Outpost
Packet Message Manager

Quick Start

Forward

This guide provides some brief instructions on how to install, configure, set up, and use the Outpost Packet Message Manager Application suite. While this will step you through the basics to get you up and running, your ultimate reference will be the Outpost User Guide.

Contents

This document is arranged as follows:

Requirements

System Requirements

Outpost has been verified to run under on the following operating system environments:

Microsoft Windows:	98 2nd Edition NT, 2000, ME, XP, Vista Windows 7, 8, 8.1, and 10			
Linux running WINE:	**O/S**	**Wine**	**Status**	**Confirmed**
	Fedora 37	Wine 8.1	Confirmed	March 2023
	Ubuntu 14.04.2	Wine 1.6.2	Confirmed	
	Linux Lite 2.8	Wine 1.7.55	Confirmed	
	Zorin OS9 Lite	Wine 1.7	Confirmed	
	openSuSE 42.1	Wine 1.8.1-6.1	Confirmed	
	openSuSE 13.1	Wine 1.7.2-2.1	Confirmed	
	Linux Mint 13	Wine 1.4	Fails… Automation Error	
	openSuSE 12.1	Wine 1.4-2.12.1	Fails… Automation Error	
	NOTE: Outpost should work with Linux and Wine v1.6.2 or later.			
Mac Book Pro, INTEL	Requires a product called Crossover MAC from the Codeweavers site (http://www.codeweavers.com). This configuration was confirmed to access the BBS's using the TELNET. Serial Port use was not confirmed.			

Hardware Requirements

Outpost system requirements are minor and the application should work on any system with 10MB of free disk space.

Processor:	Intel-based; required to support any of the above Operating Systems.
Interfaces:	One or more of the following: Serial Port: An available Serial Port for Serial or AGWPE interfacing, or USB port: Any compatible USB-to-Serial adaptor to connect to the TNC Network: Network interface for remote AGWPE or Telnet interfacing
Hard Drive:	Minimal; 10Mb should be more than sufficient to get started.
Peripherals:	Printer for message printing (if required)

Installation

Installing the software off the Web begins by downloading the Outpost Install Program to your PC.

1. Go to the website (www.outpostpm.org), navigate to the Downloads section, and look for the current Outpost Installation program.
2. Click to download the installer. Or right click on the link, and select "Save Target As". The install program is named **opsetup####.exe**, where "####" is the current installation version.

The Outpost installation program includes all the files needed to install and use Outpost on your PC. After downloading the install program, run the program as follows:

1. Click on the program to start the installation process.
2. **Information**. This is general information that you should check out depending on the type if install you want to perform. When done, press **Next >**.
3. **Select Destination Location**. This is where the Outpost Programs will be installed. Unless you have special requirements, accept the default location, and press **Next >** to continue.
4. **Select a Data Location**. This is the location where Outpost data will be installed. You can change this if you want your Outpost data in a different directory, or possibly on a USB Memory Stick. Unless you have special requirements, accept the default location, and press **Next >** to continue.
5. **Select components.** Outpost can install program components as follows:
   a. **First time installation for new users:** Installs all components; programs, documentation, configuration files, samples, etc. You can uncheck specific components as necessary.
   b. **Update for Existing users:** Installs only the Program Files. You may also want to include the User Documents component to get the latest user guides for this release.
   c. **Custom Installation:** Lets you pick whatever components you want to install.

   Choose whichever installation option is right for you, then press **Next >** to continue.
6. **Select Start Menu Folder:** The location where the install program will place the program short-cuts. Accept the default location.
7. **Select Additional Tasks:** Lets you determine if you want icons placed on the desk top. The installer will place 4 icons for the most popular programs. This choice is purely optional, but makes it easier to find Outpost when you want to run it.
8. **Ready To Install:** This summarizes the options you selected. Press **Install** to continue with the install process.
9. **View the README.TXT file** (also found in the Outpost data directory).
10. When done, double-click on the Outpost icon to run the program.

Basic Configuration

Configuring Outpost settings allow you to not only personalize your application, but also set up the program to access packet messages from a variety of BSSs using different interfaces. To minimally get Outpost up and running, do the following:

1. Find and click on the Outpost icon on the desktop, or
2. Go to the Start button, select Programs, and select the *Outpost PMM* program.

The following describes the three things you must set up before you can send and receive packet messages. If this is an update installation, all your previous configurations were preserved.

Station Identification

On a first-time run, the Station Identification form opens. If this form does not open, you can open it manually from the Outpost main window by selecting **Setup > Identification**.

Do the following:

1. Click on **New** to the right of "User Call Sign".
2. Enter your call sign in the **User Call Sign** field.
3. Enter your name in the **User Name** field.
4. The Message ID Prefix (used when message numbering is turned on) will default to the last 3 characters of your call sign. You can change this to any 3 characters, such as your initials. This field is Required.

Skip the Tactical Calls area for now; this will be covered later.

When done, press **OK**.

Setting up a BBS

Check with the local packet user community to find out what BBSs are available and used in your area. Make sure you get the ***frequency*** on which the BBS operates.

To create a new BBS entry,

1. Select **Setup > BBS**. Press **New**.
2. Enter a friendly name in the **Friendly Name** field.
3. Enter the BBS connect name in the **Connect Name** field. This is the BBS **Call Sign** and **-SSID** number.
5. Enter a **Description**. This is a good place to list things such as the owner, location, and frequency on which this BBS operates.
6. Click the button "Let Outpost determine the BBS".

Press **OK** when done.

Setting up a Serial Interface

Outpost supports Serial Comm Port (includes USB-to-Serial), AGWPE, and TELNET interfaces. To set up a **Serial Comm Port (or USB-to-Serial) interface,** you need one of two things:

1. A TAPR TNC connected to your PC or Laptop's Serial Com Port, or

2. A TAPR TNC connected to a properly configured USB-to-Serial adaptor plugged into your PC or Laptop.

To create a new Interface entry,

1. Select **Setup > Interface**. Press **New**.

2. On the first tab, enter a name for this interface in the **Interface Name** field.

3. Enter a **Description**. This is a good place to list such as like the TNC make and model, and the Serial Port number.

4. Under **Interface Type**, make sure the button "**TNC**" button is selected.

5. Next, Select the **Comm Port** Tab.

6. On the same form, from the **Comm Port** drop-down, select the **Comm Port** tab to which the TNC is connected.

Press **OK** when done.

NOTES

1. Only valid comm ports (interfaces that actually exit to the operating system) will be listed in the **Comm Port** drop-down. This could be a hardware Serial Port or a properly configured USB-to-Serial adaptor.

2. A "**None**" in the Comm Port Dropdown means no Comm Ports were found.

3. See the *Outpost Users Guide – Basics* for information on the **Prompts**, **TNC Cmds**, and **Init Cmds** tabs.

Checking your Configuration

Outpost will always display the base configuration at the bottom left portion in the **Status Bar** on the main Form. This will include your Call Sign, the selected BBS Friendly Name, and the selected Interface Name. This is the configuration that will be used to connect to a BBS.
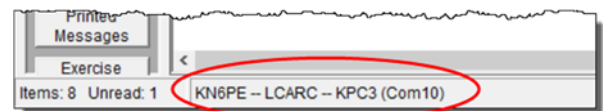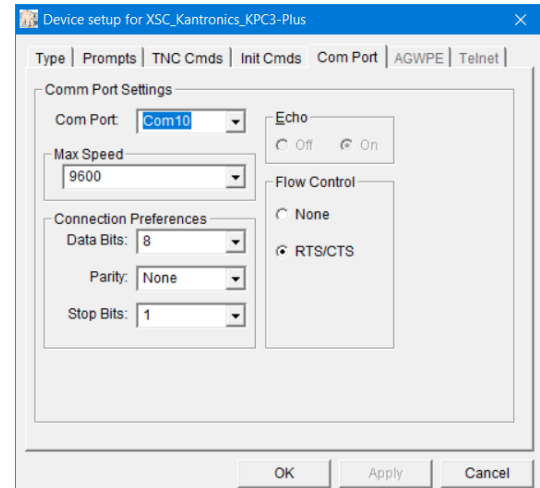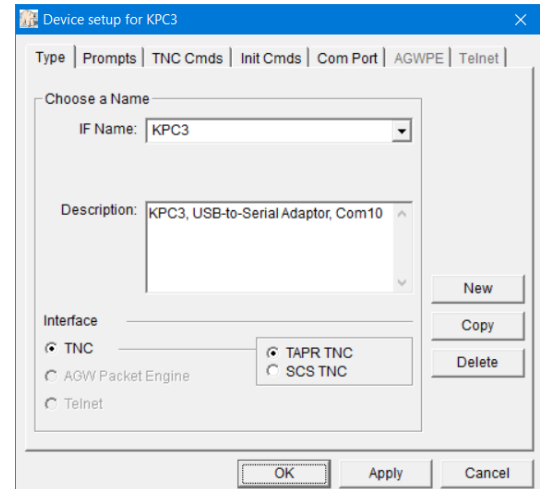
Testing the Configuration

The best test of the configuration is an actual connection to a BBS. Perform these steps:

Confirm the Comm Port setting

1. From Outpost, select **Tools > Interactive Packet**. Select **Serial/Comm Port**.
   The **Ipserial with Outpost** program opens.

2. From Ipserial, select **Setup > Comm Port Settings.** Select the Comm Port that you set up in Outpost.

3. Press **OK** when done.

4. Connect your TNC to your PC or laptop. Apply power.

5. From Ipserial, press **Connect**. Verify the TNC is talking to the program (see *NOTES* below).
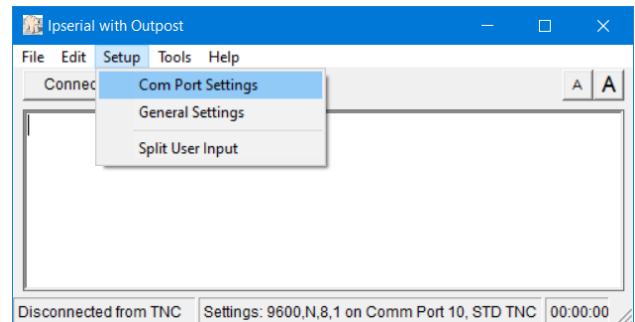
Press **OK** when done.

NOTES

1. If you see bursts of garbled text displayed on the screen, the TNC may be searching for your PC's baud rate. On Kantronics TNCs, watch for the string **"PRESS (*) TO SELECT BAUD RATE".** Press the Asterisk key immediately when you see this text and then enter your call sign when prompted to do so.
   NOTE: You will see this the first time you run a new TNCs or if the TNC battery is dead.

2. If you press the **ENTER** key on your keyboard and see garbled text, then the Comm Port settings may not be correct (baud rate, stop bits, parity). Check your TNC manual and make sure the Outpost settings match the TNC settings.

Initiating a Send/Receive Session

To run the Send/Receive Session,

1. Turn on the Radio. Set the frequency to the *BBS frequency*.

2. Turn on the TNC.

3. From Outpost, Press **Send/Receive**.

4. The Outpost Packet Session Manager form will open and Outpost will automatically send TNC commands to connect to the BBS.

5. Outpost will then send BBS commands to check for messages addressed to you, and then retrieve them.

6. When done, Outpost will exit from the BBS and disconnect from the interface.

7. If all this happened, your configuration is good!
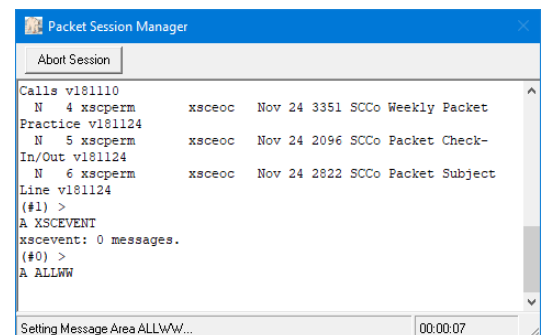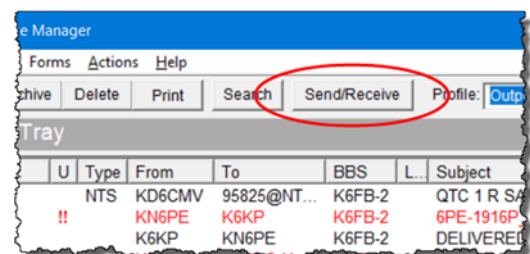
Creating Messages

Using Folders

Outpost organizes its messages in a series of folders. Once a folder is selected, the contents of that folder are displayed and the selected folder name is shown above the message list area. The first 3 folders support the program's message workflow.

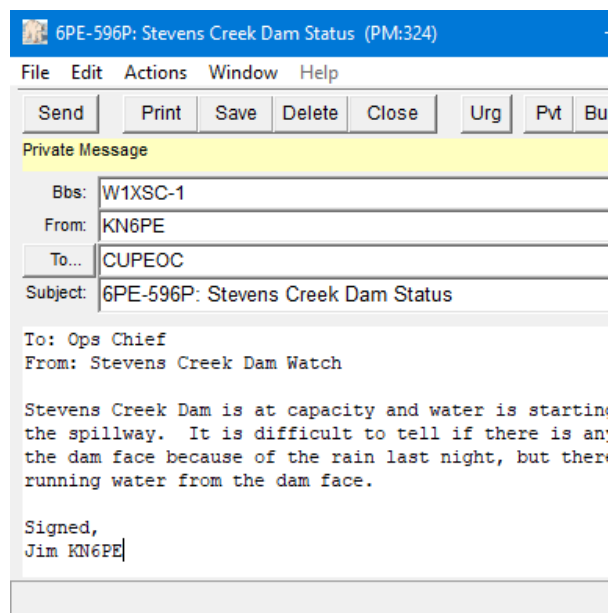**Creating:** On creating a message, the following can happen:

- If you press **Send** on the message form, the message is saved to the **Out Tray**. All fields **must** be filled in and are checked when **Send** is pressed.

- If you press **Save** on the message form, the message is saved to the **Drafts** Folder.

- If a previously saved message is opened, edited, and the **Send** button pressed, then the message is moved to the **Out Tray**.

- As long as it is not sent, these messages can be edited.

Sending: During a Send/Receive session, the message is sent to the BBS. When the message is sent, Outpost moves the message to the **Sent Msgs** Folder. The date/time for this message is updated to the date/time the message was sent. Sent messages cannot be edited.

Receiving: Messages retrieved from the BBS by Outpost are placed in the **In Tray** and shown in **BOLD** typeface. Once the message is opened, the message is listed in regular typeface. Received messages cannot be edited. However, they can be forwarded or replied to.

Creating a message

1. From the Outpost tools bar, press **New**. A new message form will open with the following fields automatically filled in.

    a. **Bbs:** From the BBS setup.

    b. **From:** From station Identification.

2. Fill in the rest of the blank fields:

    a. **To:** Enter a destination call sign or tactical call (shown here).

    b. **Subject:** Enter a subject text.

    c. Message body. Enter the message. Tabs are OK to help with the formatting.

3. Once all fields are filled in, press **Send**.

4. The message is saved in the Out Tray and will wait for the next Send/Receive Session. The form is closed.

Adding a Signature

You can create a *Signature* that will be added to the bottom of all your messages at message create time. This signature will be specific for the user identified on the Identification form.

1. Select **Setup > Station ID**. Select the **Signatures** Tab.

2. Check the box "☑ **Insert a signature for <call sign> in all messages**".

3. Enter your signature text in the space provided. There is no limit to what you can add.

Press **OK** when done.

Now, the next time you press **New**, the message form will open with the signature text inserted at the end. Then, you can add your message above your signature.
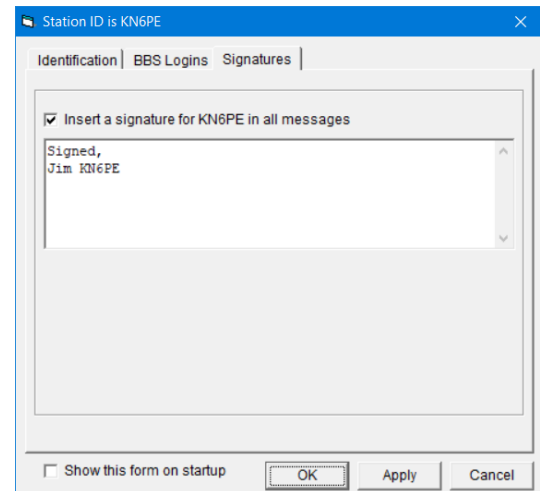
Setting a Default Destination

If you always send messages to the same location (e.g.: the EOC), then you can set up a default destination. If you intend to send messages to different users, skip this setup.

1. Select **Tools > Message Settings**. Select the **New Messages** Tab.

2. Check the box "☑ **Default Destination**". Enter a call sign, tactical call, or email address where messages are to be sent. **NOTE:** Default destinations can be overwritten on the message form at create time.

3. Default Destinations can either be a valid Call Sign or a Tactical Call.

Press **OK** when done.
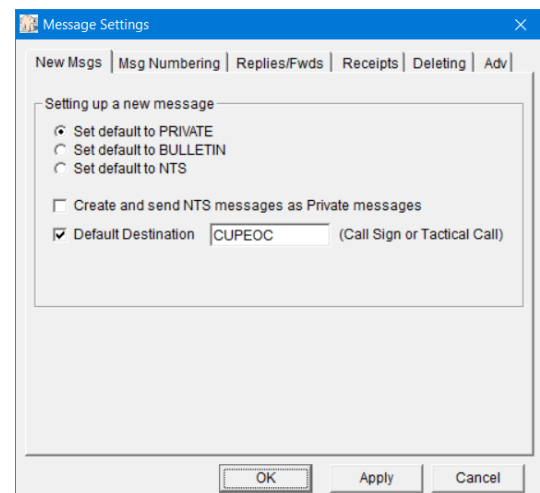
Message Numbering

For casual Outpost use, Message Numbering is usually optional. However, most emergency communications teams will set up message numbering to ensure the messages they send are uniquely identified and traceable. Check your local packet message policies for guidance on this topic.

1. Select **Tools > Message Settings**. Select the **Message Numbering** Tab.
2. Check the box "☑ **Add message number to Subject Line for outbound messages**"
3. Choose the desired message number format.
4. Optional: check the box "☑ **Add message number prefix**" and enter a character to follow the number.
5. Optional: check the box "☑ **Add a local message number to inbound messages**" (supports message tracking).

Press **OK** when done.
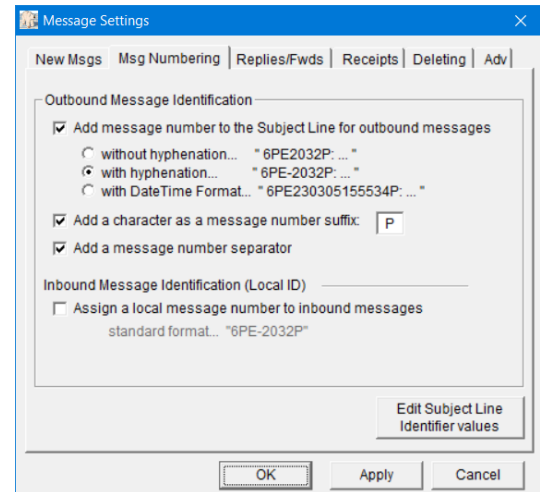
Message Receipts

You can request message delivery and read receipts when sending messages to or receiving messages from other Outpost stations. Check your local packet message policies for guidance on this topic.

1. Select **Tools > Message Settings**. Select the **Receipts** Tab.
2. If you always want a Delivery Receipt, check the box "☑ **Always request a Delivery Receipt**". This lets you know the message was retrieved.
3. If you always want a Read Receipt, check the box "☑ **Always request a Read Receipt**". This lets you know the message was opened.
4. If you always want send a Delivery or Read Receipt regardless of what the sender requested, check either or both the "☑ **Auto-Delivery Receipt**" or the "☑ **Auto-Read Receipt**" boxes.

Press **OK** when done.
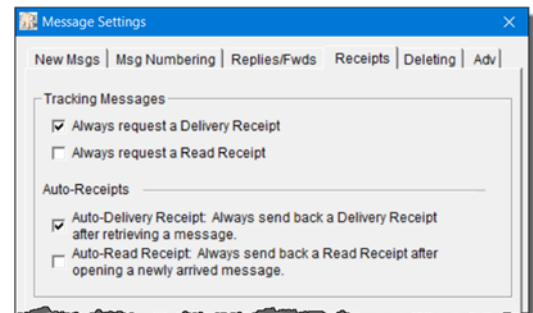
Sending a Text File

A message can also originate from a text file created elsewhere. To import a message from a text file, do the following:

1. From the Outpost tools bar, press **New**.

2. Fill in the message header (To:, Subject:).

3. On the message form, select
    File > Open a File. Navigate to the directory where the text file resides and select the file.
    Press **OK**.

4. The text will be loaded into the message area and the message subject will include the text file name.

5. Once all fields are filled in, press **Send**.
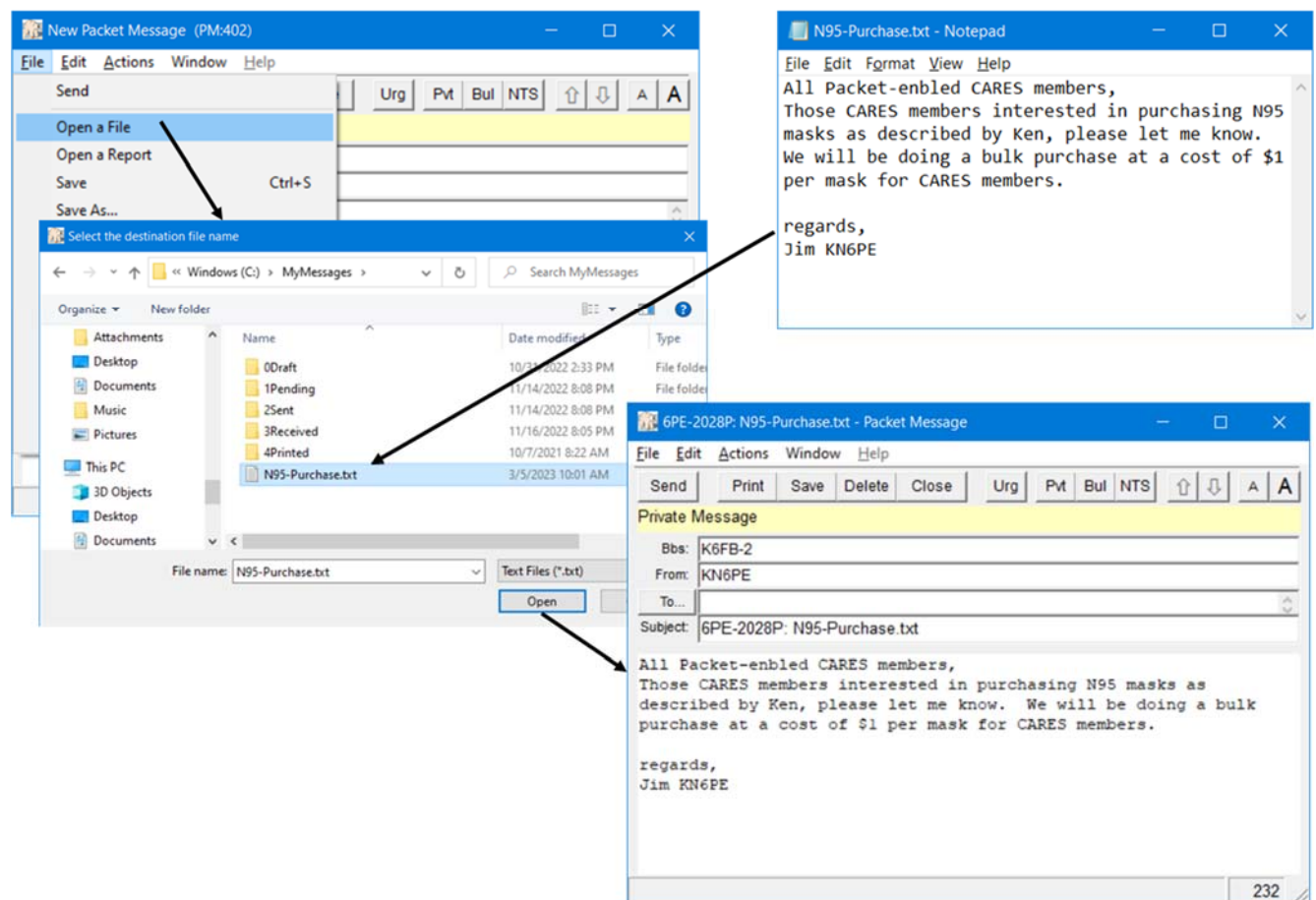
Receiving Messages

The Send/Receive Session

The Outpost *Send/Receive Session* handles sending all commands to the BBS that control sending, listing, receiving, and deleting messages on the BBS.

The *Send/Receive Session* does the following:

1. Initializes the Comm Port, AGWPE, or TELNET interfaces (**Setup > Interface**).
2. Sends post-connect TNC initialization commands (**Setup > Interface**, Init Cmds Tab).
3. Processes the BBS path if defined (**Setup > BBS**, Path Tab).
4. Connects to the BBS (**Setup > Interface**, TNC Cmds Tab; **Setup > BBS**).
5. Sends any pre-Send/Receive BBS initialization commands (**Setup > BBS**, Init Cmds Tab).
6. Sends any user-created bulletin message delete requests.
7. Sends messages from the Out Tray where the messages…
    a. **BBS** field matches the connected BBS, and
    b. **FROM** field matches the Call Sign or Tactical Call selected in the Station Identification.
8. If **Retrieve Private** was selected, lists and retrieves my messages (**Setup > BBS**, Retrieve Tab).
9. If **Retrieve NTS** was selected, lists and retrieves NTS messages (**Setup > BBS**, Retrieve Tab).
10. If **Retrieve Bulletins** or **Filter** or **Custom** was selected, lists and retrieves Bulletin messages.
11. Sends any **Delivery** or **Read Receipt** messages (**Tools > Message Settings**, Receipts Tab).
12. Sends post Send/Receive BBS initialization commands (**Setup > BBS**, Init Cmds Tab).
13. Disconnects from the BBS.
14. Sends pre-disconnect TNC initialization commands (**Setup > Interface**, Init Cmds Tab).
15. If Tactical Call is enabled, transmits an Unproto packet of your call sign and tactical call as a legal station identification.
16. Shuts down / disconnects from the interface.

Send/Receive Automation

There are three automation settings that determine when and how often Outpost will connect to the BBS. Check your local packet message policies for guidance on this topic.

1. Select **Tools > Send/Receive Settings**. Select the **Automation** Tab.

    a. For manual control, click on ⊙**Manual**.

    b. To initiate a connection at a _fixed_ interval, click on ⊙**Schedule… every…** ; enter a minutes value.

    c. To initiate a connection at a _variable_ interval, click on ⊙**Schedule… at X minutes past the hour…** and enter one or more minutes.

2. To send a message immediately after it is completed, check the box "☑ **Send a message immediately when it is complete**".

3. Press **OK** when done.
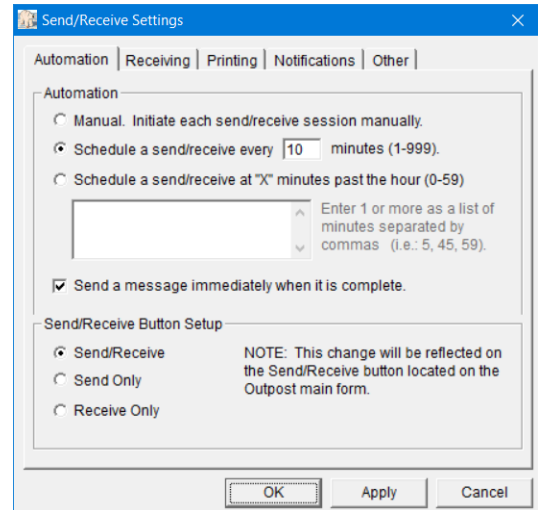
Selecting Messages for Retrieval

Most amateur radio BBSs support some or all of the following message types:

    a. Private (addressed to a single user, are usually deleted at retrieve time)

    b. NTS (National Traffic System, requires special handling)

    c. Bulletins (retrievable by everyone, only the originator or sysop can delete it)

Retrieval settings are BBS-specific, meaning you can configure different BBSs to retrieve different kinds of messages.

To configure BBS retrieval:

1. Select **Setup > BBS**. Select the **Retrieving** Tab.

2. Click on the appropriate message type for retrieving.

3. There are three options for retrieving bulletins.

    a. Select **All new…** for known small BBSs, like a KPC3 PBBS (should not be a lot of bulletins).

    b. Select **Selected…** for BBSs like K6FB

    c. Select **Custom…** for JNOS, TNOS, or SNOS

Press **OK** when done.
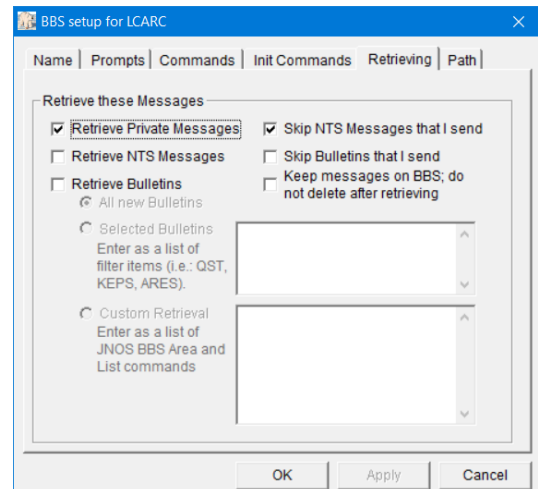
The **Selected Bulletin** option works with the BBS _List Filtered_ command (**Setup > BBS**, Commands Tab, defaults to "L>") and can retrieve specific BBS messages sent to a named area. To the fight is an example of a PBBS- or F6FBB-specific bulletin message retrieval.
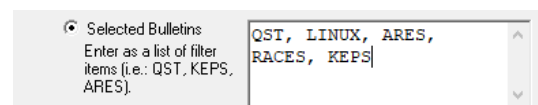
The **Custom Retrieval** option accepts any BBS message area or list commands. This is an example of a JNOS-specific bulletin message retrieval.
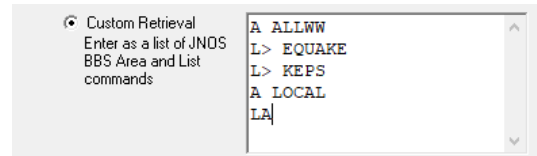
Announcing Received Messages

When retrieving messages automatically, there are times you may not notice when a message arrives. This setting will cause Outpost to play a .wav file on receipt of a message.

1. Select **Tools > Send/Receive Settings**. Select the **Receiving** Tab.

2. Check the box "☑ **Play this sound on arrival**"

3. Use the **Browse** button to select .wav files that are included with Outpost, or browse elsewhere for your favorite.

4. Press the **Test** button to verify your sound card works and that the selected file is the one you want.

Press **OK** when done.
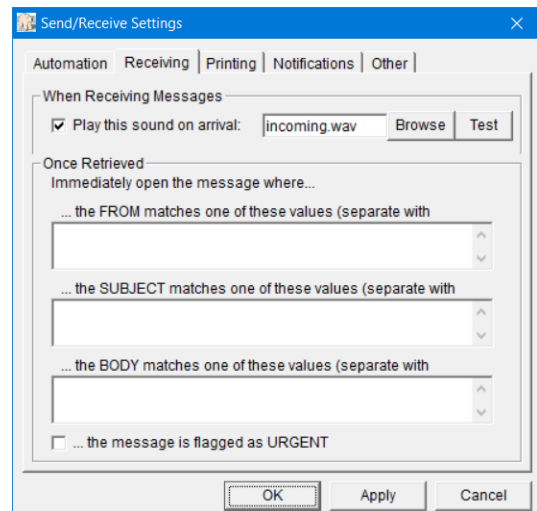
Setups for Tactical Operations

Tactical Calls

During an activation, amateur radio operators use tactical calls to identify an assignment with which message traffic is exchanged. Because several different operators may be assigned to a specific location over time, a tactical call makes the assignment "operator neutral," thereby allowing the operators to change without having the assignment name change.

Picking tactical calls

Not all BBSs inherently support a non-call sign (tactical call) login. You will have to experiment with your BBS to see to what extent it supports a tactical call. Check with your local emergency communications team for guidance. Also, see the **Outpost Users Guide – Basics** for more information.

Confirm the BBS can handle your Tactical Call

1. Pick a tactical call based on your BBS TYPE.

2. From Outpost, select **Tools > Interactive Packet**.
   Select **Serial/Comm Port** to run the **Ipserial** program.

3. Verify the TNC Comm Port, and press **Connect**.

4. Set your TNC to your Tactical Call with the TNC `mycall` command.

5. Issue the BBS connect command for your BBS.

6. Verify the BBS does not generate an error.

   a. IF you receive an Error, then you need to pick a different Tactical Call format.

   b. Receive a prompt to register? This Tactical Call format should work; register this logon.

```
CMD: mycall CUPEOC
MYCALL was KN6PE
CMD:
CMD: c K6SJC-1
```

Set up Outpost

1. Select **Setup > Station ID**

2. Check the "☑ **Use Tactical Call for all BBS interaction**" box.

3. Click on **New** to the right of "Tactical Call Sign".

4. Enter your Tactical Call Sign.

5. Enter any Additional ID Text (such as the location of your assignment).

6. Enter a Tactical Message ID Prefix (usually the first or last 3 characters of the tactical call; make sure it is unique with other stations!).

7. Press **OK** when done.

8. Press **Send/Receive** to confirm you can connect without problems.
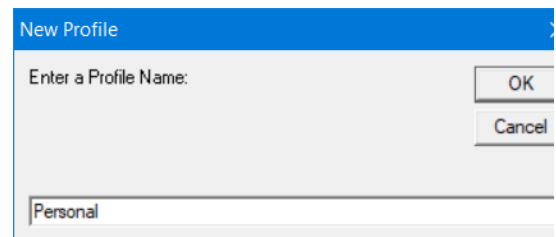
Profiles

Most of Outpost's configuration settings are stored in an initialization file. *Profiles* are essentially different combinations of Outpost settings stored under different profile names. Once defined, you can switch from one profile to another, thereby changing your configuration as needed. See the ***Outpost Users Guide*** for more information.

On installing Outpost for the first time, the "Outpost" profile is loaded as shown on the top of the Outpost main form.
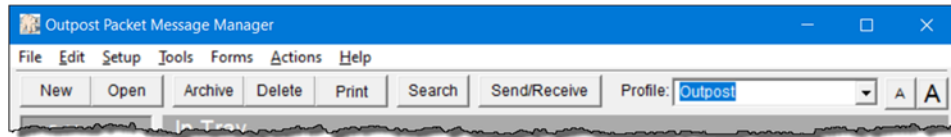

Creating a new Profile

1. Select **Setup > Profiles > New Profile…**
2. The Profile is created with the last profile as the starting point.
3. Any change made now will be saved under the new profile name.

Switching Profiles

4. From the Outpost main form, select the Profile dropdown. The list of defined Profiles will be presented.
5. Select the Profile you want to load.
6. When switching profiles, the current profile settings are saved before the selected profile is loaded.
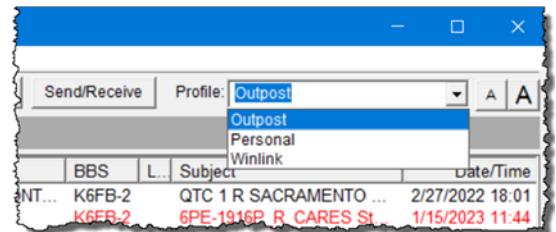
Protecting Profiles

1. You may need a profile definition to be preserved from one time to the next, while still making changes to it for a specific session. This can be done with the Profile Save options.
2. Select **Tools > General Settings**. Select the **Profiles** Tab.
3. Select the Profile Save option that suits your needs.
4. When switching profiles, the current profile settings are saved before the selected profile is loaded.
5. Press **OK** when done.
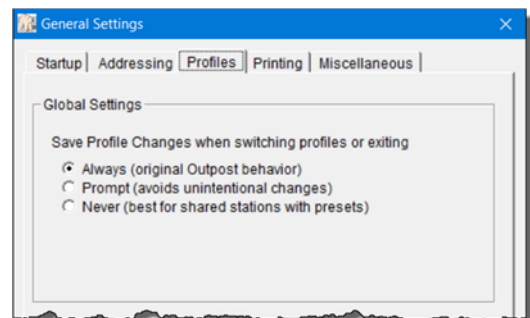
Other Resources

See the following information for more details and hints on using Outpost:

1. Users Guide… http://outpostpm.org/index.php?content=docs#user

2. Application Notes… http://outpostpm.org/index.php?content=docs#app

    a. USB Serial Server (2021)

    b. Setting up Outpost for Winlink and Telnet Access (2017)

    c. Setting up KA-Node, Netrom, and telnet access setup (2017)

    d. TNC Settings for Santa Clara County Packet (2016)

    e. Spell checking for Outpost (2012)

    f. KPC-3P BBS-in-a-Box (2009)

    g. Poor Man's Attachments (2009)

    h. FBB Implementation Guide (2006)

    i. Getting Outpost to work on Windows 95 (2006)

    j. Sending Spreadsheet Data (2004)

3. Users Group. A Groups.io list exists for users to ask questions, post ideas and hints, and share experiences. users+subscribe@outpostpacket.groups.io