Tools > Report Settings) was inadvertently cleared and the form saved, an error occurred at the time of the message creation since the number field was null. This change ensures that there is a number in this field prior to exiting the form.

ER#693: Handles the ">" character embedded in the BBS welcome message. On initially connecting to a BBS, Outpost looks for the ">" character which universally seems to be the last character of a BBS prompt, then derives the BBS prompt based on the previous string. However, at least one Winlink CMS station had the ">" character embedded in the welcome message that caused Outpost to prematurely stop looking for the real prompt, thereby missing the SID. This situation is now correctly handled.

ER#703: resolves form buttons getting chopped off. If an Outpost form was sized smaller than the number of control buttons allowed, button wrap-around occurred and masked other fields or controls. Wrap-around has now been disabled. Users are encouraged to keep the windows sized to the point that all buttons of interest are visible.

ER#707: adds clarity to form text. This change applies clarifying corrections to the text of several forms.

ER#710: Fixes Interface Data Logging for Telnet. This change resolves the issue that no Interface Data logging occurred when operating Telnet and Tools > Log Settings, and L2: Interface Data Logging... was checked.

ER#711: Duplicate subject line message identifiers when using opdirect.exe. During a recent drill, Santa Clara County RACES reported situations where several messages came in from the same state with the same Message ID in the subject line. This release resolves this situation.

ER#712: Incomplete message print on a new message. On opening a new message, if the Print button was pressed, an incomplete message was printed. Identified the problem and resolved.

4. Changes since v2.2.1

ER#689: Outpost now recognizes Winlink Classic. There apparently still are versions of Winlink in production that identify with a SID of “[WINLINK-...]”. Outpost now detects this SID and treats it as a standard WL2K BBS.

ER#704: KPC3-5x also produces a “#### BYTES...” line as the KPC2. Different flavors of the KPC TNC continue to pop up. This fix addresses the case where an earlier firmware version of the KPC3 TNC also reports the number of bytes with the message list. Outpost now detects this and no longer complains that it could not decode this line as a message line.