Outpost Packet Message Manager

Version 2.0.4

Overview
Sunnyvale Amateur Radio
Emergency Service

23 March 2006



Why are we here?

... and, why are we talking about packet?

Purpose

- City... provides services; promotes the common good
- EMS... Prepares for disasters
 - responds to minimize loss of life and property
 - speeds the recovery

Needs

- EMS...
 - needs information... what's going on out there?
 - work with recovery partners and service providers

Capabilities

- What we bring...
 - Volunteerism!... An interest to help out
 - Communications
 - Structure



Why are we here?

... and, why are we talking about packet?

Capabilities... communications

- Frequency agility
- Different modes... voice, data, video
- Bandwidth
- Independence from commercial services

| | Simple Messages | Complex Messages |
|------------|----------------------|------------------------------|
| Mode | Voice | Packet |
| Messages | Short messages | Lists, instructions, details |
| Delivery | Immediate | Store & forward; mail drop |
| Equipment | Radio | Radio + TNC+ PC + SW + BBS |
| Complexity | Short learning curve | Many commands |
| | | |



Why are we here?

... and, why are we talking about packet?

Mapping Capabilities to Needs

- Cupertino OES... PSAs, message handling with field sites, etc.
- County ODMS... Casualty Collection Points
- Santa Clara County OES... EOC-to-EOC message handling, RIMS backup

CAPABILITIES help fulfill NEEDS, that support PURPOSE

Is Packet a capability that could address other needs?



What is Outpost?

- A Windows-based packet messaging client
- Supports ARES, RACES, and other amateur radio emergency response teams and their need to pass digital traffic
- Helps automate the packet message handling environment
- Manages all message handling between you and your BBS
- Lets you read, delete, create, reply to, or forward messages back to the BBS



Why use Outpost?

- Leverages the existing packet hardware, network, and BBS infrastructure
 - Compatible with many existing BBSs and TNC PBBSs
 - Uses your existing TNC and packet radio equipment
 - Only a packet client (end-user) change is required
- Hides the complexity of the packet operating environment
 - Similar look and feel to contemporary email programs
 - Shorter learning curve for packet operations
 - Allows users to... "focus on the message, not the medium"
- Implements most local emergency management policies for digital communications
- Still under active development based on user requests and on-going alignment with the Outpost mission.



General Outpost Features

- Message Management
 - Multiple message folders
 - Supports the three primary message types: Private, NTS, and Bulletins
 - Text Formatting in a free-form message window
 - NTS Message Maker with automated ARL message support
 - On-line report builder using report templates
 - Supports Urgent message, Delivery and Read Receipts
- Send/Receive Session Management
 - Supports Serial, AGWPE, and Telnet interfacing to a BBS
 - Automatically controls the sequence for initializing the selected interface, connecting to, and sending messages to and retrieving messages from the BBS
- Configurations and Setups
 - BBS, TNC, and Interfaces manages a list of BBSs & Interfaces
 - Message Retrieval choose the message types ti be retrieved
 - Send/Receive automation 3 ways for automatically initiating BBS sessions



Outpost History

Commenced Development...
 November 2002

• v0.95; First Beta Release... May 2003

• v1.0; First Release... October 2003

v1.1; enhanced look and feel...
 March 2004

• v1.2; on-line reports, MSYS support... May 2004

v1.3; collaborative messaging...
 December 2004

• v2.0; AGWPE and telnet support... June 2005

v2.0.4; NTS extensions, other enhancements... February 2006



Topics

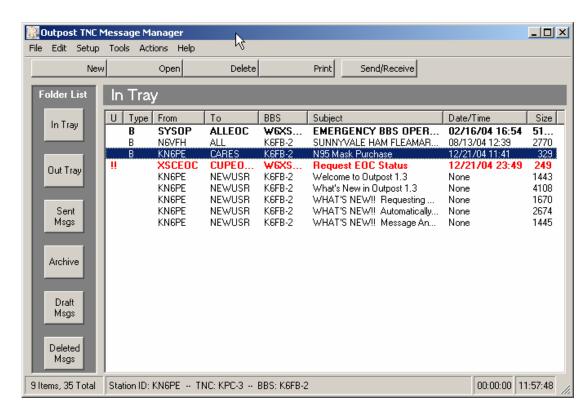
- Features
- Setups
- Tools and Controls
- Creating Messages
- A Typical Session
- Limitations and Constraints
- Questions



Features

Message management

- Familiar email-app look and feel
- Separate folders for message storage
- Clearer message identification (unread=BOLD, urgent=Red)
- Follows a formal message workflow
- Manage BBS and interface setups
- Additional settings to control how Outpost behaves

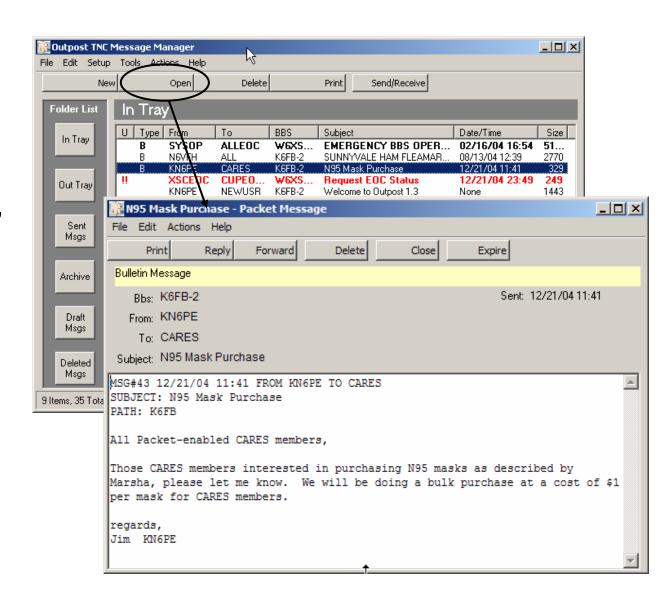




Features

Message viewing

- Supports viewing, printing, deleting or saving a message to a local file
- Reply and Forward message formatting

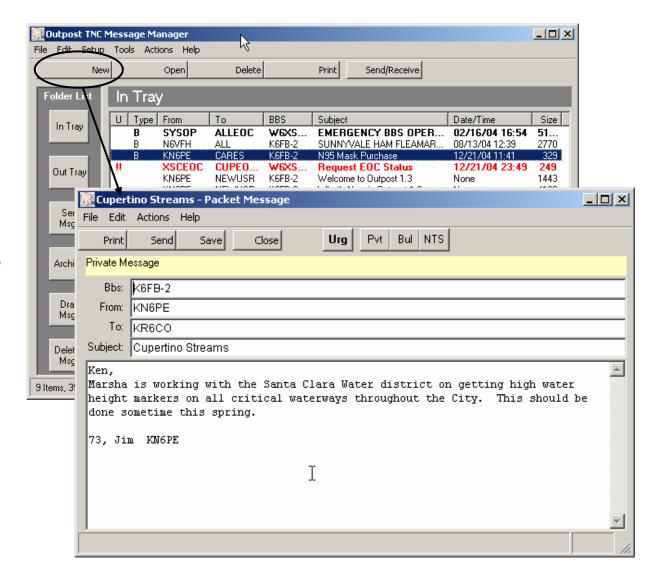




Features

Message creation

- Supports Private, Bulletin, and NTS message types
- Message formatting before sending
- Set messages to <u>Urg</u>ent
- Request delivery or read receipts
- Different ways for originating messages
- NTS Message Maker





Setups

Application setups

- TNCs: create, update, or delete
 - Configure Serial Comm Ports that are associated with each TNC
- BBSs: create, update, or delete
- Change the Station Identifier (the call sign assigned to the TNC)





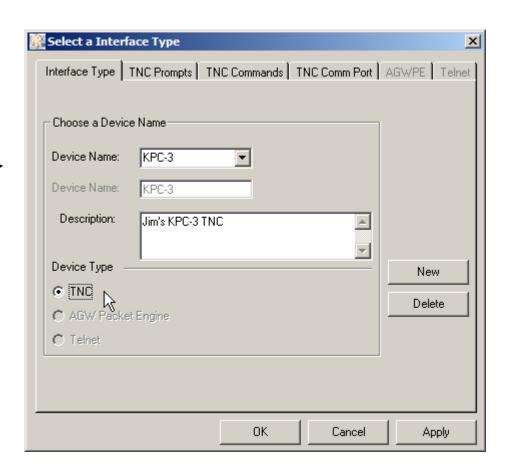
Setups

Application setups

- TNC Interface setup
 - •TNC Prompts
 - •TNC Commands
 - Comm Ports
- AGWPE
- Telnet

Notes...

Create, update, or delete interfaces.



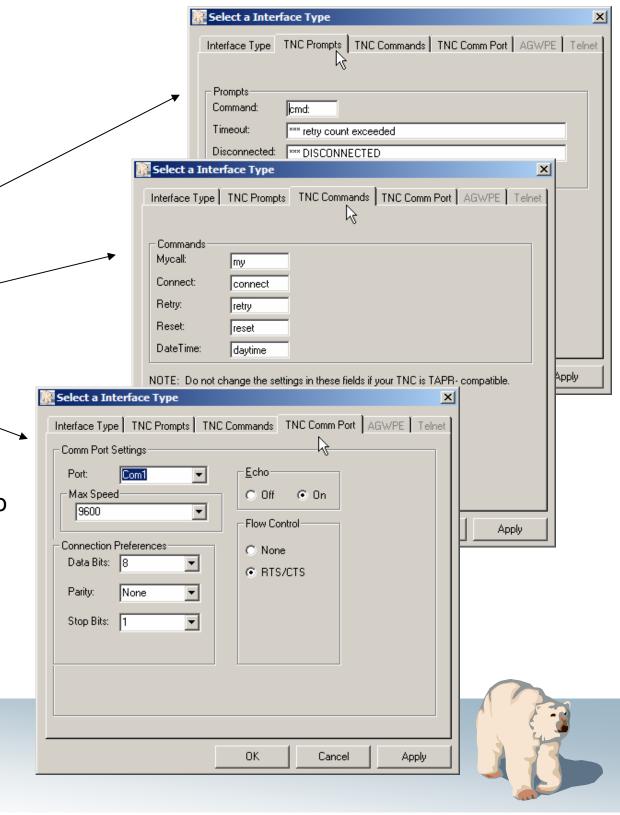


Setups - TNC

Application setups

- TNC Interface setup
 - •TNC Prompts
 - TNC Commands
 - Comm Ports
- AGWPE
- Telnet

- Outpost sends TNC commands to the TNC as part of the TNC initialization.
- Supports Hardware Flow Control.
- Confirmed operational with USB-to-Serial port adapters.

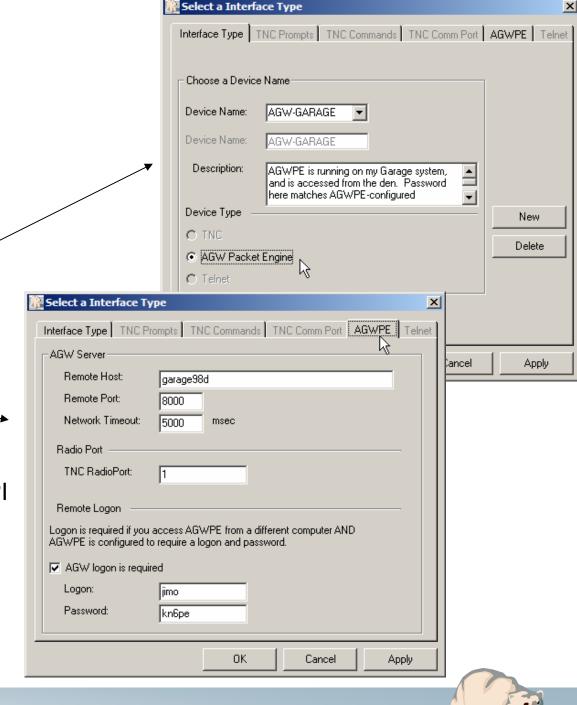


Setups - AGWPE

Application setups

- TNC Interface setup
 - TNC Prompts
 - TNC Commands
 - Comm Ports
- AGWPE ~
- Telnet

- Implements the AGWPE TCP/IP API specification.
- Supports AGWPE v2000.20 or higher.



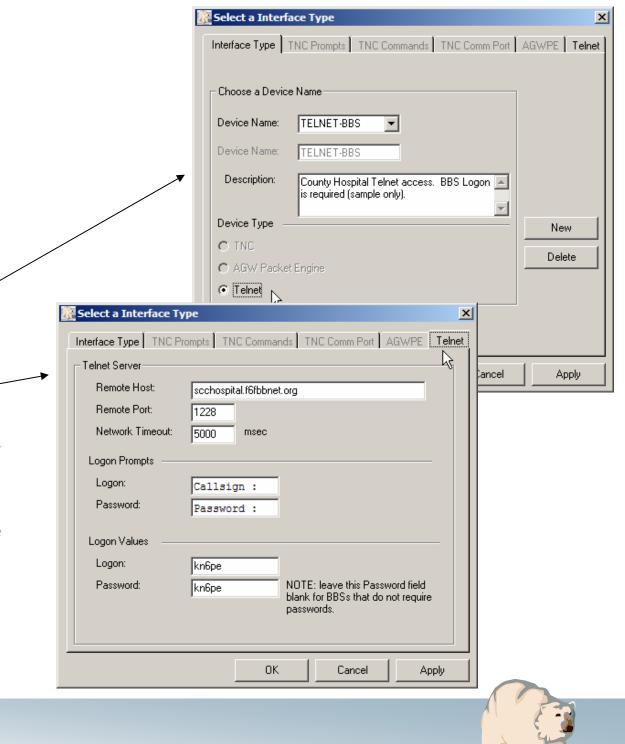
Setups - telnet

Application setups

- TNC Interface setup
 - TNC Prompts
 - TNC Commands
 - Comm Ports
- AGWPE
- Telnet

Notes...

 Requires access to a LAN or internet, depending on where the BBS is.

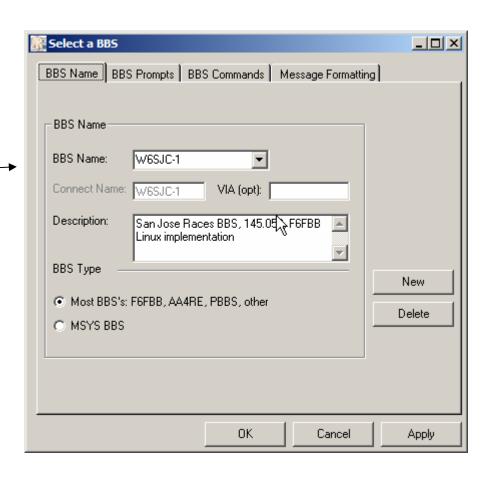


Setups - BBS

Application setups

- BBSs
 - •BBS Prompts
 - •BBS Commands

- Defaults are the most common BBS commands.
- Need to be careful with BBS prompt uniqueness.



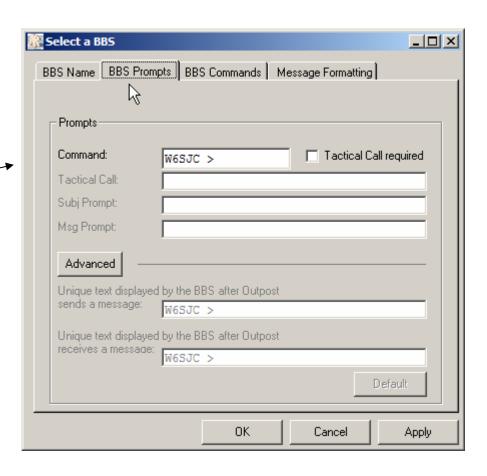


Setups - BBS

Application setups

- BBSs
 - •BBS Prompts
 - •BBS Commands

- BBS Prompts "Help>" and "Help >" are not the same!
- Need to be careful with BBS prompt uniqueness (like MSYS's ">" prompt).
- When in doubt, manually connect to a BBS, and copy the BBS prompt as is... the more of the prompt there is, the better (less unique).
- Secondary Tactical Call Logon available (such as the modified AA4RE BBS).

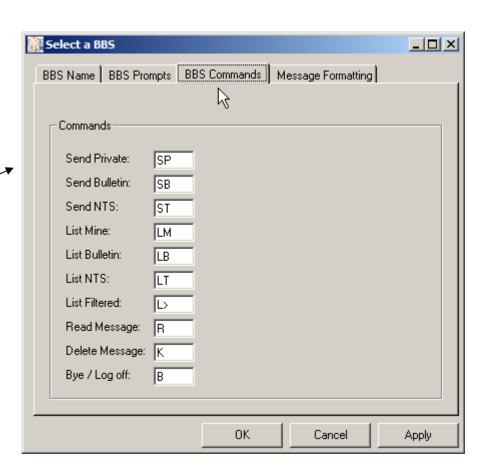


Setups - BBS

Application setups

- BBSs
 - BBS Prompts
 - •BBS Commands

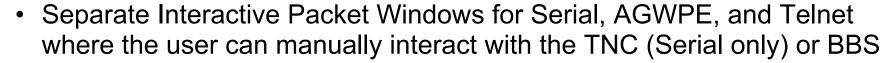
- Common commands that Outpost needs to interact with the BBS.
- Outpost sends these commands to the BBS as part of the send/receive session.

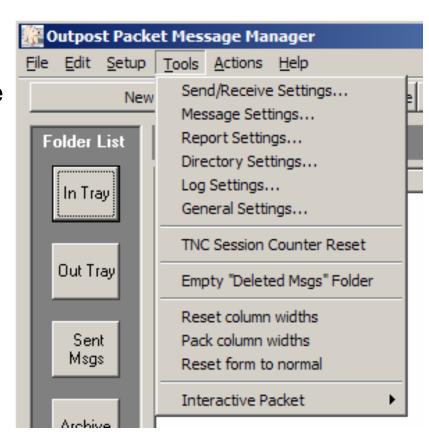




Types of controls

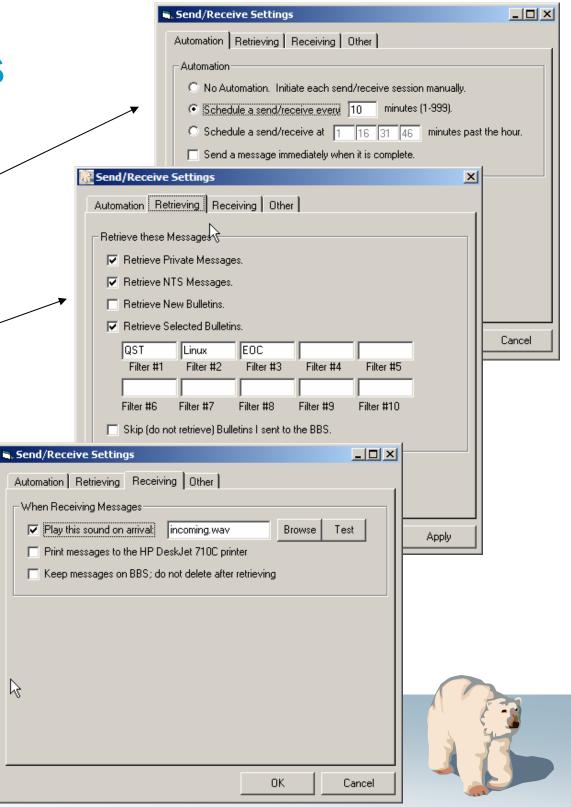
- Controls the flow of each Send/Receive Session
- Sets how messages are created and handled
- Set various data fields to automatically populate on-line reports, messages, other areas
- Set up default Directory Names
- Various Log Settings
- Controls to re-size message listing column widths





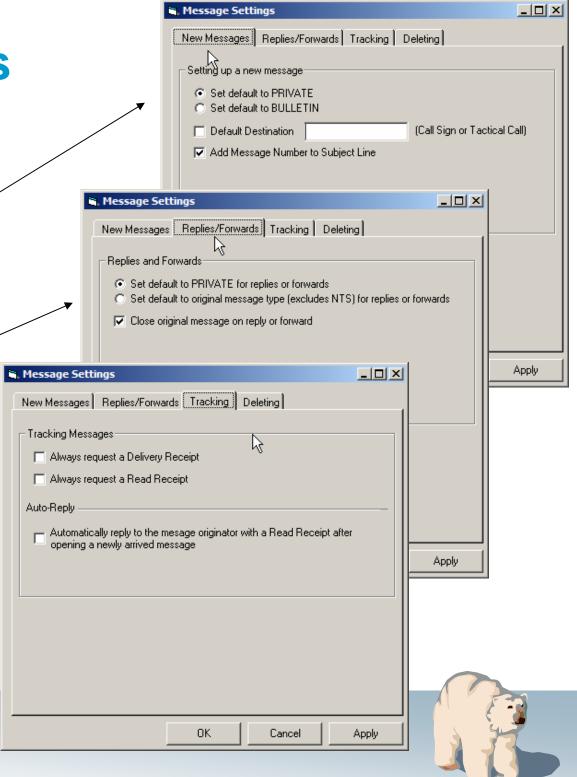
Send/Receive Settings

- Selects different ways to schedule message send/retrieve sessions
- Select which message types are to be <u>retrieved</u>
- Once a message is <u>received</u>, select what to do with it



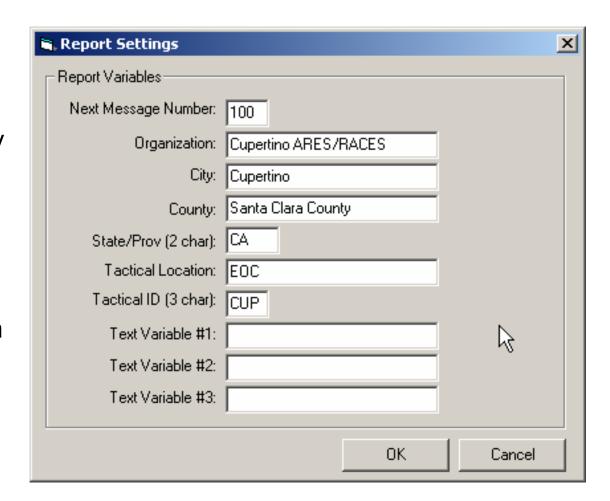
Message Settings

- Define default settings for néw messages, includes
 - Default destinations
 - Auto message numbering
- Handling replies and forwards
- Set up defaults for requesting message receipts
- Setting for permanently deleting messages



Report Settings

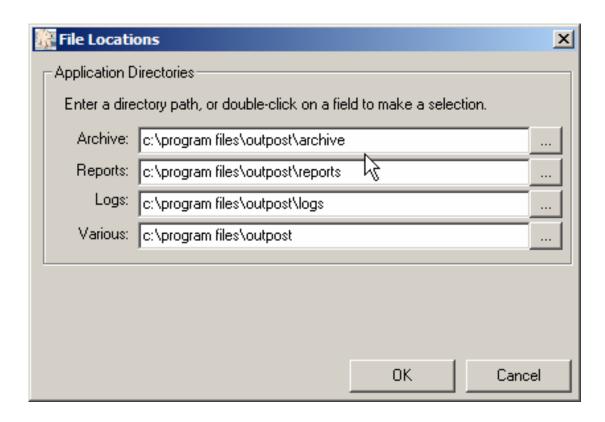
- Message number automatically increments and populates...
 - the Subject Line
 - NTS Messages
 - On-line reports
- Standard report variables automatically replace <tags> in On-line Reports (described later)
- Three flexible fields are userdefined and automatically replace <tags> in On-line Reports





Directory Settings

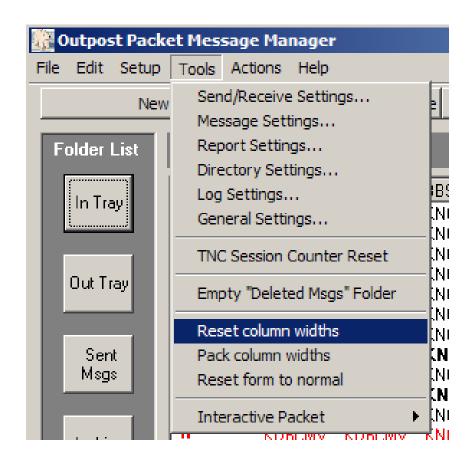
- Used for optional organization of application files...
 - Archive directory is used for message archive export and import files (*.oaf)
 - Reports directory is checked for any On-line Reports (*.txt)
 - Log directory is home for all Outpost logs (*.txt)
- On first time startup after installation, the directories listed here are created
- User defined to any existing or new directory on the PC





Other Controls

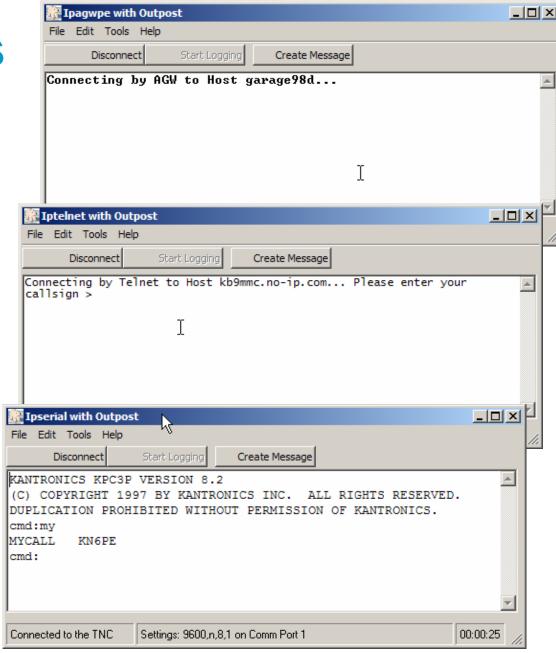
- General Settings…
 - Show station ID form on startup
- TNC Session counter displays in session logs; increments with each Send/Receive Session
- Bulk delete of the Deleted Msgs Folder
- Display controls
 - Resets column widths to their default settings
 - Packs column widths for optimal viewing
 - Resets the form if it gets stuck in a "minimized" state





Interactive Packet Window

- Windows to manually interact with the TNC (serial only) and BBS by
 - AGWPE
 - Telnet
 - Serial
- Logging controls
- Cut-and-paste clipboard support into and out of the IPW window
 - use the Edit control on the menu
 - cntl-c gets the TNC's attention
- Directly create an Outpost message from highlighted IPW text





Messages

Creating Messages

- Direct Entry
- NTS Message Maker
- On-line Report Builder
- Cut-and-paste from other apps
- Import Text from a file

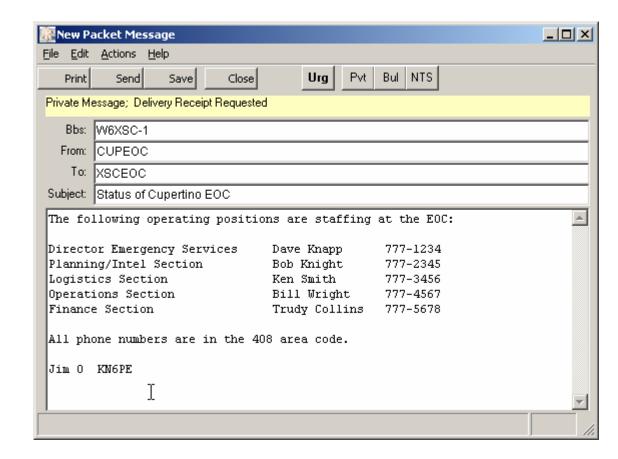
Special Message Handling

- Bulletins
- NTS



Direct entry

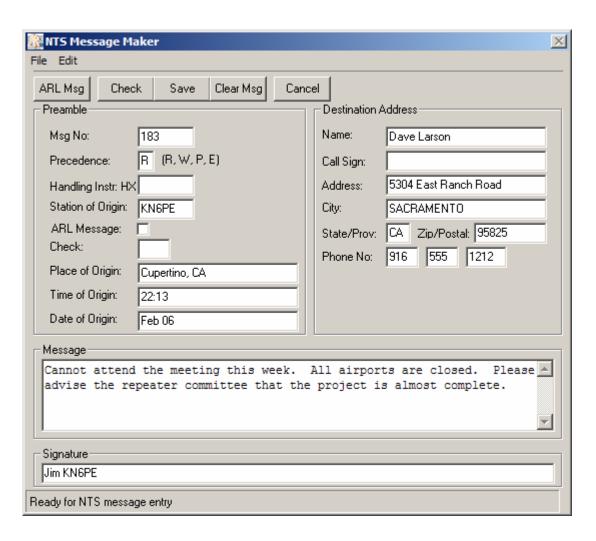
- Allows cursor placement within the text field
- Supports TAB characters (cntl-tab) thereby reducing character count
- Allows text files to be directly imported into the message form





NTS Message Maker

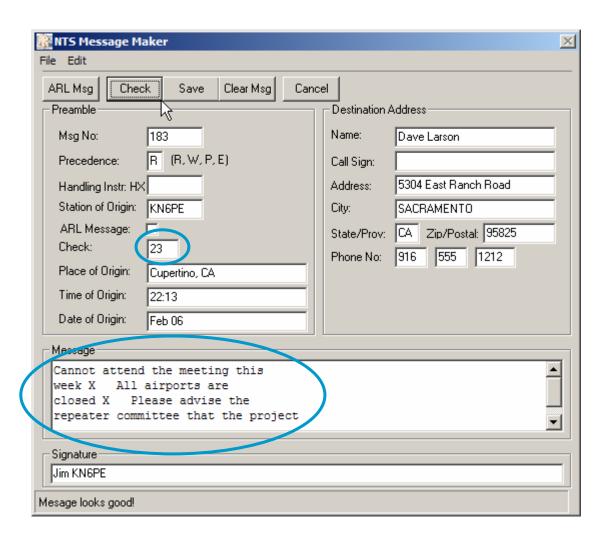
Step 1: Forms-based with field validity checking





NTS Message Maker

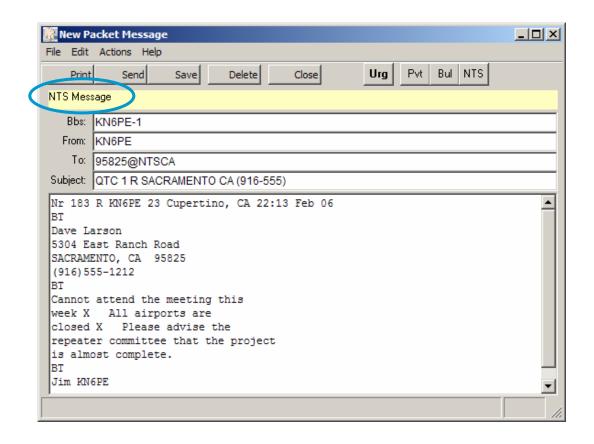
- Step 1: Forms-based with field validity checking
- Step 2: Press Check; reformats the message per the agreed NTS Packet message standard





NTS Message Maker

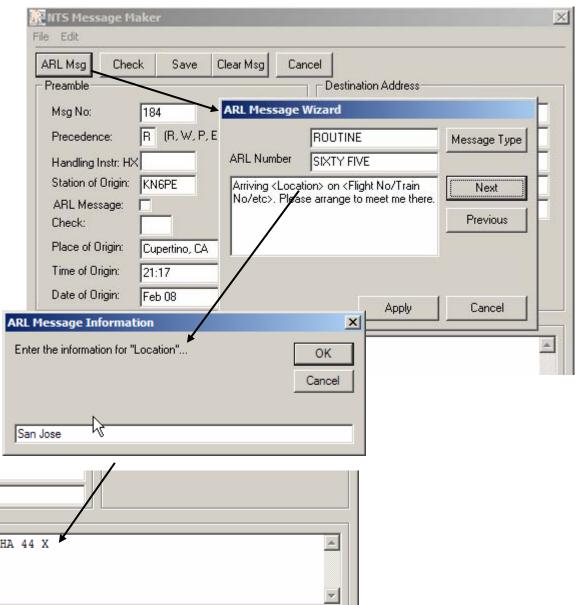
- Step 1: Forms-based with field validity checking
- Step 2: Press Check; reformats the message per the agreed NTS Packet message standard
- Step 3: Saves the message to a message window; message type is NTS. Press Send when ready.





NTS Message Maker

- For ARL Messages...
 - Select the message Type...
 Routine or Emergency
 - Select the message
 - Provide any additional information
 - Send the message as usual



On-line Report Builder

- Step 1: Set up the Report Settings (described previously)
- Step 2: Understand the list of Report <tags>

NOTE: there are some report variables that have to methods for representing them

| Tag | Description | |
|--|---|--|
| <d>, <date1></date1></d> | mm/dd/yy (5/21/04). | |
| <date2></date2> | dd-mmm-yyyy (21-May-2004) | |
| <t>, <time></time></t> | hh:mm (22:45) | |
| <m>, <msg#></msg#></m> | Message Number; from Report Settings | |
| <c>, <call></call></c> | Call, as entered at the Station ID form | |
| <name></name> | Name, as entered at the Station ID form | |
| <bbs></bbs> | BBS name; current BBS | |
| <subj>text</subj> | Places "text" on subject line | |
| <org></org> | Organization; from Report Settings | |
| <city></city> | City name; from Report Settings | |
| <county></county> | County name; from Report Settings | |
| <state></state> | State name, 2 char; from Report Settings | |
| <pre><pre><pre><pre></pre></pre></pre></pre> | Province name, 2 char; instead of state | |
| <tacloc></tacloc> | Tactical Location; from Report Settings | |
| <tacid></tacid> | Tactical ID, 3 char; from Report Settings | |
| <text1, 2,="" 3=""></text1,> | User defined text; from Report Settings | |
| = | Prompt | |
| / comment | Place a comment in the report | |



On-line Report Builder

- Step 1: Set up the Report Settings (Tools > Report Settings)
- Step 2: Collect the list of Report tags, most in the format "<tag>"
- Step 3: Develop the report template, save as a .txt file.

NOTE: see the use of comments (/), <tags>, and prompts (=)

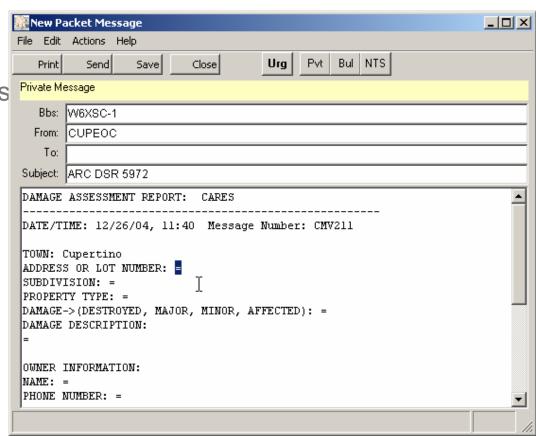
```
_ | 🗆 | × |
  DamageAssesment 3.txt - Notepad
File Edit Format View Help
  Author:
                Jim Oberhofer KN6PE
               29-May-2004
  Rev Date:
 *********
<subi>ARC DSR 5972
DAMAGE ASSESSMENT REPORT: <orq>
DATE/TIME: <D>, <T> Message Number: <tacid><msg#>
TOWN: <city>
ADDRESS OR LOT NUMBER: =
|SUBDIVISION: =
PROPERTY TYPE: =
DAMAGE->(DESTROYED, MAJOR, MINOR, AFFECTED): =
DAMAGE DESCRIPTION:
OWNER INFORMATION:
NAME: =
PHONE NUMBER: =
NUMBER OF PEOPLE AFFECTED: =
        ADULTS: =
       HANDICAP: =
NUMBER OF CONFIRMED INJURIES: =
NUMBER OF CONFIRMED DEATHS: =
OPERATOR: <name> <C>
STATION TACTICAL: <tacloc>
---- End of message ------
```



On-line Report Builder

- Step 1: Set up the Report Settings (Tools > Report Settings)
- Step 2: Collect the list of Report tags, most in the format "<tag>"
- Step 3: Develop the report template, save as a .txt file.
- Step 4: From a new message form, "File > Open a Report" and choose a report template.

NOTE: Subject line is updated, <tags> are replaced, and cursor is positioned at the first prompt.

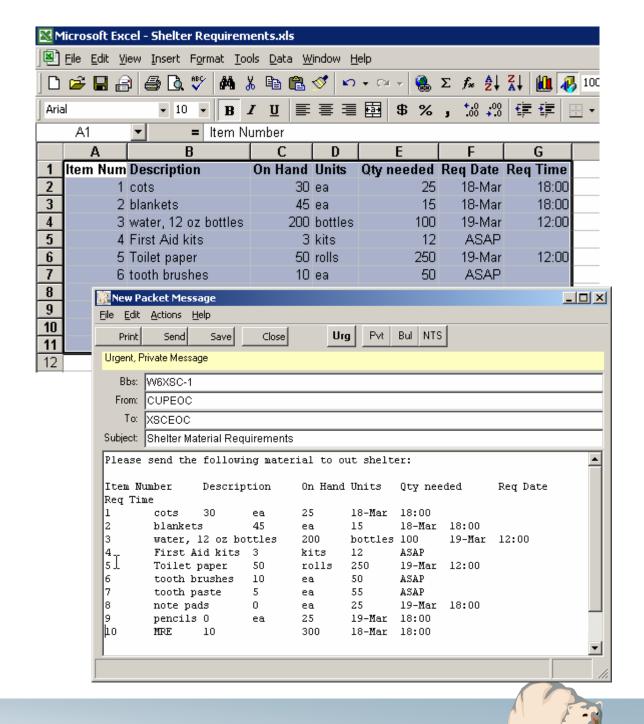


- Press <u>cntl-Tab</u> or <u>left-mouse</u> to progress to the next prompt.
- Press "File > Clear Remaining Prompts" for any unfilled prompts
- Press Send when done.



Cut-and-Paste from other apps

- From Excel, highlight the fields to be copied, then paste into an Outpost message.
- At the receiving station, highlight and copy the message, then paste back into Excel.
- Tabs are preserved so the message can be pasted back into another spreadsheet.

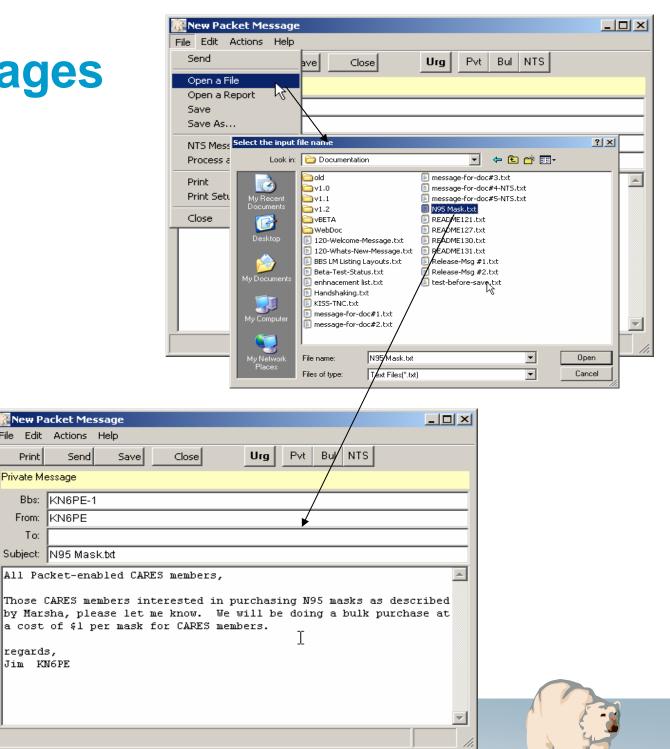


Import text from a file

- Open a new message
- File > Open a file
- Select the text file, press OK

 Full in the Destination and Subject.

Press Send when done.



File Edit Actions Help

Send

KN6PE-1

KN6PE

Subject: N95 Mask.txt

Print

From:

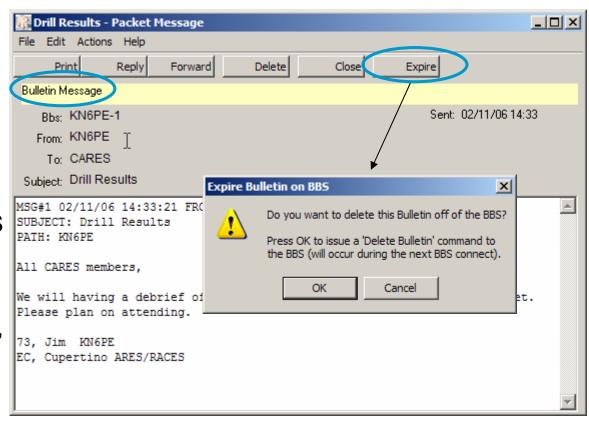
regards, Jim KN6PE

Private Message Bbs:

Special Message Handling

Bulletins

- To delete a bulletin off of the BBS
 - that you originated...
 - Retrieve the bulletin from the BBS
 - Open the message
 - Press Expire
 - On the next send/receive session, the bulletin will be deleted off of the BBS.



Notes

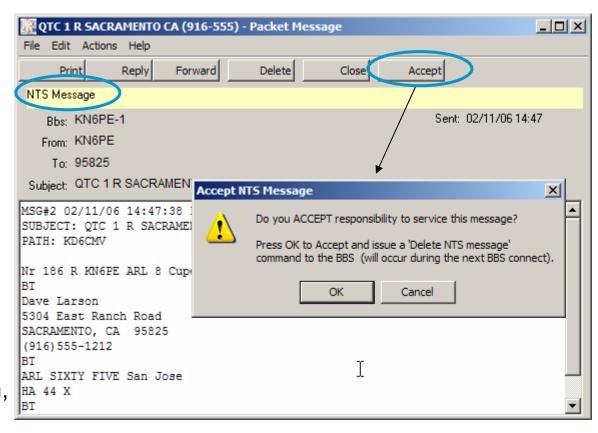
You can on delete bulletins that you create



Special Message Handling

NTS Messages

- Retrieved NTS messages are not automatically deleted off of the BBS. To accept a message for servicing...
 - Retrieve the NTS message from the BBS
 - Open the message
 - Press Accept
 - On the next send/receive session, the NTS message will be deleted off of the BBS.

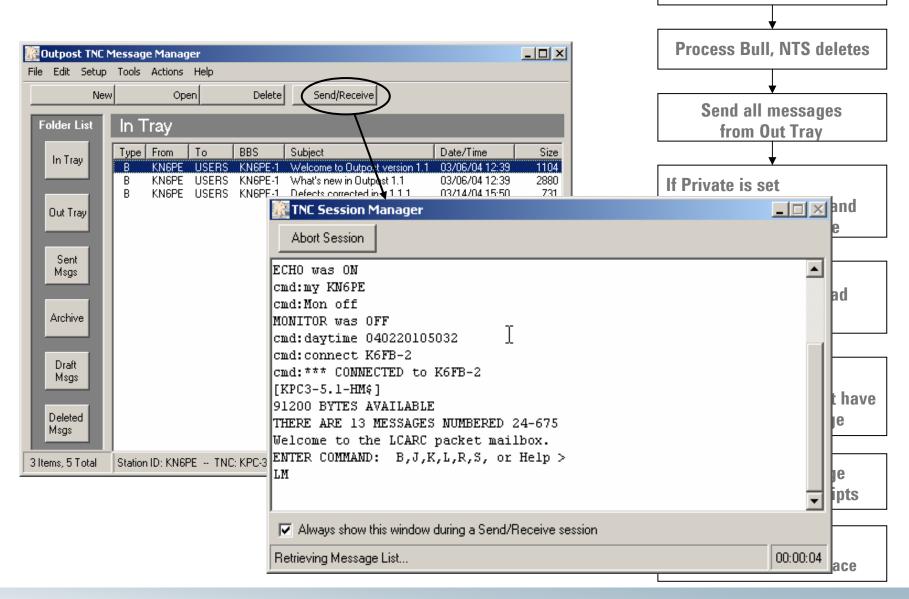


Notes

 If you change your mind and do not plan to service the NTS message, it is common courtesy to post it back up on the BBS



A Typical Session



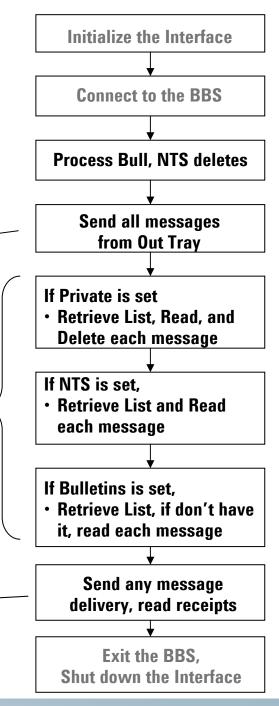


Initialize the Interface

Connect to the BBS

A Typical Session

- Influenced by...
 - Send/Receive Settings
- Send Messages
 - Only sent from the Out Tray to this BBS
 - Messages must be "Sent" not "Saved"
 - Moved to Sent Folder when sent
- Retrieve Messages
 - Depends on the Retrieve settings; if none are selected, none are retrieved
 - Depends on the "Keep on BBS" setting
 - Bulletins are never deleted
 - New messages are stored in the In Tray
- Send Receipts
 - Any pending Delivery and Read Receipts are sent back to the requester





Considerations, Limitations and Constraints

What Outpost does not do

- No support for any bulletin board forwarding protocol
- No support for common mail protocols (POP3, SMTP, etc.)

Things to avoid

- Sending bulletins to a named person (instead of a group Identifier such as ALLEOC, etc.) will cause repeated retrievals by that person
- Embedding the BBS prompt string in a message (fails to ensure the uniqueness of the BBS prompt) will cause erroneous results



What's Next

- Enhanced Packet Network Support
 - KA-Node, NET/ROM routing
- Generic Tactical Calls
- Attachments
- Winlink client support



For more information

Send inquiries to...
Jim Oberhofer, kn6pe@arrl.net

Visit the Outpost website... http://www.CupertinoARES.org/projects/outpost

Or, Google... outpost packet



