



Puget Sound Boaters Net

A few months ago we started meeting on the Green Mountain repeater at 7:50 a.m. to practice our radio skills. We had about six check-ins and someone suggested that we use the time 747 – so now we check in at 7:47 a.m. We use the 146.88 repeater. What is the 146.88 repeater and how does it work?

The repeater is located on top of Green Mountain near Bremerton. It was established by Phil K7PF, who is a member of the Port Ludlow Amateur Radio Club (the same club that operates the widely popular 75 meter NW Boaters Net every morning at 0830 Pacific Time (3.865 MHz). A repeater repeats a signal. For example, the 146.88 repeater transmits on 146.88 MHz so you tune your radio to 146.88 MHz in FM (Frequency Modulation) mode to listen. When you press the transmit key on your radio – most modern radios are microprocessor controlled and automatically transmit on the appropriate offset frequency. In this case the offset frequency is -600 KHz (0.600 MHz lower than the frequency that your radio receives). Hand-held portable Amateur Radios have come down in the hand-held marine radio price range and now include more features than most people can use. Many have wide frequency coverage from 500 KHz to over 1,000 Mhz.

On many radios you can see the display shift from the listening frequency to the transmit frequency which confirms that you are transmitting on the correct frequency (146.28 MHz for the Green Mountain Repeater). The repeater will receive your transmission and “repeat” or amplify the signal – and then simultaneously transmit out on its transmit frequency – in this case 146.88 MHz. The advantage of using a repeater is that a very weak signal (like the 1 watt produced by your hand held radio) can be picked up by the repeater and re-transmitted at 40+ watts using a multi-gain antenna system on top of a mountain to project a signal many miles away.

Tests using the Green Mountain repeater have resulted in favorable signal reports from the Canadian border to Tumwater. This area includes most of our popular Puget Sound cruising area. The Coast Guard has similar repeater systems – but they are not for public use. When you call on channel 16 the CG can pick up your signal from one of its repeaters. However, if you are calling another boat, you are not transmitting through a repeater but are transmitting simplex (direct from your boat to another boat on the same frequency).

Repeaters have been placed at strategic locations along Vancouver Island – which gives the BC Boaters Net wide coverage. The repeaters are linked so you can “check-in” from

the San Juan Islands to Port Hardy. The BC Boaters net can have over 50 vessels checking in around 5 p.m. every evening during July and August. Our local net – the Puget Sound Boaters Net – is a bit more modest – since it currently only includes Puget Sound.

The Puget Sound Boaters Net started with just a few “check-ins” but has been growing quickly under the guidance of now experienced net control operators Dale Sherrow, Laura Cruz, Ruellene Morganti, Dave Ballaine, and Chris Warner. The net control operator is much like a Committee Chair running a meeting over a telephone. In fact, the net has included phone-patches from Chris Warner who has provided Sun Valley ski reports through a phone-patch with Dwight Shaw. Combined with weather from Tumwater, Hood Canal, Driftwood Key, Kirkland, Medina, Beaux Arts, Duwamish, Downtown Seattle, and the Edmonds convergence zone, we have quite a variety of weather observations and opinions about not only the weather, but current event topics such as the removal of Morse Code from the FCC testing menu, taxing of repeaters stations, legislation to restrict cell phones (and other radio devices) while driving, and the status of the repeaters. As the season changes I’m sure more boating topics will emerge, but for the time being we all are getting more proficient on using radios and having a lot of fun in the process.

Who checks in? Regulars include (call sign, name, boat name, location): N7ATC, Barrie, *Cloud Nine*, Shelter Bay; N7DOS, Bob, *Finesse*, Finn Hill; WA7DS, Dwight, *Cassis*, UW; KE7GCJ, Dale, *Little Brother’s*, usually commuting to work somewhere on the Burke-Gilman trail; KE7GCS, Mike, *Starbird*, Bainbridge; KE7GCW, Larry, *Perseverance*, Kirkland; KE7GCX, Chuck, *Summation*, sometimes Seattle high rise, sometimes Beaux Arts; KE7GCY, Susan, *Fast Forward*, Tukwila; KE7GDB, Dave, *Spirit of Kazan*, Bothell or Driftwood Keys; KE7GDE, Marc, *Almaxm*, Medina or somewhere around the Duwamish; W7HDC, Day, *Oceana*, Edmonds – the convergence zone; KE7HIP, Laura, *Ruddy Duck*, Seattle – or walking the dog; N7KIA, Larry, *Snowbird*, Gig Harbor; KE7KIS, Chris, *Panther*, overlooking Shilshole or reporting via phone patch from Sun Valley; KE7KIY, Peter, *Olenko III*, KE7KJG, Rod, *Pelican*, mobile around Snohomish; KE7KJJ, Victor, *Loreley*, Marrowstone or Redmond; N7LED, Don, *Bandit*, Blueridge or walking the dog; WO7O, Bill, *Lulu*, Hood Canal; KN0TEE, Ruellene, *Petit Syrah*, Tumwater; KN0TME, Don, *Petit Syrah*, Tumwater; AI7V, Chuck, *Alert*, Shilshole sometimes; WM7W, Dan; CG83527 – longest vessel – reports usually from Port Ludlow; KB7CPQ, Larry, *Shingebiss*, Lake Union; Dave, *Gizmo*; N7PZI, AB7JT, Heather, *Gypsy*; KE7SHC, Dave, *Gypsy*, and other occasional and weekend check-ins.