

Clay's Corner for December 2011

Here we are again ....The Christmas Season and the end of another year...As you get to my place in life (old) you understand how time really flies. It's still hard for me to believe that I've been in this vocation going on 51 years and all in the same market. Looking in the mirror, however, really helps me understand.

Big item in the news in our business this past month was the EASNT. Finally the Feds starting practicing what they have been preaching. Let me explain- For years we have been required to do monthly and weekly EAS Tests....All the while the primary reason for the EAS (or so they say) has never been tested. That all changed on November 9<sup>th</sup> when the National EAS system was finally tested. The results were mixed. I can say that, for the most part, stations here in Washington State faithfully relayed what we were sent. The bad news is what we were sent was not all that good. Due to an 'issue' with the distribution system that feeds all the Primary Entry Point (PEP) stations the message started to repeat before it was finished. This caused another set of 'Header Codes' to start playing soon after the test began. In some cases these extra data bursts just added to the background noise. In other cases, it caused some EAS boxes to mute. Frankly, I did not expect it to go perfectly...however some did and those were quick to point out the shortcomings of the event. As we say in EAS circles....This is why we test. Thankfully the Feds had the guts to actually see if their creation would fly. Now what? Well there is a lot of fact finding going on, including the reports we are all to file with the FCC. My guess is we can look forward to additional testing, perhaps now on a regular basis. Of course we will soon have a National CAP System that will provide yet another method of dealing with public warnings.

Down in Oregon, things did not go as well as the entire state did not run the test due to a foul-up at the state level. Rep. Greg Walden, a former broadcast station owner from Oregon was not at all pleased. Perhaps good news is that Oregon will be getting two PEP stations...Previously they had none. Maybe the Feds felt no one lived 'out there'.

One very beneficial aspect of the EASNT was a significant increase in the level of interest in EAS. I have long felt that, in the minds of some, that EAS was another term for wastebasket. As the person that administrates Monitoring Assignments in our state, I was suddenly hearing from parties that before were non participants. This is good. While I am on the subject, I want to again remind you that the method we use in our State to distribute EAS information is the Washington State EAS Remailer hosted by Hatfield and Dawson. This is the vehicle we use to update monitoring assignments, announce meetings etc. If you are not a subscriber – You need to change that.

On the top of Monitoring Assignments – This past year I separated our EAS Plan Tab 10 into separated this rather large document into 15 smaller ones...one for each Local EAS Area. For example, here in the Central Puget Area – Tab10 for Central Puget is the item you should have (In Tab 10) in your State EAS Plan Binder. If you don't have the latest in your binder –

You can send me an email requesting it and I will ship out the latest via the EAS Remailer.

The latest issue of QST had some interesting articles...

- The ARRL has out a newly revised Antenna Book. For those of you that work with Antennas and RF, this is a great one to have in your reference collection....Even if you are not a Ham.
- One would think with all the other means of electronic communication available today that Amateur Radio would be dying...Not so....There are now more than 700,000 Hams in this country alone.
- For those of you that are Hams and have not been active in a while...The sun is, finally, cooperating and propagation is fantastic. 10 meters has not been this good since the late 50's.
- Heathkit is back! If you were like me, you built a lot of electronic kits from Heath..good to see them back again.

On the subject of Amateur Radio – The November issue of Electronic Design News has a great article about Ham Radio in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century by Doug Grant, K1DG.

Metal theft continues to be a problem. Apparently most of it is driven by those that steal the stuff to cash it in for money to \_\_\_\_?. Now there is something else that is becoming a hot commodity for thieves....Grease. And you can blame the bio-fuel industry. What happens is restaurants have been placing their leftover cooking oils out-back in unsecured containers. Recyclers come by, take the grease, and send the restaurant a check. In one case the restaurant owner asked the recycler why he did not get a check and they explain there was nothing to re-cycle. Time for the 'grease stake-out'...In this case they nabbed some young thieves. This is led some law enforcement types to call grease 'the new copper'. Who wudda thunk?.

Meanwhile copper theft continues – In one case a Jeffrey Blake was indicted by a federal grand jury for taking a station (KKOW) off the air by stealing what was apparently the stations ground system. What makes this one, perhaps unique, is the fact that he is charged with one count of attempting to damage a communications system and an attempt to damage an energy facility (apparently he did something to a power substation also) He now faces a possible 10 years in prison and a \$250,000 fine. One aspect of the charges caught my attention was that they used the stations participation in the Emergency Alert System in the prosecution.

In Sacramento thieves has been making away with the wiring for street lights darkening some 1000 of them in recent weeks. With local governments running short on money, this is making things worse. The solution – Weld covers on wiring access points. I guess hanging the thieves by their thumbs is out.

Someone suggested that stations coat their grounding system, and perhaps rigid transmission lines with a type of roofing cement. This stuff is gooey and very hard to get off. Apparently if it's difficult the lazy thief will go elsewhere.

John Price recently brought to my attention what happened at Entercom's WILK in Pa. There the station uses open wire feeders, instead of coax, for feeding it's multiple tower array. In this case these feeders are about 20 feet off the ground to be clear of flooding from a nearby river. You guessed it – Thieves stole the feeders copper wires. Understand they have been replaced now with copper-weld (copper covered steel). See the picture below -



One of the most bazar metal thefts was when a 3 foot long copper sword was stolen from atop Lincolns Tomb in Springfield, Ill.

In Georgia, Federal Prosecutors have charged 3 men with not only copper theft...but...releasing hundreds of pounds of ozone depleting Freon into the atmosphere...and that is a big no-no. Apparently the trio had stolen 35 air-conditioning units figuring they would scrap them for Copper and Aluminum. Not being the sharpest knife in the drawer they failed to consider what they were doing was going beyond simple metal theft. The penalties run into the millions and sentences run 50 to 65 years. Armed with that, perhaps we can find out a way to get Freon into our broadcast equipment ????

One concern I have is the Occupy movement. Have to wonder when someone affiliated with this activity will try and gain a louder voice by taking over a broadcast station....After all they do it all the time in third-world countries.

Another call letter change in our area – KTBK has become KMIA. You might think missing in action but they are thinking MIA means mine in Spanish. This station, operated by Adelante Media Group has had a number of previous calls – KWMG, KDDS (Bustos Media), KNWX,

KTTH (Entercom), KBSG (Viacom) KASY, the original call from 1958 operated by the Garre Family. The stations studio and transmitters are in Auburn.

During this season perhaps we should be thankful that our broadcast stations are in the U.S...For example, Israel recently ordered the shut-down of a radio station because of their 'dovish' programming that is not pleasing the present administration. Wow...think what would happen in this country if that happened here? Yes we should be thankful.

After a lot of rumors...Fisher has finally sold their home, Fisher Plaza, making KOMO etc a tenant in their own building. Apparently a move to please stockholders. Reminds me of Entercom's sale of their big transmitter facilities on Cougar and West Tiger or the sale of the Channel 11 tower on Capital Hill. They produce a nice one time bump in the bottom line at the expense of greater operating costs. Over time, they don't appear to make any sense...but, hey, this is why we are engineers. We are not expected to understand.

I am probably one of very few in this business that has not yet made the move to a smart-phone. Yep...I'm still packing my trusty flip-phone...and I have, what I think, are some very solid reasons for not making the change –

- I have tons of battery life...Like several days, even though I got to places like Cougar and West Tiger that have no cell coverage. My understanding is that smart-phones are real battery hogs.
- I tell people if they want to communicate with me -- lets talk ....Adding that real-time communication is amazingly efficient...and they don't have to wait for my response to a question.
- In our state with it's no talking or texting while driving – I am a compliant person with my blue-tooth speaker phone.
- With my EAS involvement etc I often get 100 emails per day, how would I get anything done?
- Then there is the fact that my cell phone bill (which I pay for) would likely double with a smart phone

What do you think.....Should I make the change and should it be an I-Phone or Droid something or another?

While on the topic – Dwight Small (who packs a Droid) offered up some suggestions for nifty applications that I'd certainly find valuable.....e-Engineer (iPhone)...ElectroDroid (Droid) Engineer's Calculator (iPhone) ...RealCalc (Droid) ....Resistor Calculator (iPhone) ...And the best them, Slide Rule that operates on both platforms that actually has the look of an old fashioned 'slip-stick'.

Clear Channel recently changed formats on their near Olympia – Capital Peak high-powered rim-shot 102.9 KNBQ from Country to a simulcast of KJR –AM. (The stations HD-2 continues with Country). I find it interesting how, way back when AM was king and FM was added chiefly

because there were few FM receivers...Simulcast was SOP. Then FM came into it's own leaving all but the big signal AM's to keep the AM band warm, if I recall KOL was one of the first to spin off their FM creating what is today known as KMPS. Now things are reversing with KOMO, a big signal AM picking up a South Mountain Rim Shot FM (97.7) simulcasting their existing AM. Now Sports format KJR Simulcasts an FM. Makes one think about their format competitor, KIRO-AM and wonder what they will do. KIRO has a problem, however....Their FM is currently the market leader and they don't have another FM to simulcast their AM. Due to the popularity of KJR-FM it's not likely they will be able to call their sports stations KJR AM and FM, at least for the time being, you will still hear KNBQ on the FM side of KJR.

In terms of numbers of stations, one of the biggest sales of radio stations recently took place in Yakima and Tri-Cities with the sale of a dozen. The new owner is Ingstad Radio Washington LLC which is shelling out \$13.5 Megabucks.

Some expensive broadcast equipment was damaged recently in the aftermath of the firing of a popular football coach at Penn State. WTAJ-TV remote truck was the focus of attention by some very un-happy people who broke it's windows and ended up tipping it over on its side, thankfully no station employee was injured.

Then there is the Mohu Leaf an antenna designed to receive local TV stations. The company thought that a good place to advertise their product would be on Cable TV. One line in their ad did not sit well with the cable outfit where they said it was not necessary to subscribe to expensive cable service to watch HD programs. In this case, Time Warner Cable said – no thanks and turned down the spots.

A new study just out finds that non-traditional TV viewing now accounts for 7% of total viewing time. The term is call cross-platform. With the continued blurring of devices, Computers, TV's etc it will be interesting to see where this goes. TV has been dealing for years with VCR and DVD's and now Computers, Netbooks, Notebooks, readers etc, just like Radio has been dealing with Tapes and CD's and MP3's and now Pandora etc. Broadcastings days of being the exclusive means of getting content to consumers are over. We are now just another vehicle.

Proving that some people will never learn - - WMID has been asked to pay 20 Grand for a collection of tower related issues – Faded and chipping paint, un-locked fence around the tower, and mainly continued violations after being warned by the FCC.

Then there is WERX in Columbia, N.C.. Just so happened an airline pilot noted that there was a problem with the stations tower lights. The FCC took a look and found only one light working, about 100 feet up, on the SEVEN HUNDRED foot tower. The station said their monitoring system also failed and were not aware of the issue. However, there was no inspection log etc.....10 Grand.

Remember Kent Kramer? He worked in Seattle a few years ago. Saw his name in print recently. He's DOE of Reach Media, the Tom Joyner Morning Show in Dallas.

In closing....Those of you that know me well, know that I often have fun with our language. Recently I began thinking about the work UP and how UP is being used in places that are bound to totally confuse anyone trying to learn our language. Especially if you learned that UP means the opposite of down...

Here's an example of what I mean –

They broke UP – (they broke what?)

Catch UP -- (How will I recognize it if I find it?)

You really messed UP -- (Perhaps it will not look as good afterward?)

Touch UP – - (As with Paint?)

Can you keep UP -- (Perhaps, unless someone else wants it)

Just do a work UP -- (Like the one was not good enough?)

Put UP or Shut UP -- (We've all heard that one)

Ease UP -- (Slow down what?)

Foul Up -- (More familiar terms?)

Screw UP – (Like foul UP but perhaps worse?)

Give UP -- (As in a gift?)

Hold UP – - (As in Rob...or hold what?)

Join UP -- (Like Join the Army?)

Wake UP – - (Time to Get UP?)

Keep UP -- (If you can)

Let UP -- (Sort of like slow down?)

Make UP -- (As in do it over?)

Open Up -- (Opposite of shut up?)

Rope Up – - (Something to do with cowboys?)

What's UP – (That's what I'm trying to figure out.....)

Have a great Christmas, my friends, and may 2012 be the best yet.

Thanks for everything!

Clay