

TSARC Owned Equipment Rules of Conduct



Repeater ownership statement

The Tri-States Amateur Radio Club of NW Georgia has been assigned the FCC callsign W4GTA. The clubs repeater(s) can be found on the coordinated (SERA) frequency of 145.350 MHz and is owned solely by the Tri-States ARC who is considered the “owner”.

None of the club members by virtue of their membership status, has any ownership rights to or in the repeater(s). The repeater(s) owners or trustees can alter or make exceptions to these Rules of Conduct at any time, for any reason, with or without prior notice. When this happens, we will make every attempt to post the revised Rules of Conduct in a timely manner online at the club website, tristatesarc.com.

Why do we need rules at all for conduct or etiquette?

No one likes a bunch of arbitrary rules, but when you have a shared resource, like a wide coverage area repeater(s) they become necessary. We tend to assume that everyone knows the generally accepted rules. But, that could be careless of us and unfair to those who want or need to have a clearer definition of our expectations and requirements. It can also create discord when repeater users offend others by unknowingly breaking some unwritten rule. Activities that may be an irritation or even a flagrant violation to one person might not be an issue at all to another. It's probably best for us to be clear about the rules we really think are important. It is not our intent to define every action allowed or disallowed but to provide the guidelines for proper etiquette and give some “breathing room” to previously established as well as new and exciting uses of the repeaters.

We understand that everyone slips once in awhile, no matter how hard they try. But, we expect all users of the TSARC repeater(s) to do their very best to follow these few simple and obvious rules of repeater conduct. Conduct on the repeater(s) should be governed by common sense and courtesy.

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The TSARC repeater(s) are open for all to use, however **ALL** repeater users must follow the rules of the repeater, and by use of the repeater, you are agreeing to this. This applies to ALL TSARC repeaters, current and future.

Nothing could be fairer. The ARRL says it clearest of all: "A repeater is not a public utility - you do not have a "right" to use it. When you are using someone else's repeater you are, in effect, a visitor in the owner's station. So, you should conduct yourself accordingly. If you use that station in a manner that the owner finds objectionable, that person has every right to revoke your privilege of using it!" (Source: The ARRL's FCC Rule Book)

The rules are pretty basic (see below for further explanations):

- Watch your language; **our repeaters are "G-Rated" 24 hours a day. If you can't say it in your elementary school child's class, do NOT say it on the repeater.**
- Always identify yourself according with regulations
- Avoid lengthy conversations, pause several seconds between transmissions.
- Do not interrupt existing conversations unless you have something meaningful to add.
- Yield existing conversations to recognized activities such as ARES, club net, Skywarn or other net and/or emergency activities, etc.
- Do not engage in political soap boxing. Do not engage in any personal antagonisms.
- Do not use CB lingo / language.
- Always yield the frequency to any station with emergency traffic.
- If you hear stations jamming or interfering **do not** make any comment, ignore them.
- Do not antagonize those interfering!
- When using EchoLink, Allstar or other VOIP, identify yourself as you would on RF.
- Non TSARC members will yield to TSARC members wanting repeater use.

Our repeater is "G-Rated" 24 hours a day.

You never know who may be listening. Even late at night, there are generally people listening to the repeater, including non-hams. This is important to understand for several reasons. Our repeaters serve many purposes. One of the most important is the exposure it gives the hobby to the community. Any scanner can be used to listen to our repeaters. That's good – It's actually the most visible aspect of our clubs. It's one of our most effective forms of publicity. We want non-hams to know that Amateur Radio is an interesting hobby and a good group of people to get to know - something clean and educational - something they would want their kids to get involved in. Kids may or may not listen late at night, but their parents do. Let's all do our part to give Amateur Radio a positive image. We want any ham that listens to us to think of us as good operators, not idiots. Any time we talk on the repeater, we are ambassadors for the hobby. Have you ever noticed how you like to listen to some repeaters, but sometimes you find a repeater that makes you roll your eyes and twist the knob? We lose good people because of what they hear on our repeaters. Our rule is simple: absolutely no obscene, indecent or profane language or meaning at any time.

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Always identify according to the regulations.

Correct operating procedure is a distinct characteristic of Amateur Radio. It's important that you convey to the public and to new hams the image that Amateur Radio operators really know what they are doing. A friendly style is great, but takes pains to operate professionally. Don't become sloppy. Amateur Radio regulations are largely self-enforced and we all need to work together towards these goals.

Do not engage in political soap boxing.

Soapboxing, which goes hand-in-hand with overly long conversations, is when people carry on a conversation on the repeater that is a thinly disguised broadcast. The subject is generally to "put down" an institution, group, or an individual for as wide as possible an audience. This is very objectionable to other repeater users and listeners. Using any repeaters as a platform for soap boxing is unacceptable. Conversations on the repeaters should be friendly ones. Do not make them negative commentaries on institutions, groups, or people. Avoid discussions on inappropriate subjects including politics, sex and religion! Don't use the repeaters to "put people down." Amateur Radio is not a broadcast medium – 97.113(5)(b). Are we talking about censorship? No, not exactly. A person may have the right to stand on the street and say bad things about someone. They don't have the same right when they are a guest in that person's house. When using the repeaters, you are a guest operator of that station. No one has any right to use the repeaters in ways that the repeater trustee feels are objectionable.

Do not routinely circumvent the time-out timer.

The repeater's time-out timer serves two purposes. The first purpose is to satisfy regulation 97.213(b) requiring us to limit repeater transmissions to a maximum of three minutes under automatic control. Like many repeater owners, we also use the time-out timer as a way to encourage users to limit the length of individual transmissions. This gives everyone a chance to speak. Under normal conditions, it is rude to get around the time-out timer by momentarily dropping carrier to reset the timer or saying "Stand by, let me reset" and continuing. Always remember there may be an emergency, someone may need the repeater. Resetting the time-out timer should only be done as absolutely required and infrequently. Learn to speak concisely and limit the length of your individual transmissions.

Always yield the frequency to a breaking station

This applies to calling or breaking stations you never know if they have an emergency or not.

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Dealing with interference.

DO NOT ACKNOWLEDGE INTERFERENCE OR THE INTERFERER.

Do not talk to them or about them. If they are unlicensed, talking to them is against the law. If possible continue your QSO as if the interference didn't exist. If that is not possible, move to another frequency or tell the other person you've got things to do and will contact them later. Do **NOT** let the interferer know you have even noticed them. If his audience goes away, so will they.

No rebroadcasting of material, recorded or direct over the repeaters.

You cannot record then replay any material, even ham conversations over the repeater without permission from all parties involved including the repeater owner. The exception to this is the "ARRL" and/or "Newline" Ham Radio news broadcast, but even that needs repeater owner approval.

No cross-band or remote base connections without prior permission from the repeater owner.

This rule insures the system will not be compromised by connections we have no way to control. Such connections can cause massive interference, even though it seems it is working good.

What gives the trustee the right to tell someone how to operate?

All repeaters have rules. These rules often go beyond Part 97. And, users who refuse to comply with the repeater's rules can be told to stop using the repeater. This is entirely at the judgment of the repeater trustees. Rule 97.205(e) says, "...Limiting the use of a repeater to only certain user stations is permissible." There are no qualifications – ifs, ands, or buts – to this rule. This isn't just the right to close a repeater. In fact, the ARRL says, "...a repeater does not have to be listed as being "closed" in The ARRL Repeater Directory in order to have a limited access." (Source: The ARRL's FCC Rule Book) The terms "open" and "closed" don't appear in the regulations at all! Listing a repeater as "open" means you don't have to be a member in order to use it, but, you still must follow the rules of the repeater owner. The FCC supports a trustee's right to control the use of their repeaters.

The letter reproduced below is an example. On Dec. 13, 2001, FCC Special Counsel for Amateur Radio Enforcement Riley Hollingsworth, wrote to a Mr. Banks because he had not stopped using a repeater when asked. (Reading between the lines it seems that Mr. Banks must have argued that the repeater was "open".) Mr. Hollingsworth explained that a repeater doesn't need to be "closed" for a trustee to require compliance among the users. Banks had to comply or expect FCC enforcement action. Please take time read this letter.

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December 13, 2001

Mr. Thomas J. Banks
250 S. W. Moselle Avenue
Port St. Lucie, FL 34984

RE: Amateur Radio License KB4AN: *Warning Notice*

Dear Mr. Banks:

On November 14, 2001 the St. Lucie Repeater Association Trustee requested that you refrain from using their AF4CN repeater system. The request was made as a result of your failing to follow Commission rules and operational rules set forth by the licensee/control operators of the repeater. Information indicates that you have not adhered to the request.

The Commission requires that repeaters be under the supervision of a control operator and holds such control operators and licensees responsible for the proper operation of the repeater system. Control operators may take whatever steps are appropriate to ensure compliance with the repeater rules, including converting the repeater to a closed repeater or taking it off the air entirely. We do not require them to convert the repeater to a closed repeater in order to ensure compliance among the users.

Please be advised that we expect you to abide by the request to stay off the AF4CN system and your failure to do so after receipt of this letter will jeopardize your Amateur license. If you use the repeater again we will initiate enforcement action against your license, which may include revocation, forfeiture or a modification proceeding to restrict the frequencies on which you may operate KB4AN.

Section 308(b) of the Communications Act of 1934, as amended, 47 U.S.C. Section 308(b), gives the Commission the authority to obtain information from licensees about the operation of their stations. Pursuant to that section, you are requested to respond to this letter within 20 days stating what action you have taken to comply with the November 14, 2001 request by the AF4CN repeater trustee.

We also note that your address in our database shows 4356 Dorothea Drive in Lake Worth. Please take immediate steps to correct it.

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Each station owner is responsible for the operation of their equipment.

They must always meet the FCC defined rules, and may also implement a more stringent set of rules for the operation of their equipment. To use our repeater(s) you must follow our rules. There are few repeaters with more lenient rules than ours, and some which are much more restrictive. Beyond the FCC minimum requirements, it's up to each repeater owner to set their own operating rules. A repeater user needs to try to fit in.

If the rules for the TSARC repeater(s) are uncomfortable for you and do not suit your personal needs or style we encourage you to try other repeaters or even try talking on simplex. We wish for everyone using our repeater(s) to abide by these simple rules and enjoy freely using our repeaters.

Please report interference and flagrant violations on the repeater(s) to repeater@tristatesarc.com.

We welcome you and hope you have many enjoyable conversations on the TSARC repeater(s).

73!

The Executive Board of the Tri-States Amateur Radio Club (TSARC)

Portions of this document were extracted from other repeater owners versions, copyrights apply where applicable. Thanks to those folks!