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## ECHO LINK VOIP

### PART TIME vs. FULL TIME

By Murray Green, K3BEQ - Nov 2005

**The connection of our club's repeaters to the Internet and VOIP** technology began in 1996. The operation presently employs the *Echo Link* software, on a part time basis, as an additional feature of the repeaters. Why part time vs. full time? Good question. Here are some answers:

Almost 3,000 stations check into the Echo Link servers daily. When connected, a station's callsign, location etc., (see below) are listed on the computer screen, (some might say buried), among the listings. The chances of receiving a call are far and few between. Scrolling down the list can be mind boggling although you can scroll by call area, country and even connect to a specific call sign or node number.

Purely as an experiment, Echo Link was activated full time. Incoming calls averaged about 3 or 4 daily but many went unanswered. (Some believe it is not "ham radio" and refuse to use it. But that is their choice.) To provide more activity, outgoing connections are periodically made to stations by the sysop. Requests from local area stations to connect to a specific area or call sign are few and primarily limited to hams visiting the area wanting to talk back home. Enabling members to remotely initiate outgoing connections through DTMF does not seem to substantially increase activity based on listening to those few local repeaters that employ that capability. However, the topic is moot since our interface does not provide for DTMF except for control purposes.

In view of the above, it was deemed not cost effective to keep a computer, transceiver and associated power supply up and running 24/7, 365 days a year for a few daily contacts. (I suspect one could say that about some repeaters.) Nor would it be financially prudent, in our case, to invest in dedicated equipment installed at the repeater site for the same purpose.

In summary, our *part time* operation coupled with connecting out periodically by a system operator has shown to provide about the same amount of activity, or more, as certain repeater systems using Echo Link *full time*. Of course you have to have a system operator willing to do it. In the final analysis, however, whether to operate full or part time is entirely the decision of the specific repeater organization based on their range of activity and financial status.

VOIP has proven to be a beneficial addition to repeaters. It permits hams who cannot put up HF antennas and do not have computers, to operate out of their local areas using a basic VHF/UHF handheld, mobile or base station. For others without HF privileges, it gives them a taste of DX and an

incentive to upgrade to General or Extra class. And during emergencies it enables users to contact stations outside of their immediate area for needed assistance, traffic handling and information. A huge asset to the Amateur Radio Service enabling the meshing of Internet/RF technologies.

*(Echo Link screen listings. Below are 26 connected stations. Imagine what 3,000 look like!)*

The screenshot shows the EchoLink software interface. The main window displays a list of 26 connected stations with columns for Station, Stat, Time, Location, and Node. The stations listed include K248PM, K13X, KQ4UD, KWDL, KY4M, LA6ZEA, LU9CR, LW8EPT, MIACA, MI4WE, M34HQ, M38UV, M3EVM, M3INS, M3KTA, M4NDVQ, N1LFE, N1UKI, N2AZW, N2CZQ, N2MCP, N3TLEZ, N4DFQ, N4SDA, N5DKR, N5QMN, and N5RMR.

Station	Stat	Time	Location	Node
K248PM	On	07:08	Fl Lauderdale Fl	134404
K13X	On	07:09	Lake Worth, FL	150227
KQ4UD	On	07:02	Winston-salem, Nc	37910
KWDL	On	06:08	Davenport, Iowa	69869
KY4M	On	06:05	Glasgow, KY - Matt	89318
LA6ZEA	On	13:10	Sandefjord	25100
LU9CR	On	09:16	Buenos Aires, Argentina	101971
LW8EPT	On	12:04	In Conference (1)	88256
MIACA	On	12:07	Listening (Local QRM)	149352
MI4WE	On	12:06	try:-WWW.EQ50.NET	3207
M34HQ	On	12:08	Jim@helburn-n-east.uk	52055
M38UV	On	12:10	UK East Anglia	149820
M3EVM	On	12:11	Eastbourne	140601
M3INS	Busy	12:05	Busy Back ASAP	69064
M3KTA	On	11:40	Cambridge	109001
M4NDVQ	On	21:00	Now in Japan : JASVQ	130970
N1LFE	On	07:10	West Haven, CT USA	19471
N1UKI	On	07:00	Ocklawaha Florida	55957
N2AZW	On	07:11	Leicester, N.Y.	116041
N2CZQ	On	07:24	Steve Albany Ny	2346
N2MCP	On	07:06	Long Island	21933
N3TLEZ	Busy	07:07	Busy	69703
N4DFQ	On	07:05	Somerset, KY	70620
N4SDA	Busy	07:09	@S Ches in Florida	17900
N5DKR	On	06:00	Elisville, Ns	50270
N5QMN	Busy	06:10	Connect to N5QMN-R	42322
N5RMR	On	04:10	Baton Rouge, La	90549

Station W33V-R  
Ralph Zancha  
Lowington, IL  
The 444.275/PL 103.5 Repeater was put on the air December 5, 1987 on the Lowington water tower.  
It is now on the grain elevator at 220 feet moved there in September 1990  
Owned by W33V and KR9K

Connected to: W33V-R Ralph Zancha  
United States  
w33-56.wireless111.com

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