

Clay's Corner for November 2011

Our last meeting was at KIRO-TV in Seattle. If you were not there, you missed an excellent program on trying to manage audio levels and loudness in Television.. Radio is very lucky that it does not have to fight this battle. In most cases, everything in Radio is Loud. Again a big thank you to Annette Parks and the crew at KIRO and Tektronix for hosting us and for providing the outstanding box lunches. One comment – While waiting in the lobby at 3rd and Broad I could not help but check out the TV set in the corner. It might be tempting to feed this device some premium quality video...but this was not the case. It was a – real- TV receiver with a set top antenna...and it was not a fancy Plazma, but a set with a CRT. And, it looked great.

Certainly sad news this month, the passing of Terry Denbrook. Thanks to all of you that posted comments on the Chapter 16 Web-Site and to Jim Dalke for a great job too. I first met Terry, many years ago, at the studios of Clay Huntingtons KLAY in the Park Towers apartments on Tacoma Ave... Must have been in the 60's. Unfortunately we never worked together, however we would talk on the phone periodically. Most of us knew that Terry had undergone surgery for cancer. The majority would have stopped right there, but not Terry. He continued to do what he loved, Broadcast Engineering. What many did not know was that Terry not only worked at KUOW for many years, but also did work for many other broadcasters in the area, right up until the end. I understand there will be a memorial service in Seattle for Terry. Keep an eye on the Chapter 16 Web Site and Remailer, we will let you know where and when.

The big news this month is the upcoming National EAS Test. (EASNT) This will be the first time in we have actually tested the system that is supposed to provide a last-ditch method of distributing a Presidential message. The Feds have been testing how the National System would work in Alaska and now feel that it's time for the rest of us. The FCC has been active with this by requesting a good deal of information from everyone. In some areas of the country the fact that they are actually going to test this thing has caused them to scramble to try and put together a system. My advice –

- Make sure that your EAS Equipment is functioning properly
- Be sure you are monitoring those sources as prescribed by the Washington State SECC
- Determine that what you monitor will indeed forward to you the National Test from the PEP.
- If at all possible, monitor the PEP Station (KIRO-710 AM) directly as they will be the local source of the test message.
- Everyone will be running the same message so you may receive it from other sources.
- Instruct your staff about what's coming down
- Be there yourself to make sure that all goes well
- Carefully make record of everything related to the test so you can fill out the required forms.
- There will be some failures, as we keep saying....This is OK, this is why we test.

I would hope that your station is airing PSA's explaining what is about to come down on the 9th. No idea of what the text will be of the EASNT...Hopefully they won't try and repeat an HG Wells. One more item about EAS – The FCC is working on a best practices guide for EAS – You can view it at - <http://tinyurl.com/EAS-Best-Prac-Guide>

One question keeps being asked...Is the new Washington State CAP system involved, the answer is no. This is a test of the legacy EAS systems ability to distribute a National Level Message.

A sad note regarding EAS...Don Miller, who has headed up the Washington State EAS effort for many years and is the chief architect of the Washington State CAP system is retiring from his position with WEMD and is taking a position with MyStateUSA who is the provider of the CAP server for the State system. I don't know how to adequately express my gratitude to Don...Simply put – He gets it – and will be greatly missed.

Recent construction, or perhaps destruction, activity on West Tiger Mountain saw the removal of the old CATV building to make room for a new, larger, diesel storage tank. This building was constructed back in the 70's with the goal of receiving local TV stations, off-air, and sending those signals to Cable Head-ends around the area via CARS Microwave. The upper floor of the two story building was the home of a number of antennas with a fiberglass wall toward the west. Interestingly the off-air reception there was very poor. This led them to build a platform down on the north side of the mountain and relocate the receive antennas there. Later it became popular for local stations to directly feed the cable systems and KING-TV installed a dish on the tower for that purpose. As time went by, fiber became available thereby eliminating the need for the West Tiger facility which sat empty for the past 10 years or so.

Ever wonder why those metal gizmo's we mount equipment in are called 'Relay Racks'? That's because, likely back before broadcasting, it was a mounting system for Railroad Signally Relays. My question is who told RCA that rack screws should be 12-24's? I recent ran into a situation where some old RCA racks were used, but the station was using 10-32's...Hmmm.

Apparently Clear Channel recently had a large number of layoffs at it's small and medium market stations. This just before the announcement that the economy is growing and not headed for a double-dip. Apparently many of he hits are in programming. Hopefully the media giant understands the value of its Engineers.

Congrats to Andy Skotdal – Our areas latest AM station, KXXA on 1520, received PTA early in October. Next step – Getting that 50 Kw authorization.. Nice to see LOCAL ownership!

It's not been too long ago that broadcasters were fighting all those un-licensed devices that wanted to operate in un-used TV channels after the big DTV shuffle. We were worried about low powered wireless mics etc. Now that battle looks like childs-play as the Feds are now wanting to 're-pack' the band and shuffle everything ...Again. Call me stupid, but I could never

understand the Feds thinking and how we ended up with what we have now. Looking at the big picture we have a checkerboard situation where some areas have a TV station on RF channel X while other areas around it have none. Did they not know that the folks that would like spectrum for their new wireless gizmo would want the same spectrum – everywhere? Sounds to me that the Feds have finally tumbled to the fact that they blew it. IMHO, they are the ones that should foot the bill for any future shuffle.....However, the Feds don't make mistakes and therefore they want to shift the burden to the broadcasters. Grrr. Our own broadcaster association, the WSAB, has been working with Senator Murray regarding this re-packing issue. If your station is a WSAB member, you can find out more from them.

Perhaps a bit of relief here...The Commerce Department has identified 1,500 MHz of federal spectrum they are going to take a close look at for wireless broadband. All the time Congress is looking at how to reassign 120 MHz of broadcast TV spectrum for the same purpose. Seems to me Commerce just handed NAB a bit of help here. Obviously no quick decisions here as everyone impacted is doing all they can to hang on to what they have. These situations are very much like Water-Wars with everyone wanting more of something that is limited. Logic usually goes out the window.

Metal theft, in particular copper, continues to be a problem. Recently, in San Francisco, a historic 2-ton bell was stolen from St Mary's Cathedral. Seems to me it would be pretty hard to take this to a local scrap yard. Broadcasters, wireless system operators etc. have been trying to come up with methods to keep thieves from stealing what they need to make their systems work. Some wireless outfits have switched to copper covered steel wire and have posted signs explaining that it has no salvage value. Some have been coating their copper grounding conductors with roofing tar figuring would be bad guys will pass it up....Oh yes, that Bell was cast back in 1889 and is valued at .5 Megabucks.

From the U.K. I understand that Britain's culture minister has (hang on now)Admitted that the country's new digital radio system and poor audio quality and coverage. There are now calls to keep their legacy analog FM system. Understand that they are using a DAB system and not the HD Radio technology used here. On that subject ...I have to wonder if Ibiquity will throw in the towel on our digital AM system. The fact is that the model has changed, gone is the goal of AM's to try and get FM quality out of their stations. In many cases stations that installed the system have turned it off. Time will tell. Meanwhile our FM system appears to be working quite well.

Looking at some of the FCC's fine work -

Some broadcasters have forgotten to do something that the FCC did not fine humorous ..In this case, a station in neighboring state, Idaho, apparently forgot to file for license renewal...and...continued to operate for about 5 years! It appears they then realized their mistake and filed for an STA. It gets worse. The stations (an AM-FM) continued to operate after the STA expired and before the licenses were granted....Total Tab – 13 K-Bucks. Yikes!

Then there is the – FM – station in Pennsylvania that was fined by the FCC for operating with excessive power during post sunset hours. (FM stations operate 24/7 with the same power). Apparently a typo at the Commish. It was their – AM – Station that was the violator.

Don't hear about this very often, but a cable system in Michigan for operating without EAS Equipment. That will cost them 8 Grand.

A Florida pirate radio operator will get off easy with a \$250 dollar fine. A whole lot less than the asking price for operating an unlicensed station on 88.3 for two to three weeks. His attorney was able to convince the feds that he did not have the resources to pay the bill.

Neal Davis in FT Lauderdale, Fla will be asked to pay 10 Grand for his pirate station on 96.1.

Proof that tower work is the most dangerous occupation...Two men fell from an estimated 340 feet from a tower in Indiana last April. The contractor, ERI, has been fined \$91,500 for the accident. The Indiana Occupational Safety and Health Administration reported nine violations.

On the subject of towers. Comcast uses a lot of them and recently started up its own tower company. They will leasing space to other tenants. Reminds me of how American Radio Systems (ARS) spun off their towers to form a separate company, then call American Tower Systems (ATS), today its known as American Tower Company (ATC) The new outfit will start with some 800 towers. This is interesting in light of the fact that many broadcasters, radio and TV, have sold their towers to tower companies. Locally, Entercom sold their Cougar and West Tiger towers to ATC while the Channel 11 tower on Capital Hill now belongs to Richland Tower.

Staying with the tower theme – The FCC, on Sept 7th, released a 148 page draft dealing with the effects of towers on migratory birds.....In the event you need some light reading.

Meanwhile, 35 windmills in Western PA have been shut down at night since an endangered species bat was found dead under one of the turbines.. They are apparently going to be able to resume operation after Nov 15th with the bats will hibernate for the winter. I have to wonder what's going on here. I thought bats normally flew at night and navigated by non-optical means. Guess that shows what I don't know about bats. Now the big question...Are there bats in Eastern Washington where there are a ton of windmills?

The folks at NPR are likely a bit nervous as budget talks continue in WDC. Rumors are that the GOP wants to cut funding for NPR. This likely has a lot to do with the networks 'slant' on news. Perhaps NPR ought to start running commentaries by Rush and Glenn? The next elections will likely have a lot to do with this outcome.

Arbitron recently released a table showing the market rank of markets all over the country. Here is what they say about PNW markets –

13 – Seattle – Tacoma

#23 - Portland, Oregon
#93 - Spokane, Wa.
#101 - Boise, Idaho
#149 - Eugene Springfield
#177 - Wenatchee
#188 - Tri-Cities, Wa.
#201 - Yakima, Wa.
#213 - Bend, Oregon

Guess the surprise to me was that Wenatchee is bigger than Tri-Cities.

This will likely not surprise youThe CTIA reports there are now more wireless devices than there are people in this country.

That's about it for this month - Happy Thanksgiving to all -

C.U. Next Month in most of these same places.

Clay, CPBE, K7CR