

The Tri-State Emergency Weather Net History (Draft)

The Tri State Emergency Weather Net started out with a local, once-a-week Hot Springs Emergency Weather net. It was informal, partly to compile weather statistics and partly to encourage use of two meter FM. Lee Renstrom (W0HOJ), and Harry Kruse (W0HOH) were probably the instigators, but there aren't any of the original members alive to contest that. Many of those first members were already silent keys when Lon Seaboldt WS0V retired to Hot Springs. Lon says the beginning was around 1973 or maybe earlier...there were no repeaters, yet, so the net was local.

Shortly after the first net operations, the reason for the net's existence expanded to emergency reporting with members physically going to observation points if the weather was deemed sufficiently threatening. The name of the net changed to the Fall River County Emergency Weather Net, and shortly after that, to the Southern Hills Emergency Weather Net. Net Controls were located in Hot Springs. Except for emergencies, the net met three or four times a week. There was an informal arrangement with the Sheriff's department to relay to them any severe weather reports.

Somewhere in the 1980's, or a little before, the net expanded to include stations in Nebraska (two meters was getting more common and much more effective). A lot of hams had Yagi's, some of them on towers with rotators, and the '85 repeater was activated in about 1977. For a while it was called the South Dakota-Nebraska Emergency Weather Net, but with occasional check-ins from Wyoming It was renamed the Tri-State Emergency Weather Net. Net control stations were still mostly located in Hot Springs, with Lee Renstrom handling traffic several days weekly. The regular schedule was four or five days a week, without any net on the weekends, unless there was an emergency

Lon, WS0V retired to Hot Springs in the late '80s, and started to relieve Lee as net control. When Lee died, (I don't remember the exact year...around '92, I think) I took over the running of the net. We expanded to seven days weekly, with net control stations spotted all over the area. At one time or another we had net controls in Newcastle, WY. Gordon, NE. Eagle Butte, Pine Ridge and Buffalo, SD, to mention a few of the remote ones, and, of course, a whole bunch of more local controls. The '85 repeater covered an immense area, and we had check-ins from Montana and North Dakota, too, when conditions were just right. One of our net members calculated that the '85 repeater covered some 350,000 square miles, and we announced it as "the second highest point between the Rocky Mountains and the Swiss alps." The net opening preamble was established during this time, and is still used, the last I heard.

Sometime in the late '90's the net formalized association with ARES®. Lon, WS0V became Emergency Coordinator for Custer, Fall River, Shannon, and Bennett Counties, and the net attempted to cover storm and flood reports for these counties. That wasn't possible: There just weren't enough hams to do the job, so we gave up the attempt. We kept the affiliation with ARES®, established a formal link to the Weather Bureau, and continued daily reporting of weather observations. We continued to go to reporting points in case of severe weather, though NOAA radar made that rarely necessary. The city of Hot Springs is nearly the only blind spot on their radar, and we can see what's happening from our homes.

When Lon's wife became ill, (2005?) he resigned the EC post. Phil, W0FUI, took the EC, but didn't want to do the net, so it was arranged for Chuck Palmer, (N0UKO) in Rapid City to become Net Manager. Chuck handed it off to Tim Anderson, K0OR who changed the format from completely informal reporting

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to formal style traffic reporting. The '85 repeater was no longer the only repeater in use and the focus of the net moved to the Northern and Central Hills. Butch Kruse, N0DUX's parents, Frankie, W0MZI and Harry, W0HOH, especially, were part of the original Hot Springs Net. Tim, K0OR, was in it early on, and would have been a great resource.

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