Distracted Driving

Current interpretations of the California Vehicle Code, after enactment of AB 1222 to amend Section 23123.5 of the Vehicle Code, indicate that it is legal to operate installed mobile amateur radio equipment while driving your car. Holding a handheld radio by itself (no speaker-mic or external antenna) while driving might not be legal, according to some interpretations. Whether legal or not, is it safe?

Watching scary TV ads by car insurance companies should be enough to prevent you from doing anything (especially texting!) that would interrupt your driving focus. Losing focus for a critical few seconds is caused by glancing at a GPS, checking who called or texted, eating or drinking, talking with your passenger, or (gasp!) talking on your ham radio. No, I’m not suggesting that we remove ham equipment from our cars (which would be contrary to our RACES emergency communications capabilities), but I can’t emphasize enough the dangers of using that equipment while driving in heavy southern California traffic. HF equipment, especially, is dangerous (but so enjoyable!) to use while driving, as we glance at our transceivers to check frequencies and modes and tune around for interesting DX contacts.

More fatal accidents occur in areas familiar to drivers than in unfamiliar areas. Accidents near a driver’s home or on familiar roads going to work are more common than while driving on vacation. Drivers tend to focus more when driving in unfamiliar areas. When driving near home, we tend to be oblivious and desensitized to our driving environment, and perhaps focus more on our radios than on pedestrians or on other drivers making unexpected turns or stops.

Figures from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and other agencies identify three main types of distracted driving—visual (taking your eyes off the road), manual (taking your hands off the wheel), and cognitive (taking your mind off the driving task). Using ham equipment while driving can trigger all three causes—visual (looking at your transceiver’s frequency), manual (tuning your VFO or switching frequencies, or even turning your loop on a T-hunt), and cognitive (thinking of what you are saying over the air to another ham, or how to get to a location to which you are deployed during an emergency).

Every second of focus is critical while driving. You never know when another vehicle might dart into you lane unexpectedly. (A defensive driving course will teach you to always leave room for escape, especially while speeding on a freeway, in case of such unexpected lane changes. Avoid tailgating!) You never know when a jay-walking pedestrian will do something stupid. Stay alert! Stay focused!

Using amateur radio equipment while driving is not worth risking your life or your passenger’s life, or another driver’s life, or a pedestrian’s life. You will never enjoy amateur radio again if using it costs a life. Don’t let your amateur radio transceiver distract you.
Members of County and City RACES and MOU units in Orange County gathered early Saturday morning, May 5, 2018, at the back parking lot of OCSD Communications & Technology to set up vehicular and portable stations for ACS Radio Rodeo. Setup officially started at 0800 hours, but many units arrived much earlier to get ready for the exercise. Instead of sending and receiving a large number of messages on modified ICS 213 forms, as in previous City/County RACES & MOU ACS exercises, this event gave us practice in setting up for emergency communications in the field and testing our capabilities of making local contact on various bands, including 40 meters, 6 meters, 2 meters, 1¼ meters, and 70 centimeters. It also tested communications capabilities between the Cal OES Southern Region counties on 40 meters, 2 meters, 1¼ meters, and 70 centimeters.

OCSD Emergency Communications Manager Lee Kaser, KK6VIV, arranged for the Orange County location and made sure that the OCSD Control 7 Chevrolet Tahoe was available for local net control duties. He showed up bright and early with the Tahoe. Thanks to Brad Russo, KB6GPM, for programming the Tahoe’s radios for the event. Control 7 was used for local net control on 2 meters and 70 centimeters. It could also have been used on 40 meters, but that was handled from the van of Newport Beach RACES Chief Radio Officer Peter Putnam, NI6E, who also provided local net control radios on 6 meters and 1¼ meters.

Lee Kaser also provided a PA system that OCRACES Chief Radio Officer Ken Bourne, W6HK, used for briefing all participants at 0830 hours on exercise procedures, and for debriefing after 1100 hours. Lee used the PA system for announcing frequency changes during the local net, so that the city RACES and MOU units would know which frequency to select to communicate with net control.

OCRACES Sgt. Bob McFadden, KK6CUS, coordinated local net control operations, with Sgt. Tom Tracey, KC6FIC, overseeing Control 7 as Applicant Dennis Brunning, KC6NVX, operated and Tony Scalpi, N2VAJ, logged. Ken Tucker, WF6F, operated the other local net control from the NI6E van. Thanks to them, the entire net operations went very smoothly. Capt. Bourne operated his portable station on 40 meters, 6 meters, 2 meters, 1¼ meters, and 70 centimeters, while checking the entire “Rodeo” operation.

Cal OES Communications Reserve Unit (CRU) handled the roll call of Operational Areas (County RACES) in the Southern Region from its Regional EOC at the Joint Forces Training Base in Los Alamitos, on 40 meters SSB, as well as on 2 meters, 1¼ meters, and 70 centimeters, using various repeaters and linked systems. Some of the county RACES
units that the REOC contacted, in addition to Orange County, included Los Angeles County, Ventura County, Riverside County (downtown Riverside and Indio), San Bernardino County, and Los Angeles County. They also communicated with the City of Los Angeles ACS. Very few contacts were made on 40 meters, due to poor propagation. Visiting our Orange County site from Cal OES was Tim Peters, K6TVP, Deputy Chief CRU Officer, South.

Providing expert advice for the exercise was Robert Stoffel, KD6DAQ. Under logistics, OCRACES Lt. Scott Byington, KC6MMF, was in charge of section staffing, such as field support safety and parking assistance. Other OCRACES members assisting him and performing other tasks included Sgt. Jack Barth, AB6VC, Randy Benicky, N6PRL, Roger Berchtold, WB6HMW, Sgt. Ernest Fierheller, KG6LXT, Walter Kroy, KC6HAM, Martin La Rocque, N6NTH, Matt Luczko, KM6CAO, Fran Needham, KJ6UJS, Harvey Packard, KM6BV, and Tom Wright, KJ6SPE.

City RACES and MOU units were an impressive and important part of the ACS Radio Rodeo Orange County site. Besides Peter Putnam and his NI6E van from Newport Beach RACES, we had vehicles, trailers, and portable stations from American Red Cross, Anaheim RACES, Buena Park RACES, Costa Mesa RACES (MESAC), Fountain Valley RACES, Irvine RACES (IDEC), Mission Viejo RACES, and Orange RACES (COAR). Also participating were Huntington Beach RACES and Laguna Niguel ACS. Inspection of the various stations occurred mostly during the county-to-county roll call from Cal OES.

Some ACS Radio Rodeo participants said that this type of exercise was more realistic than Field Day for emergency setups in the field, and more realistic than sending and receiving large numbers of written messages on ICS 213 forms.
Next OCRACES Meeting: June 4th

The next OCRACES meeting will be on Monday, June 4, 2018, at 7:30 PM, at OCSD Communications & Technology Division, 840 N. Eckhoff Street, Suite 104, in Orange. Our guest speakers will be Chris Doering, KI6QBM, and Jim Biram, K6JKB, from Land Ops, which is a large amateur radio club that focuses on off-road driving, navigation, radio and signal communications, vehicle recovery, night operations, and search and rescue drills. Some of their "Ops" include hiking, rappelling, and working with drones.

City/County RACES & MOU Meeting: June 11th

The next City/County RACES & MOU meeting will be on Monday, June 11, 2018, at 7:30 PM, at OCSD Communications & Technology Division, 840 N. Eckhoff Street, Suite 104, in Orange. At this meeting we will have an after-action report on the May 5th ACS Radio Rodeo, followed by brief reports from each agency on recent and scheduled activities.

Field Day with OCARC: June 23-24

OCRACES members are asked to support the Orange County Amateur Radio Club this year in operating and setting up at ARRL Field Day on June 23-24, 2018. OCARC will again hold its Field Day at the Walter Knott Education Center at 7300 La Palma Avenue in Buena Park. Contact Ron Mudry, W6WG, to offer your availability (day time or night time) and your band/mode preferences. Ron’s e-mail address is ron@mudry.us, and his cell number is 714-328-9308. For more information, see the OCARC Web site at http://w6ze.org/.

HRO Ham Jam: July 7th

OCRACES has been invited to exhibit at HRO’s 7th Annual Ham Jam on Saturday, July 7, 2018, at 933 N. Euclid Street in Anaheim. Setup will be at 8:00 AM. Store hours are from 10:00 AM until 5:30 PM, although most exhibitors start leaving after the 3:00 PM drawing. Ham Jam will have its usual round of suppliers and clubs and seminars, as well as amateur radio license testing. HRO will also have its famous hot dog lunch, provided by the Big Brothers Big Sisters of Orange County.

Sandi Heyn, WA6WZN, Silent Key

We are very sad to report that well-known ARRL stalwart and former Orange Section Manager Sandra Mae "Sandi" Heyn, WA6WZN, of Costa Mesa, died on April 28, 2018, after a lengthy illness. An ARRL Life Member, she was 75. Sandi was the wife of ARRL Honorary Vice President and past ARRL Southwestern Division Director Fried Heyn, WA6WZO, who relied on her as his trusted assistant. The couple often appeared together at ARRL and other amateur radio functions, and Sandi nearly always accompanied her husband to ARRL Headquarters for the ARRL Board's twice-yearly meetings during his years as a Director. As Fried said, "We were joined at the hip." Married for 57 years, the Heyns continued as amateur radio ambassadors even after their official League service concluded.

In addition to her service as Orange SM from 1983 until 1985, Sandi served as a member of the ARRL Planning Committee during ARRL President Vic Clark's, W4KFC, administration, was Orange Section Emergency Coordinator, and was president of the Young Ladies Radio League in 1983. She was Orange Section ARRL Affiliated Club Coordinator from 1987 until 2003, and she chaired the Orange County Council of Amateur Radio Organizations in 1991 and the Los Angeles Area Council of Amateur Radio Clubs in 1992. Sandi received the ARRL Southwestern Division Meritorious Service Award in 2001.

She also was a US Army Military Affiliate Radio Service (MARS) volunteer, a member of several amateur radio clubs in California, and was a QCWA Life Member. She regularly volunteered at the ARRL booth and in the amateur radio reception during the annual National Association of Broadcasters conventions in Las Vegas. She played a significant role in organizing the 1992 ARRL National Convention in Los Angeles. Sandi was a senior electronic technician at Rockwell Collins Inc. in Newport Beach, California. As time permitted, the Heyns would take to the ski slopes at Mammoth Mountain.

In accordance with her wishes, Sandi’s body will be donated to science.
Don Poysa, KØVNJ, was the fox on the monthly cooperative T-Hunt on Monday, May 21, 2018. He hid in the parking lot behind Hoag Hospital Irvine, near Alton Parkway and Hoag Irvine. Hiding with Don was Robbie Robinson, KB6CJZ. Both are city of Orange RACES (COAR) members.

Richard Sanders, K6RBS, from Mission Viejo, was the first to find the fox. He heard Don check into the 2-meter OCRACES ACS net twice, just before the hunt, and got instant bearings with his Doppler direction-finding system. Second place was taken by Ron Allerdice, WA6CYY, from Costa Mesa. Next were Peter Gonzalez, KC6TWS, and Pete Bergstrom, K6PB, from Irvine. Fourth place was taken by the OCRACES team of Ken Bourne, W6HK, Dennis Brunning, KC6NVX, and Roger Kepner, W6SQQ.

The next hunt will be on Monday, June 18, 2018, immediately following the OCRACES 2-meter net (approximately 7:20 PM). The fox will hide on paved, publicly accessible property in a city or sector of Orange County to be announced a few days before the hunt. No fees will be required to drive directly to the fox. He will transmit on the input (146.295 MHz) of the 146.895 MHz repeater. Hunters will compare bearings via the 448.320 MHz repeater and are encouraged to beacon their positions via APRS throughout the hunt. We are looking for a volunteer to be the fox.

The cooperative T-hunts are usually held on the third Monday of each month. The hunts provide excellent practice in working together to find sources of interference quickly. The hunts are not official RACES events, so DSW (Disaster Service Worker) coverage does not apply. Please drive carefully!

Fox-hunt loops and beams are available from Arrow Antenna and HRO, including the Arrow Model FHL-VHF fox-hunt loop (covers 1 MHz to 600 MHz) and the Arrow Model 146-3 three-element portable hand-held yagi. The Arrow OFHA 4-MHz offset attenuator can be useful when close to the fox, to prevent receiver overload. For on-foot hunting, the BC-146.565 three-element, hand-held, foldup, yagi antenna is available from Bob Miller Enterprises (http://www.rdfantennas.com), along with the VK3YN MK4 sniffer. An all-mode transceiver is quite useful, allowing hunters to switch to the SSB or CW mode for detecting extremely weak signals, or to switch in a built-in attenuator, reduce RF gain, or tune slightly off frequency when dealing with extremely strong signals. Some hunters use the DF2020T radio direction finder kit, which is a Doppler system available from Global TSCM Group, Inc. (http://www.kn2c.us). A very similar system is the MFJ-5005 Doppler direction finder. Useful apps are available for iPhones and Android phones. For some excellent information on T-hunting, see http://www.homingin.com.

Citizen Corps Exercise Planned for Jan. 2019

The Orange County California Citizen Corps Council (OC5) is tentatively planning a major exercise for January 2019, and RACES will be involved. The vision of the OC5 program is to harness the power of every individual through education, training, and volunteer service to make communities safer, stronger, and better prepared to respond to disasters and emergencies. OC5 programs and partners include the Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) program, Community Emergency Preparedness Academy (CEPA), Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) program, Fire Corps, RACES, USA on Watch Neighborhood Watch, OneOC, and Volunteers in Police Service (VIPS).
Irvine RACES (IDEC)

IDEC will participate in Field Day activities during June 22-24, 2018, at Los Lomas Community Park, 10 Federation Way, in Irvine.

Laguna Woods RACES

The Laguna Woods Amateur Radio Club will participate in Field Day on June 23-24, 2018, in two ways. They will have a table at SOARA’s location in Gilleran Park. Grace Stencel, KM6JOS, and Ron Phillips, AE6QU, are in charge of this phase. They will make Field Day radio contacts from the radio room in Clubhouse 1. Don Schwab, K6IAA, is in charge of this phase.

Hospital Disaster Support Communications System (HDSCS)

On Tuesday May 15, 2018, HDSCS communicators deployed to numerous Orange County hospitals, participating in the Orange County Multi-Agency Disaster group spring drill. While members were allowed to stage near assigned hospitals, they couldn't proceed in until the individual hospitals activated HDSCS via the unit’s paging system. This created realism for the hospitals and the responding communicators and forced everyone to deal with the different times that hospitals and EMS get onto the HDSCS net. Hospitals, simulating coping with a fast-moving wildfire, and resulting issues of phone-system failures, pressed the communicators into service to handle messages dealing with such requests as needs for N-95 masks, additional staff, ventilators, and transfers of patients to sister facilities. Midway through the drill, message traffic was so heavy that five repeaters, made available to HDSCS by clubs and individuals, were in use. The following week the Orange County Multi-Agency Disaster group monthly meeting was held with an initial overview of the drill discussed. Some highlights have been the HDSCS communicators’ competence with the forms in use by the hospitals and EMS for messages, and the ability to relay to sister hospitals outside of Orange County. A full after-action conference will take place the first week in June.

Also, in the last two weeks, leadership gave a presentation at the Bastanchury Davita Dialysis facility in Fullerton on the potential use of amateur radio support. Representatives of Davita Dialysis Centers from Brea, Orange, Santa Ana, and Tustin areas, including two others from Fullerton, attended. Need for dialysis in Orange country is increasing, so outpatient centers are becoming more prevalent and the service they perform is life critical. These sites are part of the many that are now required to meet disaster planning guidelines set forth by the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services.

Orange County SKYWARN

A new spotter reporting form is available at https://inws.ncep.noaa.gov/report/. Or on https://www.weather.gov/sgx/, click the “Current Hazards” tab and then “Submit Report.”
Mission Statement

County of Orange RACES has made a commitment to provide all Public Safety departments in Orange County with the most efficient response possible to supplement emergency/disaster and routine Public Safety communications events and activities. We will provide the highest level of service using Amateur and Public Safety radio resources coupled with technology, teamwork, safety, and excellence. We will do so in an efficient, professional, and courteous manner, accepting accountability for all actions. We dedicate ourselves to working in partnership with the Public Safety community to professionally excel in the ability to provide emergency communications resources and services.

County of Orange RACES Frequencies

40 m: 7250 kHz SSB (City/County/MOU Net—Saturdays, 1000 hours)
10 m: 29.540 MHz input, 107.2 Hz PL
20 m: 146.895 MHz output, 146.295 MHz input, 136.5 Hz PL*
20 m: 146.595 MHz simplex
1.25 m: 223.160 MHz input, 110.9 Hz PL
23 cm: output of 2-meter repeater, 1920 hours

Upcoming Events:

- June 4: OCRACES Meeting, 840 N. Eckhoff Street, Suite 104, Orange, 1930-2130 hours
- June 11: City/County RACES & MOU Meeting, 840 N. Eckhoff Street, Suite 104, Orange, 1930-2130 hours
- June 15: Orange County Amateur Radio Club Meeting, American Red Cross (George M Chitty Building), 600 Parkcenter Drive, Santa Ana, 1900 hours
- June 18: Cooperative T-Hunt on input of 2-meter repeater, 1920 hours
- June 23-24: Field Day
- July 7: Ham Jam, Ham Radio Outlet, 933 N. Euclid Street, Anaheim, 0800 (setup) to 1600 hours

RACES Program Coordinator
(Emergency Comm’s Manager)
Lee Kaser, KK6VIV
714-704-8080

Chief Radio Officer (Captain)
Ken Bourne, W6HK
714-997-0073

Radio Officer (Lieutenant)
Scott Byington, KC6MMF

Assistant Radio Officers (Sergeants)
Jack Barth, AB6VC
Ernest Fierheller, KG6LXT
Bob McFadden, KK6CUS
Tom Tracey, KC6FIC

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