NCTC System Protocol (August 2021)

The NCTC is an open, linked repeater system spreading across North Texas that is primarily comprised of UHF repeaters. For the system to be effective, useable, and to protect the assets, the following guidelines and procedures are strongly encouraged:

It's very important to key your mic and wait a second or two before talking. This allows the entire system to engage and permits all traffic to be heard from one end of the system to the other. It's also just as important to allow for pauses when responding while in a QSO to allow timeout timers across the network to reset and allow other stations on the system to break-in if necessary.

When in a QSO try to keep your transmissions brief (if possible) and please use common courtesy in the duration of your QSO. If you are engaged in a lengthy QSO (15-20 minutes for example) ask if anyone would like to join your QSO or if anyone else needs to use the system. Other hams may want/need to use the system and more importantly the system needs to take a breather from time to time.

If you strike up an extended QSO with another nearby ham on the network, a local 2m repeater or a simplex channel off the network would be a more "system friendly" alternative to consider. This keeps the entire network from being tied up.

An objective of the system is to build a system with operators that demonstrate good operating practices. Don't be afraid to assist other operators if they obviously need constructive criticism - - audio level issue, weak signal, etc. If you are the recipient of constructive criticism, don't take it personally. It's meant to make the system more usable and pleasant for others on the system.

The NCTC system was created several years ago for recreational use, but it is a vital artery for the radio desk at the National Weather Service in Fort Worth to take spotter reports during severe weather events, mainly outside the DFW Metroplex. NWS Forth Worth (WX5FWD) traffic takes priority over ALL routine/recreational traffic on the network. **When severe weather is anticipated in the North Texas region, all users should be vigilant and keep the system free for severe weather traffic to and from WX5FWD**.

The system has a weekly net every Thursday evening at 8:30 pm. Check-ins are strongly encouraged from all over the system to stress-test the network and ensure the every repeater and their connections are working properly. This is a great time to practice operating skills and get to know others on the system, announcements, for sale items, etc. Net manager is Cliff Boltwood W5RDG and he coordinates the net control duties.

After the conclusion of the weekly net, refrain from using the system for 15-30 minutes to give the system a break. A hiatus is required for everything to cool down, especially in the warmer months. Obviously an emergency or a very, very brief QSO is permissible, but any normal (or extended) QSO is strongly discouraged.

Routine status updates on the system and other pertinent content are posted on this web page NCTC.INFO, the "NCTC Radio" Facebook page and discussed on the weekly net on Thursday evening.

In depth discussion of the architecture of the network and site information is guarded information and probably should be discussed face to face or on the phone - - not over the radio.

The NCTC system is an OPEN system. All properly licensed hams are welcome to use NCTC system provided they bring pleasant and constructive content to the table. Any user that violates Part 97 Amateur Rules, demonstrates bad operating practices, blatant disregard for the NCTC system protocols, inflammatory remarks, etc will be asked to leave the system in writing. There is no tolerance for this.

The NCTC system implements many digital platforms for connectivity to the network. Allstar, WiresX, DMR, Echolink and AREDN are a few examples. As the system grows and embraces these platforms, it's imperative to regulate access into the system. We have implemented a whitelist procedure for access into the network using the above digital platforms. We simply can't have unobstructed access into the system, especially if a weather event is in progress and run the risk of having users unwillingly (or otherwise) hamper Skywarn activities. Contact one of the NCTC Admins to be considered for access to the network.

Please do not connect a remote base, cross band repeater or some other mode of communications into the NCTC system without coordinating with one of the system admins. A personal cross band repeater, for example, can and often do more harm than good. Trying to track down an obscure cross band repeater that has the entire system locked up is extremely frustrating.

Many hams utilize APRS, but please make sure your APRS-beaconing is OFF if you intend to use your radio on NCTC. APRS packet bursts are annoying on any repeater and especially a wide area link system.

Any individuals or clubs that would like to connect their repeater(s) to NCTC on a permanent or occasional basis should reach out to the NCTC Admins to ensure compatibility and expectations of both parties are mutually understood. These NCTC guidelines must be followed by any club or individual seeking access.

This network is managed by a loosely organized group of like-minded hams that have a common goal of providing a high quality, wide area, friendly and informative radio system. This is all done without any kind of annual dues or a formally structured organization. Contributions are welcome at any time. At any given time a breakdown in a system component can occur. Other times a targeted improvement needs to be completed. Whatever the case may be, we band together, pass the hat and utilize our collective talents to MAKE IT HAPPEN. Please contact David Stephens KB5WB regarding donations.

In conclusion: Have fun. Be courteous.

NCTC Admins

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Jon Moon KA5HND
Chris Moon KC5NTX
Nathan Bailey N5REL
Charles Penry WA5VHU
Thomas Ketchum WA5TXI
Christie Barnard KG5ZHC