

FOR JULY 2020

Clay's Corner

Providing news and views from a broadcast engineers perspective since September 1986

Wow....What a month!!!!

June started out with mostly peaceful protests in Seattle, followed with a night of chaos and violence in Seattle and other cities across the country as reaction to the killing of George Floyd. All of this caused FCC Chairman Ajit Pai to praise broadcasters for their extensive coverage.

Unfortunately, in Seattle and Bellevue, we are all witness to destruction of property, fires and looting and extreme levels of lawlessness. In some cases, it appeared that the protesters were being used as an excuse for those who were bent on destruction, rioting and looting. Some of which was, reportedly, coordinated via social media.

In the weeks following, all attention was focused on an area on Seattle's Capital Hill, where Police and Protesters clashed, creating an ugly scene. Eventually, in order to defuse the events, it was decided to reduce the amount of Police response and abandon their East Precinct. The protesters then created an area first called CHAZ and later CHOP, where Police were not wanted. This all resulted in an intense amount of, not only local media coverage, but National as well. Suddenly Seattle was on the map for being a place where protesters had taken over. As a result – National news attention. About the 20th of the month, things took an ugly turn as, the mostly peaceful, protest turned violent with a shooting and resulting death. In this case, Public Safety continued to stay out of where they were not wanted, igniting even more debate as to how far all of this should be permitted to go.

There was a protester gathering in my little town of Auburn during all of this. In preparation, many of the store owners near City Hall had boarded up their storefronts, fearful that what happened to the north would take place here too. Frankly I never thought I'd see this day come to this place. Thankfully, the protesters were peaceful and were not accompanied by those who were using this an opportunity to cause destruction.

Meanwhile, other cities across the nation are closely watching the situation in

Seattle, wondering if a similar situation will come to their city. Apparently there have been some attempts, but, as of this writing, none have been successful.

Closer to the end of the month, there were signs that things were starting to wear down. The number of protesters was dropping, not only in CHOP, but blocking traffic on I-5. Additionally, the legal profession was getting involved on behalf of citizens and businesses that are being negatively impacted by all of this. I sense that many are longing for the good old days.

Over recent years, Seattle has gathered a lot of media attention for positive reasons, record growth of business, building, etc. Now it appears that our area is getting a 'black-eye'. Businesses and homeowners are asking themselves if they would be better off moving out of Seattle. Recent surveys are showing increasing prices for property in the 'burbs' supporting this.

Meanwhile, the situation that sparked all of this has opened old wounds, with protests taking place not only in U.S. Cities, but around the world. We are certainly watching a time where policies and procedures of policing are under review. In addition, the entire matter of racial equality is being reviewed. Across the country, statues associated with Slavery or the Civil War are being toppled. Perhaps an example of all of this was the toppling of a statue of Francis Scott Key in San Francisco. He wrote the National Anthem, but was also, reportedly, a slave owner. In our area, there are those suggesting that Pierce County should change its name due to associations with Franklin Pierce. I'll bet there are those in King County government who are pleased with the fact that the county 'switched persons' a few years ago and became aligned with MLK?

So where are we going with all of this? An overhaul of certain police practices seems assured, and a large scale re-evaluation of where we stand regarding racial equality and how we view those that were involved in the Civil War.

And how does this involve Broadcasting? One hundred years ago, we did not have social media and the electronic media giving everyone almost instant access to what's going on across the nation and around the world. Cable News Channels and the nightly Network News systems are now able to, graphically, show the world what's going on in Seattle. This is good, as this is what a free press should be doing. We need to understand that there is a downside as well. Knowledge of these events can also inflame the passions of many elsewhere who view this as an opportunity to also make their feelings known, many of which feel that 'taking to the streets' is their only recourse.

This is resulting in more media coverage which tends to fuel the fire elsewhere. In some countries, the state controls the media, and this kind of thing would be stopped. However, today we have Social Media that is, perhaps, more powerful at influencing or swaying public opinion as is broadcasting.

So what caused all of this to boil over right now? Sure there is the George Floyd matter, but I believe that COVID-19 is a contributor. There has been a growing amount of frustration regarding this issue. Asking everyone to stay-home, record high unemployment, loss of jobs and incomes and ever increasing debt must have contributed to the frustration level of many.

Just when many were seeing businesses re-open and freeway congestion getting back to normal, there was a lot of feeling that we were, finally, getting to the better side of this COVID event. Well, sorry folks, as someone said, "We are through with COVID, but COVID is not through with us". The clear fact is, this is not over and may not be over for some time to come. However, as the old saying goes, we are not out of the woods yet. The number of cases, and deaths, continue to increase. Just recently, Yakima reported they were out of hospital capacity as many counties continue to deal with the virus. The stats are not good, with over 30,000 cases, 1300 deaths and testing showing about 6% positive. Yes, it looks like a 'Staycation' for us all this year.

I submit that those home studios will remain in place for longer than many had hoped. For those stations in leased facilities, where they pay by the square foot, having a bunch of unused space must be especially painful.

With the re-opening of our economy, has come a noticeable increase in traffic, this giving the local radio and TV traffic reporters something to do. Increased traffic means jobs and purchasing is returning. Meanwhile, governments at all levels are trying to figure out how to fill the 'hole' in their revenue from our, largely, sales tax driven taxation system. This has been a very expensive situation. My hometown, like many, is also reeling from the revenue loss with cutting of city services across the board. The pain from all of this will be with us for some time to come.

All of this is wonderful news for broadcasters that depend on local advertising revenue. Already some of the major broadcasters are reporting that things are looking up.

Interestingly, surveys have showed that lockdowns increased Radio

consumption as well as Local TV News. Sadly, not every station has been able to capitalize on it. Those that were buying advertising were those businesses that were deemed essential. Now with the opening of restaurants and other businesses that have been shut down, it will be a race to inform the public, potentially good news for broadcasters. Hopefully, those who have been furloughed will have jobs to come back to.

From the category of, it finally happened, comes news that the sale of 97.7 KOMO-FM has finally closed. This goes back to 2017 when Sinclair purchased the Fisher stations in Seattle. All of this time, KOMO has been operating the South Mountain 97.7 and a Redmond-licensed translator, under what's called an LMA or Local Marketing Agreement.

A belated happy birthday to BFD-III-PE, Ben Dawson, who turned 80 on June 13th. Ben is certainly one of our area's legendary engineers. Ben should be an inspiration to us all. For me, knowing that he is 22 months older than I am and still functioning quite well is encouraging. I recently was chatting with James Boyd who confessed that he was 72 and still very much engaged in our business. Another senior that seems to have discovered the secret of the Energizer Bunny is Jim Dalke who, if I recall, is older than any of us.

Interesting to hear that a music genre has been doing well during the 'COVID Crunch'. Country listening is way up.

In, at least one case I have heard of, a broadcast station was directly impacted by the riots in Minneapolis. KFAI was off the air due to fires that destroyed the buildings housing the stations.

Proving that 'time does fly', it was in 1980 that CNN went on the air.

Intelsat has warned the FCC of Video Quality Concerns Post C-Band Transition and can't be held responsible for interference as a result of the shuffle of operations on C-Band to make room for 5G wireless systems. They made their concerns known in an official filing with the FCC.

FEMA recently announced that there WILL NOT be an NPT (National Periodic Test) of the EAS this fall.

<https://www.fema.gov/news-release/2020/06/19/fema-cancels-2020-integrated-public-alert-warning-system-national-test-due>

FEMA Cancels 2020 Integrated Public Alert & Warning System National Test Due to COVID-19 Response

Release date: June 19, 2020

WASHINGTON – Due to the ongoing coronavirus (COVID-19) public health emergency response, FEMA will not conduct a national test of the Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS) this year.

FEMA is moving the next national test of the system to 2021 out of consideration for the unusual circumstances and working conditions for those in the broadcast and cable industry. Although systems remain in place for rapid automatic transmission of the test message by broadcast and cable operators, the follow-on reporting activities associated with a national test place additional burdens on technical staff that are already quite busy maintaining as close to normal operation as possible.

IPAWS is a national system for local alerting that provides authenticated emergency alert and information messaging to the public through cell phones and internet applications using Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA), and to radio and television via the Emergency Alert System (EAS).

Emergency officials across the country sent more than 360 important safety messages on the COVID-19 pandemic to their residents via WEA and EAS.

FEMA is required by law to test IPAWS at least every three years. The national WEA capability was most recently tested in conjunction with the EAS in 2018.

While I'm on the topic of EAS:

The EAS Plan Revision Committee is continuing to work on our EAS Plan that will, in the end, result in an entirely new plan – and name. The term 'State EAS Plan' will be used by the FCC as part of a national system called ARS that creates a method where SECC (State Emergency Communications Committees) communicate with the FCC, providing them with information regarding how the EAS works within a State. The new State Plan will incorporate a number of elements of public warning where the FCC is not involved. The new title will be WA-PAWS for Washington Public Alert and Warning Systems.

A reminder to all Broadcast Stations and Cable Systems, the way we handle Monitoring Assignments has been completely overhauled. All of the material you have in your copy of State EAS Plan deal with Monitoring (Tab 10's) should be discarded and replaced with the following 3 New Tabs:

Tab 10A – Describes how the new system works

Tab 10B – Provides Monitoring Assignments for Local Primary Stations (LP's) as well as Distribution Systems

Tab 10C – Provides tables containing monitoring choices for Participating National (PN) facilities

This new material is on the WEMD EAS Website. If you would prefer, you can drop me a note and I'll send them to you directly. (k7cr@blarg.net)

OH YES – The next scheduled meeting of the SECC, scheduled for July 14th, will again be virtual, i.e., no in-person meeting. It will take place via telephone conference bridge only. I will have more information posted on the State EAS Remailer.

Looking at the Radio Ratings....

KIRO-FM is firmly in the #1 slot, KUOW has dropped off a bit and KOMO-AM is holding steady. In light of the COVID and protests, this is not surprising. I Found it interesting that KING-FM is doing very well, even their HD-2 made a showing in Nielsen, perhaps something to do with listeners wanting something soothing during these turbulent times? Not surprising KIRO-AM's numbers are in the dumps. Perhaps with the news that we will be having a Baseball season, albeit a short one, will help. Been a while since we have had a 'new' ball game of any sort.

I did find it interesting that Emerald Downs will be resuming horse-racing. However, with one twist...no one will be permitted to be in attendance watching.

It's always sad to report the passing of a fellow broadcast engineer.

Jon Kenneke was employed by Oregon Public Broadcasting, OPB. He was

also an Extra Class Ham with the Call Sign of K7PGB. Jon lived in Albany, Oregon.



www.fisherfuneralhome.com/obituary/Jon-Keith-Fromherz-Kenneke/Albany-Oregon/1874878

Another passing was Joe Sabo, who worked in the Seattle market.



<https://bartonfuneral.com/2020/04/22/ernest-joseph-sabo-jr/>

The SBE is accepting applications for a new Executive Director to replace retiring John Poray. Their goal is to have a final candidate named for the SBE National Meeting in September. Obviously, no-one is sticking their neck out and predicting there will be an in-person meeting.

The FCC has taken the first official steps toward picking an independent entity to handle relocation payments for the clearing of C-Band spectrum for 5G wireless and it is not wasting any time in trying to move the process along. The Wireless Telecommunications Bureau issued a request for proposal last week.

As part of the FCC decision to clear 300 MHz of the band, 280 MHz for auction and 20 MHz for a guard band, the Commission mandated the creation of a neutral relocation clearinghouse to collect disburse relocation payments, including those collected from new wireless operator licenses to pay the users moving off the spectrum to exit early.

Apparently, efforts by the folks who run the satellites to stall the project citing potential interference issues have fallen short.

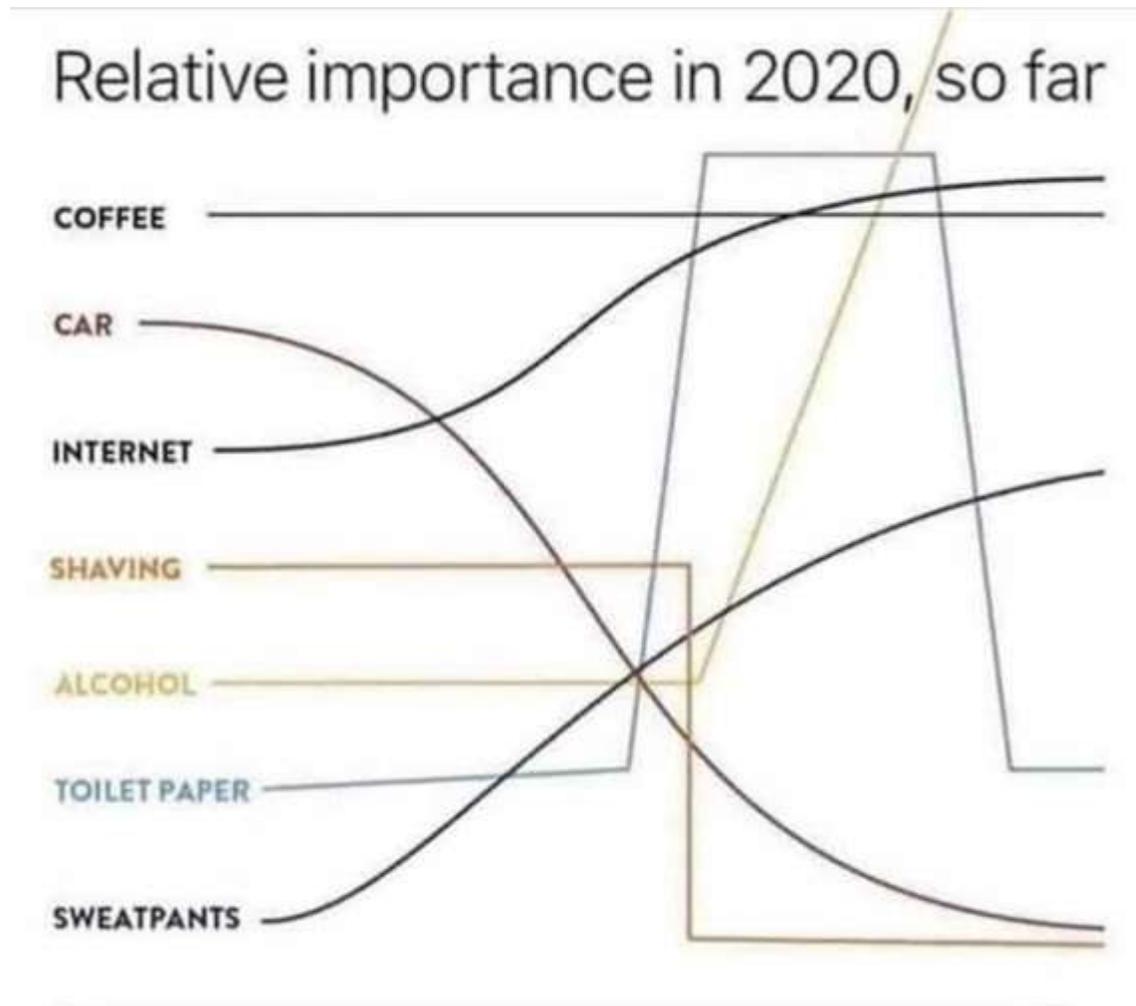
Last month I included a picture of mountains from Dwight Small's backyard (Wwhich happens to be a lake). In response, Dwight sent me a new one, with names of what we are seeing.

L to R: Glacier Peak, Whitehorse Mtn. (with the snow field at the top) and Three Fingers to the right. I believe the snow field to the right (south) of Whitehorse is known as Boulder Ridge. The peak to the right of that is Mt. Bullen.



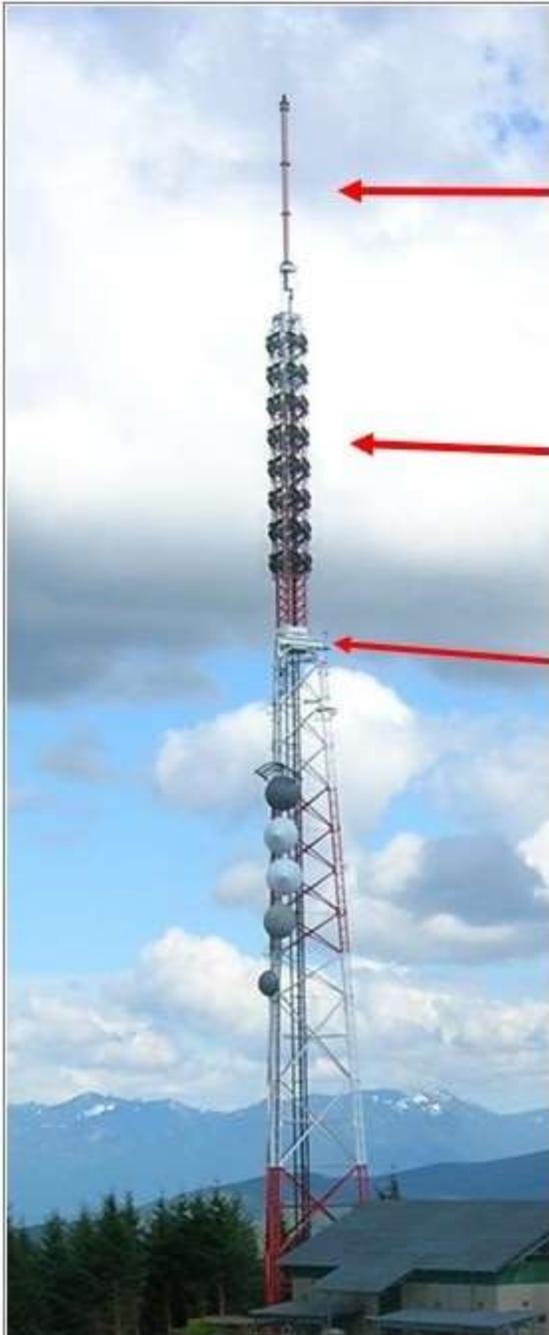
Being hunkered down due to COVID-19 is not so bad when you are forced to stay at home and this is the view from your backyard. I'm sure he's not missing the protests in Seattle either.

A friend recently sent this to me. Sort of describes things of late in engineering terms.



Activity at West Tiger Mountain has moved into high gear with construction related to the Antenna fire of a couple of years ago. To start with, here is a picture Terry Spring shot of the tower before the fire.

THE WAY IT WAS:



KUNS-TV –
Antenna was removed a few years ago, the pole was un-occupied

The FM Master Antenna that burned. The Antenna elements (Black things) were removed a temporary antenna was mounted on the west-side after the fire.

The 'Adaptor' anchoring the FM antennas Square section to the triangular tower.

What is taking place now -

1-The KUNS Pole is removed

2-The Square tower that held the burned FM Antenna was removed.

3-The Adaptor was changed adapting the top of the tower to the new, triangular, tower that will go all the way to the top to which a new FM Master Antenna will be attached.

Here are some pictures taken of the project before the end of the month.

First a picture of John Breckenridge, owner of Seacomm Erectors, a local company based in Sultan that's doing the job.



Here is a closeup of the Seacomm large 'Gin-Pole' attached to the tower and in position to remove the tower top pole that used to hold the KUNS-TV Antenna. At the bottom of this picture you can see (in white) the top of the square tower that held the old FM Antenna.



Tilting down, you can see the location of the former FM Antenna. The 'wires' on the left were part of that system.



Tilting down some more you can see the rest of the FM's square tower. The big structure painted white is what I call the adaptor that 'adapted' the Triangular tower to the Square one above.



Here's a closeup of the 'adaptor', a very large amount of steel, weighing in excess of 15,000 Pounds. The Red gizmo is the Gin-Pole that has to be strong enough to move these pieces from the ground up here.



In the following pictures you can see how the Gin-Pole is used to hoist the old adapter off of the tower.





With most of its top pieces now removed, the tower on the right is a lot shorter than the other one. On the other tower, to the left, attached to what's called a 'T-Bar' are two of the site's TV Stations.



Now laying on the ground, a portion of the Square Tower that held the FM Antenna that burned. A huge amount of steel in this piece.



The following picture shows the bottom of the former KUNS-TV Pole. Note the number of large bolts that attached it to the tower.



The following picture shows the new tower sections that will comprise the top of the tower. The round object on the left end is the new LED Beacon that will be on the top. Mounted on the side of this tower will be the new FM Master Antenna for the six radio stations at the site. Hubbard's 92.5 and 98.9, iHeart Media's 96.5, 102.5 and 106.1 and Entercom's 94.1.

As you may have noticed, this new tower is much smaller and lighter than the one it replaced.

The machinery above the tower are the winches that are used to raise and lower the various pieces of tower and antennas. The Satellite Dish belongs to one of the TV stations at the site.



The new Antenna comes in many pieces, all in these cardboard boxes.



With everything removed, it's time to start stacking up the new hardware. Those are the Cascades in the distance.



Back down, closer to sea-level, another former location of ball games is getting a new name. Amazon purchased the naming rights to the former Key

Arena and, perhaps surprisingly, the name Amazon will not be in lights at the top, but rather 'Climate Pledge Arena'. Wonder how future sportscasters will stumble over that one? Perhaps it will become known as the PDA? The Baseball location, now called T-Mobile, has not had much airtime thus far due to the whole COVID mess.

When we were first urged to wear masks, there was not much available. This time around there is a huge variety to choose from. In some cases, looking at the ads that have appeared on my phone, they are clearly making a fashion statement. What I am a bit surprised about is the lack of branding going on. I've seen masks with Mariners and Seahawks logos, and a few with a familiar 'W' or Cougar Logo. Surprisingly, there is not more interest in advertising. And where are the masks with Radio or TV Call Letters?? Of course, with station promotion departments working from home, and revenue down, this is probably not high on the priority list.

In the event you were wondering, the Sun is still quiet. No Sunspots to report.

The FCC is – still – fining people for operating a Pirate/Unlicensed radio station. Most recently Gerald Sutton was requested to pay \$10,000 for his illegal FM radio station.

Have to mention how Cumulus has finally closed on a deal, long in the making, that will see them sell their Washington DC WMAL transmitter site for some \$75 million. We will likely never see anything like that in this area. Our Major AM transmitter sites are either on Vashon Island or in swamps.

The hopes of many that operate Class A stations to upgrade to a proposed Class C4 is not looking good with the news that the FCC is not likely to support the idea that would take it to the next step.

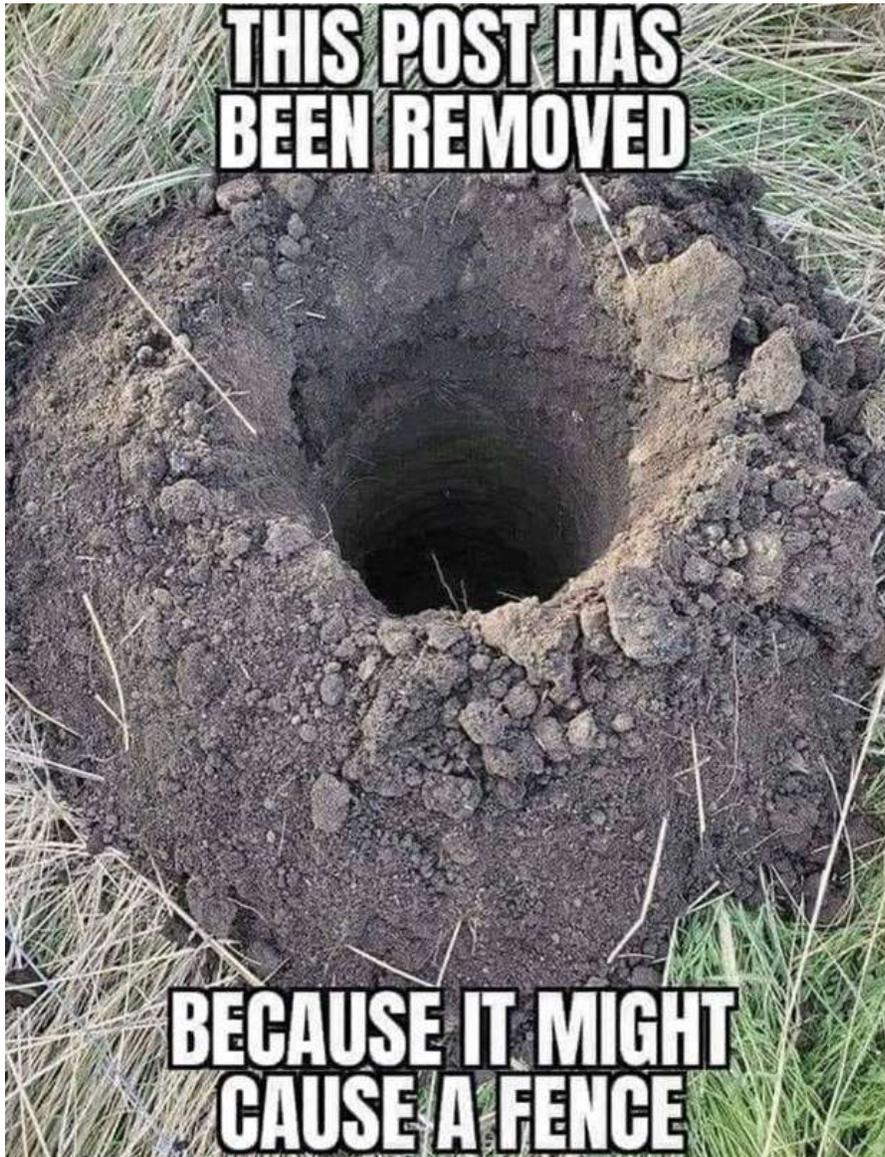
More bad news for Boeing. Apparently just fixing the computer system that was identified as the cause of two crashes of the 737 Max is not enough to satisfy the FAA and foreign regulators. They want more done before the plane can fly again. As you know, the 737 is made in Renton.

How bad has the pandemic been to Radio revenue? Estimates are ranging from 30 to 60 percent.

And, lastly....House Democrats have voted to make Washington D.C. a State. As if there was not already enough confusion between WDC and Washington

State. This is going to be fun to watch. What would they call it? One proposal would name it 'Washington, Douglass Commonwealth'. Of course, this is a long way from actually taking place.

This one has been making the rounds (I've received it from several sources). An interesting commentary on events of the day.



That's about it for this month, my friends. Lord willing, I will be back next month to most of the usual locations. Until then, stay safe as you carefully venture out with your facial coverings!

Clay, K7CR, CPBE
SBE Member #714 since February 5th, 1968