

Clay's Corner



For the first time in the twenty something years I have been writing this column...I am not sitting at home in the Hamshack on the desk top PC. Right now I am sitting in my pickup at the Radio Club of Tacoma Field Day site where I will be, off and on, operating 15 meters during this annual Ham Radio event.

It was great to see so many turn out to our last chapter meeting in Bellingham at the Electricity and Radio museum. I suspect that we will be looking for more interesting things to do like this in the future. For those that attended, if you are like me, you got a thrill out of seeing that giant Tesla Coil throw energy around the room....And,if you are like me (an old timer) you enjoyed looking at things that are older than you!...If did not attend, make it a point to so see this place...very cool.

Are you ready for the FCC deadline and have your new EAS Equipment installed? I know there are those that have been dragging their feet in the belief that the Commish is going to extend the deadline...thus far, no sign of it. There are a couple of other EAS related items in the minds of many...

The FCC has released the, long awaited NPRM that will have the effect of making many changes to the EAS rules we are to obey. If you have not looked at this item...You should. Remember, if you don't make any comments you are telling the FCC that you will be happy with whatever anyone comes up with....

The other matter is the upcoming National Test. Just the announcement of this event has caused many to look into what the impact will be and already there have been calls to make tweaks to the system before the big day this fall. My take on this is that we should let the chips fall where they may and let the failures take place. It's likely that this is the best way to get the attention of those in government who need to find out.

Your Washington State EAS Committee, the SECC, is going to have it's hands full dealing with all the related issues...and boy...we could really use your help. If you have an interest in helping, please contact me directly.

As you know, our state is one of the first to roll out a CAP based system...the good news is that we are ahead of others in many respects.

When you get your new CAP EAS box, you will need to contact Don Miller at Washington Emergency Management so he can get your device connected to the Washington State CAP Server. When you are connected and receiving messages your next step will be to contact me so I can update the records.

We will be making changes to many of the monitoring assignments, therefore, I need to know a couple of things – 1) When you are now receiving CAP Message and, 2) What your station is monitoring. Please direct this information directly to me at – k7cr@blarg.netI

I did have a bit of bad news since I wrote my last column. My trusty desk top machine, for reasons that remain unknown, decided to get a corrupted XP dll file thereby telling me it was time to spend some money. A new, much bigger hard drive, more RAM, Win 7 etc. Going to miss XP I'm sure...but time to move on.

Just today I read a piece in the paper about a move to permit power companies to deviate from 60 Hz. Wow! All those devices that are locked to the power line frequency that would suddenly be thrown a curve. Will be interesting to see how many utilities actually agree to do this....Is there nothing sacred anymore?

Are you like me and get frustrated when you hear some technophobe reporter explain something to the masses that you know the laws of physics don't allow? Recently a substation suffered a fire near Redmond causing a pretty good sized power outage and, of course, lots of smoke. On the scene was the reporter to explain to us all what caused it. The story –It was caused by mineral oil used in the transformer. Oh really ??? I supposed, using their logic, the fire could have been caused by any material or substance on the site. I can see it now ...Electrical fire caused by copper wire. Do these news organizations tell the reporters to just make up something based on their belief that the masses will believe anything tossed their way? Then again it would likely violate all kinds of corporate policy to run a technical story by an engineer before airing. In another recent story there was a cellphone tower on fire. I was listening to the radio at the time and was waiting for Mr Technogaff to make comment...

Recent radio ratings came out and the results must have a number of programmers scratching the heads trying to figure out how that little 'peanut whistle' of a radio station could possibly generate bigger numbers than stations operating with thousands more watts. I'm talking about little KMCQ of course. I am reminded of how the radio technophobes will blame engineering rather than content when the 'numbers' are bad....How do you explain that this situation to that radio program director??? Love it !

If you think that we have had a very cool spring and start of summer, you are very correct. Here's a couple of stat's for you – At this writing we have had 296 days with the high temp below 80 degrees, the 5th longest such streak on record. -- The latest date for the first 80 degree day was July 21st back on 1980 -- 1954 set a record that I hope we don't come close to...in that year the temperature only exceed 80 on two days. -- In the last 2 weeks the snow level was below 5000 feet too.

Some states faced with economic troubles are looking at selling their state owned broadcast stations for cash, or having an adjacent state run them. This is the case in New Jersey where they are considering turning over the control of WNJN-TV to New Yorks WNET.

Ever wonder just how much NAB spends on lobbying in WDC? Reports are that they spent almost 4 megabucks doing it...and that was just in the first quarter of 2011

43 State Broadcaster associations are asking the FCC to change the rules regarding public files. They point out that many of these rules are 45 years old and much of their contents are of little interest to the public yet the Public File is an enforcement priority and source of many FCC fines etc,. Seems to me, as one that looked after public files for many years, that much of this type of disclosure could be handled on-line. Why you have to keep on files every comment being made about a station is beyond me. Perhaps It's time that the FCC look at doing here what they have done with so many other rules and bring them into this century.

Meanwhile, WLSW, a small station, got hit with a \$15,000 fine because Quarterly Issues was missing in their Pub-File. Tower lights, EAS and Public Files – the three FCC Hot-buttons.

In the nations larger markets, cable subscriptions are down almost 4 percent. Are people loosing interest in the zillions of channels cable offers...or, are they becoming un-wired due to the prices charged? Seems to me that the prices paid for cable continue to increase.

I recently started receiving emails from Inside ERP. Certainly, as a broadcast engineer, those letters mean

Effective Radiated Power...In this case it stands for Enterprise Resource Planning. Not sure how I got on their list.

If you are a pirate radio station operator there is one mistake you don't want to make...Interfere with FAA signals at a major airport. In this case, that's exactly what took place in Boston, near Logan Airport. The operator was introduced to federal officials, who had a warrant, and who took away his equipment and will likely further enhance his penalty with economic sanctions. Will they ever learn?

The New York legislature has passed a bill that would go beyond the FCC's wrist slap and fines by adding jail time for those convicted of operating a pirate radio station. Florida and New Jersey have similar laws. Wonder what it would take to get the Washington State legislature interested in doing the same. Perhaps this is something that WSAB is working on? But again, we, thankfully, don't have the same degree of unlicensed operations.

Yes, Florida does have a law dealing with pirate radio operations. The Palm Beach Post reported that Broward County Sheriff recently shut down an unlicensed station and confiscated their equipment.

A bright light at the end of the tunnel for broadcasters is coming into view as the political machines start to gear-up for the next round. In our state we are going to have a new governor that will mean a lot of money flowing to broadcasters, not to mention the spending for other offices. The national picture will also be a great revenue generator.

Things are still looking a bit grim for newspapers as revenue continues to fall. Gannett recently announced that they are laying off 700. The Seattle times is now selling, as an option, their TV program guide clearly as a means to increased revenue.

Entercom's Dwight Small forwarded me a note from Moseley advising everyone that they are about to end their support for the legacy 606 series of radio STL equipment due to many of the parts being no longer available. Their 303 and 505 series have met the same fate. Looks like a lot of Starlinks are going to be ordered. This will end the long run of analog STL systems.

Here's an item from KDKA....According to their story, thousands of people were left without power in Cranberry Township because someone broke into a substation and stole a lot of copper wire. Looks like copper thieves are not content with radio stations and street lights and are now going after where the power comes from.

In Pontiac Michigan copper thieves were blamed for an early morning house explosion...The 4th one reported this year in that area. In this case the culprits were not just taking copper wire, but copper pipes. Apparently the thieves turn the gas meter off, go into, or under, the house, take the pipes then turn the gas valve back on....Wow!

HD Radio took another step forward with the recent decision of COFETEL (Mexican equal of our FCC) to approve the use of the Ibisquity system for that country's Radio stations. This begs the question of what about Canada. When will the FM Stations in Vancouver and Victoria be adding HD to their stations. Gee, they could put French on every station this way!

Speaking of HD, during a break from operating 15 Meters at Field Day I was chatting with a fellow Ham and he told me that he liked a certain type of music. I told him that it was available 24/7 on a local stations HD-2. The next step was a demonstration in the cab of my pickup. One of my demo stations was KIRO-FM. On FM/HD1 was Cisco talking gardening, on HD2 was Viet Nam Rock and on HD3...The Sunday church service from Salt Lake....Who would have thought radio would be 3 channels?

Jon Kasprick recently reported that Green River College station KGRG has added HD Radio. It appears that you can easily count on one hand the number of stations in the Seattle-Tacoma market that are – not – operating HD. Wonder how long Fisher will remain a hold-out at their 101.5?

Received a surprise note from Chris Pannell. You may recall Chris when he was selling for Harris at many of our chapter meetings. He tells me that he purchased a medical sale company and is happy building his business. I remember when our Chapter Meetings were always attended by several vendors... Those were the days.

Our BAS group, under the leadership of Greg Thies of KING-TV had a meeting on June 21 to discuss home and alternate channel allocations. As you know we have been losing spectrum. I look forward to hearing how it went.

Speaking of shrinking spectrum, Gary Engard, our Program Chair, is working on a Chapter Meeting that will deal with the matter of wireless mics that are being squeezed out of their legacy spectrum.... Stay tuned.

Did you see the piece in the paper about power hungry devices in the home? The New Yorks Time writer showed how a typical HD TV set up consumes more power than does the refrigerator. At the Freinwald house we have Cable TV, and I can tell you that that HD Cable box puts out a whole lot of heat. Remember the old days when turning something off meant just that? The average home has a number of devices that are consuming power despite being turned off. The advent of the 'wall-wart' alone has greatly contributed the problem.

The FCC recently came out with a reminder that TV stations are required to make emergency information available to those with hearing and vision disabilities. This means if a station runs an emergency message (EAS and otherwise) the must keep those who are blind or cannot hear in mind and provide that information on their air. The FCC made very clear there are no exceptions. Read that – You will get fined if you don't obey. And if you are a small station... You are not off the hook either.

Well that's it from this end for this month...

Have a wonderful summer – Hope to see you at the Picnic, in the backyard, at KOMO-AM on Vashon on the 23rd.

73, Clay, K7CR, CPBE