

NARS NEWS



The Northwest Amateur Radio Society

Houston, Texas

October 2008



October

Generators: *Everything* you wanted to know and then some...

Just before and just after Hurricane Ike we saw a lot of chatter on the NARS reflector about generators. People were asking for recommendations on various brands, how to size, how to hook up a generator and so on. Unfortunately generators are not like panty hose where one size will fit all. There are just too many variables. The subject of automatic transfer switches and stationary designated generators was discussed along with various fuel options. In addition to the basic equipment required there are several safety concerns that need to be discussed. Of course we're concerned about electrical safety but we also need to be concerned with exhaust fumes and flammable liquids that have taken their toll on many new generator owners.



This photo is a 10,000 HP Gas Turbine Generator Tom KD5EIJ helped package and commission back in the late 1980's. This should make an interesting subject for our October meeting. Join us on the third Friday of October and give us your thought.

Important Dates

Friday, October 17, 7:30 PM - General Membership meeting, Cypress Creek Christian Community Center - Eyeball QSOs, 7:00 PM.

Saturday, October 25th, 2008
- 8:30 AM - VE License Exam Session, Tomball Community Center, S. Cherry & Market streets (just South of Main).

Tuesday, October 28, 7:30 PM - Board of Directors meeting, Ponderosa Fire Station, 17061 Rolling Creek drive.

Wednesday Lunch Bunch - North
Pepperchino Oct 15th
Luby's Cafeteria Oct 22nd
Jason's Deli Oct 29th
Baker Street Pub and Grill Nov 5th
Sweet Tomatoes Nov 12th
BJ's Restaurant & Brewery Nov 19th

Wednesday Lunch Bunch - West
Fajita Willies W. Little York Oct 15th
Jason's Deli - Katy Fwy Oct 22nd
Skeeters Oct 29th
Fajita Willies W. Little York Nov 5th
Fajita Willies W. Little York Nov 12th
Fajita Willies W. Little York Nov 19th

Wednesday Lunch Bunch - Medical Center
New Orleans Cajun Kitchen Oct 15th
Prima Pasta Oct 22th
Jason's Deli Oct 29th
Buffalo Grille Nov 5th
DJ's Old Timey Hamburgers Nov 12th
Marco's Mexican Bar & Grille Nov 19th

"Tail Draggers" Lunch Bunch
11:00 am, Aviator's Grill, Hooks Airport

Notice: NARS membership dues are \$20 per year, renewable on anniversary of last year's full payment.

Deadline for articles to appear in the next issue is the last day of this month.

BREAKFAST

at Denny's

7720 Louetta Road

Saturdays

7:30 AM

President's Corner

September - 2008

We Did! "Get ready, get set, GO!"

Only thing was that Hurricane Ike did the same thing and he was a lot larger than any of us.

We had some participants in the Texas QSO Party, but not as many as there could have been. More could have been if Hurricane Ike had not come along the week before and played havoc with our houses, our property, our towers and antenna's. He did that in grand style to a lot of us.

My Tennadyne T-12 12 ele LPA Yagi was facing one way and the KLM 3 ele 40 meter Yagi was facing another and all different from what the rotor controller says. In addition the 20 foot schedule 80 mast pipe has about a 20 degree bend just above the bottom Yagi. That's a bad deal to easily remedy.

I had just put up a revised set of low-band reversible Beverages using (new) 450 ohm ladderline. It got smashed on all four ends and in between when six oak trees came down.

But at least everything is there. Just takes a lot of labor to fix it up. Some members were not as lucky.

At any rate it did impact our participation in TQP; shades of Hurricane Rita! According to our TQP coordinator, Chuck Sanders, NO5W, there was good participation worldwide. I think he said there were only 7 counties, of 254 total available counties not represented. I think that alone is great!

Chuck did his usual bang up job in both promoting TQP but also running as a CW single op mobile along with his wife as chief pilot.

VE Session Results

Eddy Reynolds - K5WQG
NARS VE Session Manager

Saturday, September 27th VE Test Session Results:

We had a total of 3 candidates. Please welcome the latest addition to the hobby:

- Judy Rollinger - KE5WNK - Technician
- Stanley Polak - KE5WNJ - Technician
- Lonnie Franklin - KE5WNI - Technician

Special thanks to the VEs in attendance for their time and hard work:

- Keith Dutson - NM5G
- Chet Farley - KG5YF
- Bill Skipper - KB5BS
- Bob Walworth - N5ET

The next and last session of the year will be held on Saturday, Oct 25th at 8:30 a.m. at the Tomball Community Center, located at the corner of Market St. & S. Cherry St. Parking is in the rear (south side) of the building. The entrance is on the S. Cherry St. (west) side of the building.

Mike Bragassa - K5UO
President's Column (cont)

As mentioned in last month's column: September meeting was to be our officer nomination night; only to be cancelled due to Hurricane Ike. Our October meeting will be our official officer nomination night.

I ask that each of you seriously think about running for an office. None of these offices are burdensome. They shouldn't be. Don't anyone tell me different.

Even if you have held an officer position in NARS before, please step up and run for an office again. For some of you this was probably a long, long time ago. It's time to contribute again. Give back to the club that was good to you!

I read over the bylaws and sure-enough, members are allowed to be an officer more than one time.

I also ask the newer members to step up and run for an office of the club. We need both new-blood and experienced members at the helm This gives a good trade off between some-of-the old and some-of -the-new. We need both.

We need to maintain NARS as a club with vitality. This comes from members BOTH younger and older participating and contributing. Don't be a wall-hugger; step up and contribute. You did it before? Doesn't appear to have hurt you, plus we need your experience. I did it before doesn't fly any more.

Texas QSO Party 2008 – A Brief Recap

Chuck Sanders - NO5W

TQP Coordinator

All the logs are not yet in, and won't be until the end of the month but here's a brief recap on how it went.

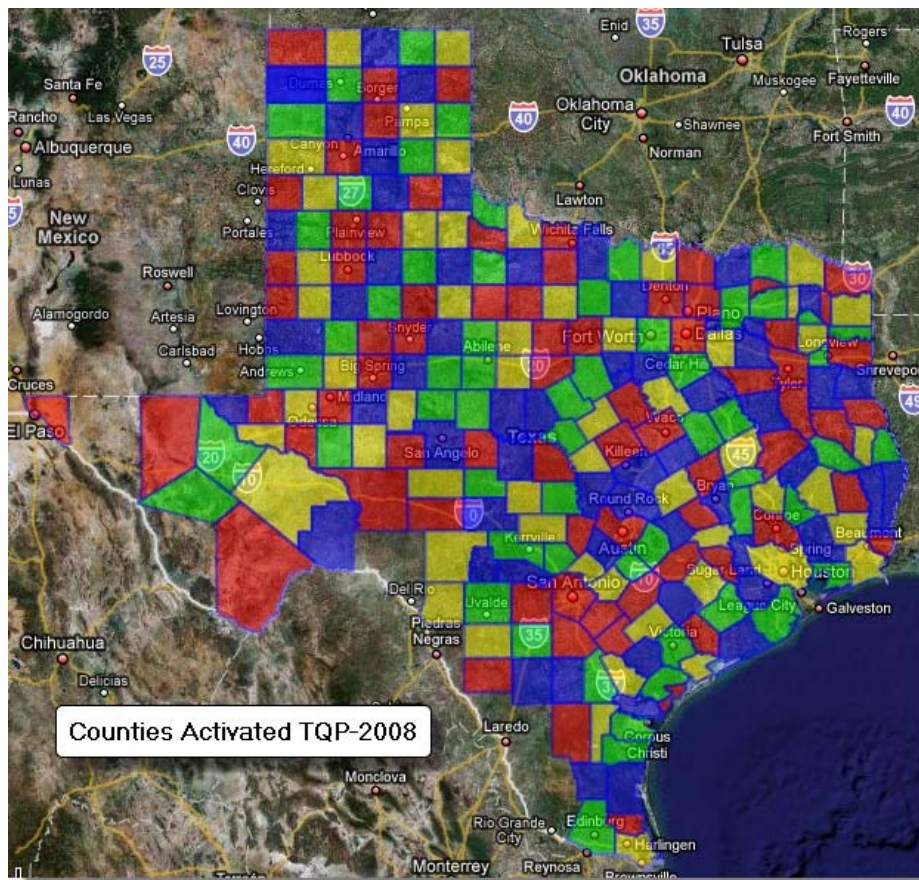
Coordinating a QSO party is not a whole lot different from hosting a party at your place. If you're like me, with a good bit of "the Knack for all things mechanical and electrical" balanced with a significant amount of social ineptitude coordinating these events can be a bit stressful. Things that keep a coordinator up at night:

- Will enough mobile ops take to the road to fill in the counties keeping things interesting for the visitors?

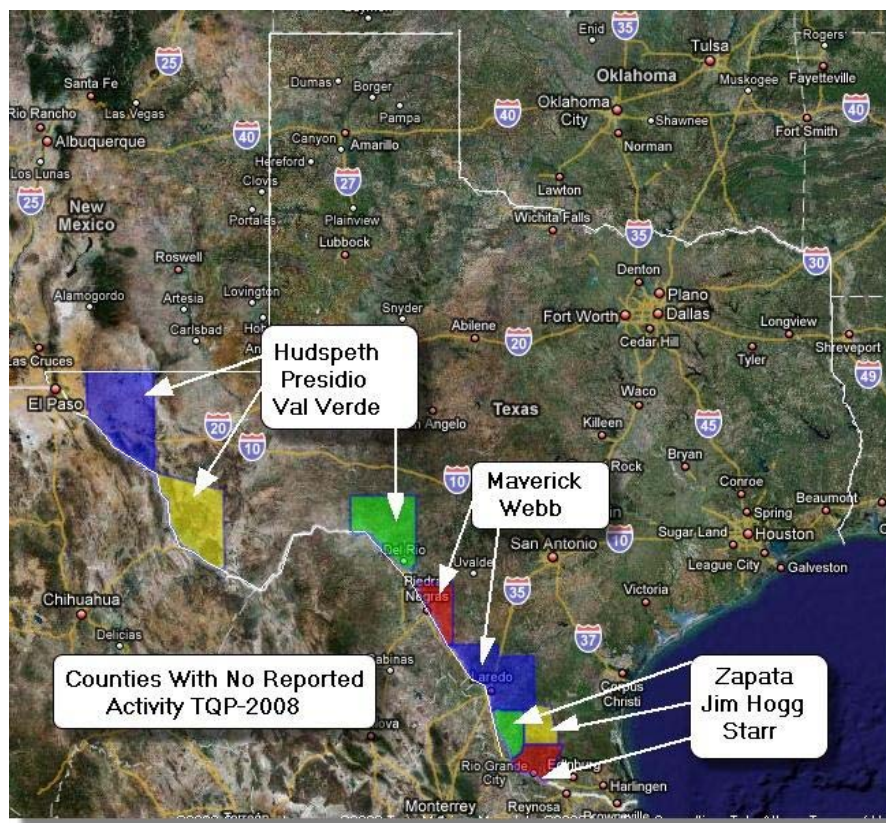
- Will enough visitors show up to make it worthwhile for the in state ops?
- Will the weather cooperate?
- Will radio conditions allow for decent conversations between the guests?
- Will other parties draw potential guests away?
- Will enough door prize sponsors come forward to supply the coveted wall decorations.

With the status of gas prices, the recent pounding from Hurricane Ike experienced by the southeastern part of the state, and the hide and seek nature of the sun spots, I had some concern about each of the above. So when I was asked to make a prediction for the Radio Sport

website of NS3T I cautiously told Jamie I'd be happy if we were able to activate at least 220 of the 254 counties. I actually thought that was an optimistic prediction but in the days leading up to the party that estimate was proven to be overly cautious as mobiles checked in with their plans and in many cases flexed those plans to reduce duplication and allow more counties to be covered with a somewhat smaller mobile group than we had in 2007. By Friday the day before the event the RSVPs indicated we'd be able to activate 243 counties – wow was I pleasantly surprised. Reviewing the early logs I notice at least three additional counties showed up so although we probably didn't reach our goal of 254 we came mighty close with around 246. Here's two maps showing what we activated and what we missed.



Texas QSO Party 2008 – A Brief Recap (cont)



Many thanks to the following mobiles who announced plans prior to the event: K5NA, N5NA, KB5U, KU5B, KE5MS, WW5X, W0BH, K5UN, W3DYA, K5MRA, KK5LO, WB0TEV, W5ETJ, N5UV, KB6OJE, N3BB, and K5SF. I shouldn't forget to mention W5ESE who hoofed it up into the Guadalupe Mountains for a little backpacking trip to activate Culberson County just south of the New Mexico-Texas state line. I recall working Scott twice and while signals from his Altoid's can transceiver were not strong they were definitely readable.

Band conditions were in general on the long side making it somewhat difficult to work other Texas stations but on the other hand the long conditions made it possible to work into Europe from the mobile during almost the entire day. It was fun working DL3DXX and LY2ZZ more than a dozen times during the weekend and a couple of times a

Swedish station and a French station made it into the log. That's a real treat and hopefully an indication of things to come as sunspots return and propagation on the high HF bands returns.

A sampling of the soapbox comments and the comments on the 3830 website indicate that a good time was had by all. Here's a few of those comments:

This contest continues to be my favorite ham radio activity of the year. It has everything: drama, a fresh pileup of really great ops every few minutes, jaw-dropping scenery, exquisite food (he exaggerates sometimes), and an incredibly talented team committed to mounting a serious multi-multi rover operation. [W5ZL]

Wow, that was fun. Got on here and there in between working on a tower project yesterday and going to church this morning. Lots of great mobile efforts. A tip of the hat from Montana to

you guys at the other end of the cattle drive, [K7BG]

Another great TQP has come and gone. Thanks to all the mobile Ops and drivers for once again making it a fun 18 hours. Also, thanks to NARS for once again sponsoring TQP. [N1LN]

Tnx to NARS for sponsoring this really terrific state QSO party. I'm telling you'all, if you haven't tried this mobile, you are missing out on a fantastic ham radio experience. [N3BB]

WOW! Plenty of action in this one...great job of promoting and hats off again to all of those mobiles...never a dull moment. [N4PN]

Never a dull moment, plenty of action, jaw-dropping scenery, drama, fantastic ham radio experience. Sounds like a successful party to me.

Hope you can join in the fun in TQP 2009.

Stories from Hurricane Ike

Norm Covey - K5OS

No physical damage except to our trees but we didn't lose any trees, just a few limbs. The 90' tower came through unscathed; the top beam was turned 25 degrees to the west and that was the extent of any radio damage. We lost our electricity and water because of Ike. We immediately collected 100 gallons of rain water to allow us to flush the potty. We had a generator that kept our freezer, refrigerator, satellite TV, phones and internet up and running. The cool front came through; it kicked off some thunderstorms and they took out the phones and internet. The water came on after a couple of days, I dumped the rain water and the water immediately went off again for another day...I looked to the heavens and said "That was a good one." The water came on Tuesday as did the electricity and the phones were on by Thursday. By the following Sunday, the yard was cleared, cleaned, mowed and you would never guess that we'd just been through a hurricane.

We were very lucky

Jack F. Dougherty - K0CO/5

1. Check that HT to make sure it works. My old reliable FT530 gave up the ghost the very weekend that Ann and I were stranded here due to flight cancellations mid-'cane.
2. Check them new HT connectors: The replacement FT60R has the new "mini" antenna and mic connectors and the old ones don't work with the new HT. Put me out of contact another day this week as I shopped for adaptors at both EPS and HARS on opposite ends of town to get it all to work.
3. /0-land station fared just fine. /5-land apartment at Westheimer/Belt8 location suffered only minor water entry and power/water loss for 24-hours. Got real good at hauling swimming pool water by the bucket full for flushing duty.

Larry Kendall - K5END

I think that because of the hurricane and the extended power outage, people will now change the way they think about trees.

It's freedom of choice: abundant trees or dependable power.

Weeks before the storm we had 8 new window shutters installed on the face of the house. Six of those 8 blew off the house during the night or early morning of September 13. All six were recovered. And a new rain gutter downspout blew off. We got that back too. What are the odds of all that?

We have a lovely live oak that now LEANS precariously toward the house. The roots on the "weather" (as in opposite of leeward) side of the tree raised the lawn up like a tent, as if the grass were fabric. It is hollow underneath the grass. It's like a

drum head. I've never seen anything like that before. Tree man arrives Monday--and he is insured and bonded or whatever.



Highway 146

It's an odd feeling, but every waking hour the first ten days after the storm I spent working on non-ham radio stuff for storm recovery, none of which was ham radio related. All I have are a few mildly interesting photos I snapped here and there during storm recovery at work. Attached for your interest, but they are probably not what you are looking for in the newsletter content. On the other hand, the irony of the counterpoint (no pun intended) doing radio to remedy the need for the generators everyone has been talking so much about, so they can do radio...

Oh man....

I think the sleep deprivation has finally got to me. I'm talking about ironic electricity.



Electric Crews

Stories from Hurricane Ike

Steve N5EN & Nancy N5EEN Niles

We did great! We had land line phone, DSL, and satellite service the whole time. Comcast and CenterPoint both went down and stayed down...

Nancy and I purchased a generator at the beginning of August. Nancy had a feeling that "it was about time". She was right! We were out of power for 85 hours. We ran the generator (7KW with Honda 13HP engine) for 84.2 hours of that time. It used 50 gallons of gasoline. We powered everything in our house except the big 220 stuff. If we had natural gas service at our house, I'd use it rather than gasoline to power the generator.

All our antennas came through the storm fine except one. My 30 meter vertical, which had one of it's guys attached to the rear fence, fell shortly after the fence did. The good news is that it snapped right at the feed point insulator - no damage to the vertical element aluminum - and I have a spare insulator. Here's before and after Ike pics of the 30 meter vertical feed point.



Before (above) and After (below)



Mark Tyler K5GQ

How about this for starters:

TH7DXX & crank up tower - destroyed

6-holes in roof with largest about 1' square.

Majority of water damage was to Marks clothes.

We were on vacation in Lubbock, dealing with a 9 rain streets were closed that we planned to take.



Mark Tyler's Backyard

Bill Denton - W5SB

Back during the during the summer, I had a feeling my 100' tower would never make it though a Hurricane. With all the large trees on our property I envisioned one of them would or could fall across the guys wires and render the whole thing a pile us junk. So I had an offer on the 3 beams and the tower. Bob NX5M came and took down the tower and W5IDX took the beams. When Ike came through it took down several trees and our QTH. Two of the largest trees (70-80 ft) fell across where the North guy wires where. The whole thing would have been a tangled mess in the middle of the two trees. The tree are still laying where they fell but the tower is long gone. The three wire antens are still up but need some repair.

Bob Walworth - N5ET

Yup, we're finally back on line, with commercial power to the house. Right at noon today. Only took 16 days, 10 hours.

Ahhha, the cool air feels good.

Ain't it so, Bob!

Stories from Hurricane Ike

John Ellis - W5PDW

Ike spared us major damage. Trees fell everywhere, but none came to live with us! The storm as was the flood in 94, a very humbling experience. Hams to the rescue. K5OS brought his (just out of the box) Honda generator, our neighbors generator powered their water well and a 200' garden hose provided us with a really cold shower from his well. I highly recommend W5KAM for tree trimming. No job too big AND he brings doughnuts !! Ken and I finished getting 2 trees off the power lines about 3 PM on the 22nd and by 7 PM we had power thanks to the crew from Florida. I never did and still don't like camping out!

The generator that Norm brought is a Honda 2 KW. I hope to have one before next Hurricane season. It is quiet as a mouse (about an 80-lb mouse) and eats like a bird (1.1 gallons of gas ran it 8 hours). The gas can that Norm has is almost as neat as the generator. Turn it upside down, put the spout in the tank, it fills, never drips a drop when you remove the spout. No lids or caps to remove. Never seen one like it b-4 !

Jerry Whiting - KB5VGD

Right after Rita my bride suggested that we get a generator to keep the house livable and the refrigerator and freezer working. I then went to talk to George Carlson KC5RCC who has a generator operating on natural gas. Based on Natural gas being the most available source of fuel, I then looked for a generator that could be converted easily and carry a minimum load to keep the home livable during a long outage. This also was a factor in sizing the generator looking at the circuits to be powered it came to a 5K plus to keep every thing we wanted running (kitchen, Master bed room, Laundry room, computers room, and shack, freezer and refrigerator in garage)

After talking to several hams it was their opinion that the Honda power plant was the most reliable for this service. At northern tool we found an 8k surge, 6.6k continuous output, driven by a 13hp Honda engine. I also elected to stay with the manual recoil starting (this helped in keeping the cost down).

A fellow ham in Florida has a business called "Alternate Fuels Technologies" that sells conversion kits for Gasoline engines to natural gas or propane.

He actually races racecars fueled with propane. The kits are reasonable and easy to install. On mine I now have dual fuel capabilities. The unit is easy to prime and a little squirt of either and 2 pulls, the unit starts

As this is a Honda engine, the oil should be changed per the manual. The engine takes 1.1 Qt oil and can be found most anywhere.

The site location in the Garage was based on distance to the main breaker and the new location of the transfer Sw, A must. With out, the liabilities can be more catastrophic than not having electricity. Engine was out side garage and generator part was inside (I cut an access in the wall of the garage.) This required me to run a gas line from the gas meter 40 ft away.

My Handy Dandy plumber did this with a ball shut-off valve at both ends of the line.

I had Trim Electric who is also a friendly electrician to hams put in the transfer switch and test the system out.

During the "Ike Hurricane" our generator ran 317-hrs (13.4 days), 4-oil changes, and only 2-phantom shut-downs. The generator restarted without a problem. Gas used since last reading 186-ccf, (20-ccf cost \$23.91), therefore total cost was \$222.36 divided by 13.5 = \$16.47/per day!

H. O. Townsend - K5CX

Thanks to Tom KD5EIJ and Marty W5MF (I like that call), I can answer the question from many of you.

The "aluminum tree" out back, as Wade Anderson K5TN referred to it, is A-OK!

The smaller of our two Elm trees (60-foot tall) was split by the wind during Ike. An 8-10-inch limb fell right across the NE Phillystran guys. From the street, the tower looked perfect. But placing an eye at the base of the Rohn 45, NE tower leg, you could clearly see the top two sections (70 and 80-foot) were pointing toward UA3-land.

Tom seems to think there had to be 2,000-lbs resting on the guys.

Our approach was to cut timber furthest away from the tree trunk to relieve the sheer weight on the guys being careful not to disturb any vertical support. As Tom came in with the Binford 8000-chainsaw, we were finally able to ease the bottom guy out from under the limb and out of the bind.

This was both good and bad. Good that the guy was out from under the weight, but bad from the standpoint that now the top guy was under all of the limb weight. With a ladder brought in for the final kill, Tom gunned the 8000, and wood chips started flying. After a last minute *CAUTION* to not let the Binford drop, and cut the guy in the final cut, Tom let'er rip!

(cont'd)

Stories from Hurricane Ike

In a flash, the final cut was made.

The upper guy acted as the master spring in a Swiss watch, the last 2-foot piece of the limb was cut.

The limb stub quickly flipped skyward catchin' the brim of Tom's hat. In a second flash, Anita and I hollered "Tom!" At that point, Tom's eyes were as big a harvest moon. Tom was doing a one point balancing act on the 6-foot step-ladder, with the Binford flying around like an Aggie pennant at a Kyle Field home game. The flowering pampas grass plums nearby were being wacked like flying corn from a cob-stripper!

Limb down.

Chainsaw down.

Tom safely down.

A quick check of the "aluminum tree," showed no long term damage.

As for the antenna check, 20-17-15 meters work well. The 40-12-10 meter element does not.

How could I be this lucky? One neighbor said the neighborhood had 90-mph and the other neighbor said 100-mph winds.

Yes, the 36-foot boom spun to almost 180-degrees out of direction. But, hey, it's still up.

Thanks to Tom and Marty for their help!



Guy-post under the top horizontal limb



Most homes and front yards looked just like this!



Guy Wires are in the top-right of picture



Welcome, Congratulations, and Condolences

Welcome to our newest member:
James Greenlee. No license yet but working on it!

NARS Resource List

General Help:

Bill Stietenroth K5ZTY
281-893-3901, k5zty@juno.com
Allen Majeski WA5REJ
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Bill Denton W5SB
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Madison Jones W5MJ
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Deral Kent K5WNO
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VHF/UHF:

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281-894-5942

PC Programming and Operations:

Keith Dutson NM5G 281-351-7683,
keith@dutson.net

Building Electronics & Kits:

Mark Tyler K5GQ
281-587-0256, k5gq@juno.com

Interference (Basic Advice):

Terry Myers KQ5U
281-443-6042,
tmyers1031@sbcglobal.net

Card Checking for Awards:

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NETS

10-Meter Ragchew: Mon 8:00 PM,
28.444 MHz Coordinator: Open

2-Meter Wedneaday Night: 8:00 PM,
146.06/66 MHz, Coordinator; Jerry
KB5VGD

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VE SESSION (ARRL) Manager:

Eddy Reynolds K5WQG
reynolds_eddy@yahoo.com

REPEATERS (KA5AKG)

2-m: 146.06/146.66 MHz Tone: 141.3
70 cm: 444.375/449.375 MHz Tone:103.5

MEETINGS

Monthly General Membership

Third Friday each month at 7:30 PM
Cypress Creek Christian Community
Center, 6823 Cypresswood Drive

Saturday Breakfast

Denny's, 7720 Louetta, 7:30 AM

Wednesday Lunch 11:30 AM

Various locations (Info on 146.660 and
listed on front page in Important Dates
column)

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