The Capitol Hill Monitor

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VIRGINIA MEDEVAC PROGRAMS

The medevac helicopter business is in full bloom in Virginia. Today, nine medevac programs fly helicopters from 17 different bases throughout the state.

While pilots and mechanics typically work for the vendor, the medical crews work for a local medical facility or provider.

Thanks to the assistance of Taylor Goodman, Bruce Harper, Jeff Holmes, Jay, James Richardson, Richard Rowland and John Wilson, we have the details on the Virginia medevac services.

Frequencies used by the individual services are listed below. Note, however, that 123.025 is a popular frequency for chit-chat between public safety helicopters in the Washington-Baltimore area. Also, 123.05 is a common frequency used by civilian helipads nationwide. In addition, Jeff recommends Reagan National's 120.75 and Davidson Airfield's 126.3 to assist in monitoring area helicopters.

Medevac related links:
http://alecbuck.com/airambulance/
http://www.alecbuck.com/gallery/categories.php?cat_id=344
http://www.flightweb.com
http://www.adamsairmed.org/states/Virginia.pdf
http://www.airems.com/
http://lifeevac.com/ODEMSAMatrix.pdf

Fairfax County Police

Website:
http://www.co.fairfax.va.us/police/police5.htm#Tag11
Frequencies:
16016 t Headquarters police trunked talkgroup
Call sign:
Fairfax 1, 2 – based on Ox Road, Fairfax
Area served:
Fairfax County with limited mutual aid.
Tail numbers/helos flown:
N208FC 1993 Bell 206-L4 (Long Ranger IV) (gone)
N407FC 1996 Bell 407
N408FC 2000 Bell 407

The county police's first helicopter was an Enstrom used mostly for aerial observation flights in the 1970's. Around 1983, the county expanded to an all-turbine fleet which would be used to perform medevacs and various police and rescue missions. The helicopter unit is staffed 24 hours a day, seven days a week, by a crew of three police officers (a pilot and two paramedics). The division was the first law enforcement agency to equip its aircraft with forward looking infrared (FLIR) surveillance technology.

VSP Med-Flight

Website:
http://www.medflight2.com/
http://www.vsp.state.va.us/bfo_aviation.htm
Frequencies:
155.8950 r [91.5] Va EOC
462.9500 d [192.8] Med 9; Med-Flight I/MCV/Va EOC
462.9500 d [179.9] Med 9; Med-Flight II
462.9500 d [156.7] Med 9; Lynmed (Lynchburg Gen)
VSP dispatches Med-Flight III via telephone or VSP chs.
Call sign:
Med-Flight I Chesterfield Airport, Central Virginia (HQ)
Med-Flight II Virginia Highlands Airport, Abingdon
Med-Flight III Lynchburg
Area served:
Virginia, roughly 60-mile radius of each base.
Tail numbers/helos flown:
N30VA 2000 Bell 407
N31VA 2000 Bell 407
N34VA 2000 Bell 407
N36VA 2001 Bell 407
N37VA 2001 Deutschland GMBH MBB-BK 117 C-1
N38VA 1993 Eurocopter/Canada BO 105LS A-3
N39VA 1993 Eurocopter/Canada BO 105LS A-3

Virginia State Police operates the Med-Flight medevac helicopters from bases in Chesterfield, Abingdon and Lynchburg. The oldest, Med-Flight I, began on April 1, 1984. It was followed by Med-Flight II on January 1, 1987 and Med-Flight III on September 1, 2000.

VSP's aviation unit operates seven helicopters and four airplanes from four bases (the fourth location is Manassas which is not used for medevacs). VSP provides aircraft for search, rescue, law enforcement and medical evacuation. The BK117 and BO-105's are primarily used for medevacs. The agency has four Cessna 182 airplanes in addition to the helicopters.

Omniflight Pegasus

Website:
http://www.omniflight.com/
http://www.healthsystem.virginia.edu/internet/pegasus/
Frequencies:
155.3400 s [203.5] EMS-1 – UVA HEAR
462.9500 d [127.3] Med 9 – Carter's Mountain
462.9500 d [156.7] Med 9 - Elliots
462.9750 d [110.9] Med 10 – Brown Mountain
462.9750 d [151.4] Med 10 – Big Mountain
462.9750 d [156.7] Med 10 – Blakey's Mountain
462.9750 d [162.2] Med 10 - Massanutten
Call sign:
Pegasus
Area served:
100 n.m. of Charlottesville.
Tail numbers/helos flown:
N5UV Agusta Spa A109E (current)
N4UV 1994 Bell 230 (former)
N222HX 1985 Bell 222U (backup)

Omniflight Helicopters began in 1962 in Wisconsin providing a Bell 47 for tourism, corporate and utility work. Its Pegasus service started in 1984 and has been based at the University of Virginia Medical Center in Charlottesville. It provides air and ground medical transport. UVA maintains a network of Med 9/10 (462.95/462.975) sites with different CTCSS tones across the valley as noted.

Omniflight Nightingale

Website:
http://tinyurl.com/f2ssr
Frequencies:
152.4350 r [192.8] Med Trans Inc (157.695 in)
462.9500 s [100.0] Med 9
Call sign:
Nightingale
Area served:
125-mile radius of Sentara Norfolk General Hospital.
Tail numbers/helos flown:
N117NG 1986 Messerschmitt-Bolkow-Blohm BK117A4

Nightingale became the 38th air medical program in the nation when it flew its first flight on February 25, 1982. The company's ambulances typically use the VHF channel while the UHF channel is monitored when Nightingale is airborne. The same dispatcher monitors both channels. Nightingale's missions are almost evenly split between scene calls and transfers.

Carilion Life-Guard

Website:
http://www.carilion.com/cpts/html/lifegard.htm
http://www.airmethods.com/lifenet/index.cfm
Frequencies:
155.3850 s [118.8]
Call sign:
Life-Guard 10 – Carilion Roanoke Memorial Hospital
Life-Guard 11 - Mountain Empire Airport, Rural Retreat
Area served:
60 miles of Roanoke (scene responses).
150 miles of Roanoke (interfacility flights).
Tail numbers/helos flown:
N412LG Life-Guard 10; 1990 Bell 412
N135ED Life-Guard 11; 2004 Eurocopter Deutschland GMBH EC 135 P2
N778AM 1981 Bell 412 (Air Methods back-up helo)

Carilion Life-Guard began serving areas of Virginia, West Virginia, Tennessee and North Carolina in 1981. The service is operated by LifeNet, a division of Air Methods, and is staffed by Carilion, which provides critical-care-trained flight nurses and paramedics.

MedSTAR

Website:
http://www.medstartransport.com/
http://www.whcenter.org/174.cfm/
Frequencies:
462.9500 s [77.0]
33072 t MedSTAR talkgroup on Arl Co trunked system
02320 t MedSTAR talkgroup on DC Fire's system
Call sign:
MedSTAR I Leesburg Airport
MedSTAR II Maryland Airport, Indian Head
MedSTAR III Easton Airport
MedSTAR IV Frederick Airport
Area served:
Washington metropolitan area and parts of West Virginia, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and central Virginia.
Tail numbers/helos flown:
N39181 1983 Messerschmitt BK 117 (gone)
N39188 1984 Messerschmitt BK 117 (gone)
N135MH 2000 Eurocopter Deutschland GMBH EC135T1
N136MH 2000 Eurocopter Deutschland GMBH EC135T1
N137MH 2002 Eurocopter Deutschland GMBH EC135P1
N138MH Eurocopter Deutschland GMBH EC135T2
N601FH 1998 Eurocopter Deu. GMBH EC135P1 (loaner)

MedSTAR is the first hospital-based air medical service in the Washington area. Its first medevac flight was for a patient with a spinal-cord injury who was flown from Prince William Hospital to Washington Hospital Center on July 3, 1983.

The initial emphasis of the MedSTAR program was to bring trauma patients from serious crashes in northern Virginia and the District to the Washington Hospital Center. MedSTAR later expanded to include interfacility patient transfer, which soon surpassed scene flights. MedSTAR also provides ground transport.

The first MedSTAR Transport aircraft was a red and white BK-117. It was the third aircraft built specifically for air medical transport and the first to be used in North America.

Washington Hospital Center purchased its own helicopter in 2000, a single-pilot instrument flight rules (SPIFR) certified EC-135, the first of its kind in the country. A second SPIFR EC-135 was delivered in spring 2001. In March 2003, a third EC-135 went into service and the original BK-117 aircraft were retired. In May 2003, MedSTAR's communications center, which had been at Washington Hospital Center, moved to Tipton Airport at Fort Meade, Md.

LifeEvac

Website:
http://lifeevac.com/
http://www.vcuhealth.org/support/lifeevac.html
Frequencies:
453.1250 r/s [192.8] LifeCom
452.1000 t 0-05-200 LTR trunk (LiveEvac II)
Call sign:
VCU LifeEvac I Petersburg Municipal Airport
MWH LifeEvac II Fredericksburg, Stafford Airport
Area served:
Approximately 100-mile radius of each base.
Tail numbers/helos flown:
N135SJ 1998 Eurocopter Deutschland GMBH EC135P1 – Air Methods Northeast region backup
N136LN 2004 Eurocopter Deutschland GMBH EC 135 P2
N138LN LifeEvac II - 2004 Eurocopter Deutschland GMBH EC 135 P2 (was N135BF)
N537LN LifeEvac I – 2004 Eurocopter Deutschland GMBH EC 135 P2 (was N162AM)

LifeEvac was originally provided by Rocky Mountain Helicopters which was purchased by Air Methods Corp., a large vendor/provider of air medical transportation. Air Methods operates from a consolidated dispatch center in Omaha, Neb. VCU LifeEvac I started in October, 2001 with the assistance of the Virginia Commonwealth University. Mary Washington Hospital later sponsored LiveEvac II.

Just after 11 p.m. on January 10, 2005, LifeEvac II (N136LN) crashed into the Potomac River, near the Woodrow Wilson Bridge. The pilot and flight paramedic were killed and the flight nurse suffered serious injuries.

Generally, LifeEvac II covers Stafford County and AirCare 2 is first due in Spotsylvania County. For info on the LTR system, see David Schoenberger's site: http://tinyurl.com/gqsge

PHI AirCare

Website:
http://www.phiaircare.com
http://www.phihelico.com
Frequencies:
462.9750 s [94.8] Med 10
18000 t INOVA Fairfax Hosp talkgroup on Fx Co trunk
Call sign:
AirCare 1 Manassas Regional Airport
AirCare 2 Shannon Airport, Fredericksburg
AirCare 3 Leesburg Municipal Airport
AirCare 4 Winchester Regional Airport
AirCare 5 Shenandoah Valley Reg. Airport, Weyers Cave
Area served:
Approximately 150 n.m. radius of each base.
Tail numbers/helos flown:
N107X 1985 Bell 412
N217AE 1989 Messerschmitt-Bolkow-Blohm BK 117 B-2
N2258F 1982 Bell 412
N302PH 2004 Eurocopter Deutschland GMBH EC 135 P2
N3893L 1981 Bell 412 (PHI back-up helo)
N3893N 1981 Bell 412
N412FH (gone)

Petroleum Helicopter Inc. (PHI) purchased INOVA AirCare several years ago and rapidly expanded to five AirCare bases. PHI began in 1949 serving offshore oil rigs and now has grown into the largest such company in the United States with 40 support bases and almost 300 helicopters. AirCare's communications center at INOVA Fairfax Hospital coordinates with the AirCare aircraft as well as the affiliated SkySTAT and ExpressCare helicopters using 462.975, the Fairfax Co. trunked system, satellite phones and text pagers.

PHI SkySTAT

Website:
http://www.phiskystat.com/
Frequencies:
462.9500 r [192.8] Va EOC Med 9
462.9750 r [192.8] Va EOC Med 10
Call sign:
SkySTAT 1
Area served:
120 nautical miles of Richmond.
Tail numbers/helos flown:
N303PH 2004 Eurocopter Deutschland GMBH EC 135 P2

SkySTAT is the third medevac helicopter serving the Richmond area (VCU LifeEvac I and VSP's Med-Flight I are the other two). SkySTAT is based at Chesterfield Fire Station 15 (across from Med-Flight) at Chesterfield Municipal Airport.

SkySTAT, which started in the summer of 2005, is a joint effort between PHI and the HCA Hospitals of Richmond. SkySTAT primarily flies patients from outlying medical facilities to Henrico Doctors' and Chippenham & Johnston-Willis.

AirCare communications tracks and communicates with SkySTAT using the Outerlink satellite phone service (outerlink.com) and alphanumeric pagers.

PHI ExpressCare

Although not based in Virginia, it is worth mentioning that University of Maryland's ExpressCare offers air and ground transport through a partnership with PHI. Some of these flights involve Virginia medical facilities. ExpressCare 1 is a 1981 Bell 412 helicopter (N412UM) based at Martin State Airport. A second base is planned on the Eastern Shore. They use 462.975 to coordinate with the AirCare comm center in Fairfax, but also use satellite phones.

# # #

WMATA'S COMPREHENSIVE RADIO COMMUNICATIONS SYSTEM (CRCS)

The Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority's VHF radio system was installed underground in the 1970's. In 1993, WMATA installed an 800 MHz 75 ohm leaky feeder system throughout the tunnels primarily for cellular phone use. The plan was to use that system to build the authority's 490 MHz trunked system.

A contract for such a 490 MHz Astro simulcast system was awarded to Motorola on Dec. 28, 2000. The 490 MHz system cost an estimated $60 million and has been operating for more than three years. Although still not fully functional, parts of the system have been completed, accepted and have been in beneficial use since June 2003.

But the authority still has trouble with noise and intermodulation throughout the system, and coverage problems in a few WMATA buildings. WMATA started a new cycle of testing and remediation of the tunnel infrastructure. One obstacle has been the D.C. Fire/EMS 800 MHz system which shares the same antenna system and has been generating excessive on-frequency interference. Modifications and testing started again in February and will continue during March.

In addition to analog and Astro digital voice communication, when completed, the system promises to support Metro Transit PD (MTPD) mobile data, bus CAD, AVL-Orbital TMS, rail communication control panels, 490 MHz paging and more. All WMATA elements, MTPD, bus, rail, maintenance, etc., will use this system for communication.

CRCS is a 10-site 21-channel system (presently only 12 channels are in the trunk pool) using 24 underground bi-directional amplifier (BDA) segments through 100 miles of tunnel. The network is accessible by WMATA's four control centers. All radio and telephone traffic is recorded. WMATA's system includes talkgroups that interface with D.C. police's trunked radio network.

The primary CRCS controller will relocate to WMATA's Carmen Turner facility in Landover around Sept. 2006. MTPD will continue to use the VHF system until the 490 MHz system has been fully accepted.

Motorola System ID: 8209
Start range for channel (offset) 380: 489.0875
Step: 25.0 KHz

488.9875 paging (simulcast 161.025)
489.0875 AVL
489.1625 AVL
489.5125
489.5375
490.7625 AVL
490.7875 Control / Analog
490.8375 Astro
490.8625 Control / Analog
490.8875 Astro
490.9125 Analog
490.9375 MDT
490.9625 Analog / Astro
496.3375 Analog / Astro
496.4375 Control / Analog
496.4625 AVL
496.4875 Analog / Astro
496.5125 Paging (1200-baud POCSAG)
496.5375 Control / Analog
496.5625 Analog / Astro
496.5875 Analog / CW ID
496.6125 Analog / Astro

# # #

SCHOOL BUS MONITORING!

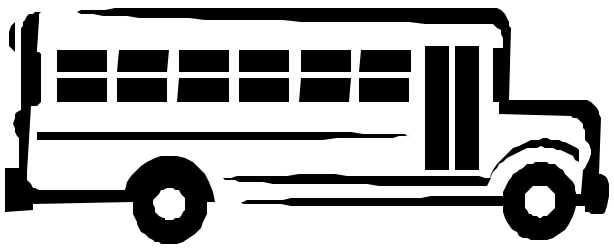
Here are the current channel plans for both Montgomery and Prince George's public school buses.

Montgomery County Public School Buses

494.8625	r	[114.8]	Ch.1 Bethesda
495.3375	r	[114.8]	Ch.2 Clarksburg
495.3625	r	[136.5]	Ch.3 Randolph
495.3875	r	[136.5]	Ch.4 Shady Grove-North
494.7125	r	[131.8]	Ch.5 Shady Grove-South
495.3125	r	[131.8]	Ch.6 West Farm
494.4625	r	[162.2]	Ch.7 Administrative
494.4625	s	[d411]	Ch.8 Direct

Prince George's County Public Schools

153.7850	r	[192.8]	Ch.1 Security and Maint (158.76 in)
155.2200	s	[192.8]	Ch.2 Transportation
156.0000	s	[192.8]	Ch.3 Security (port/mobile only)



BCC GETS REPEATER SYSTEM!

The Bethesda-Chevy Chase Rescue Squad, one of the country's oldest and best known, has a new frequency. The squad has abandoned 33.04 for 488.6625 [136.5]. The new system has a single repeater atop the National Naval Medical Center with possible plans to add an additional site on the towers at American University. All BCC units have both mobile and hand-held radios, but no mobile repeaters.

# # #

NEW TRUNKED FREQS FOR MPD

On Dec. 15, the D.C. police UHF trunked system began adding new trunked channels. The former public works channel, 453.45, and the old Alexandria police channel, 460.375, were those added to the trunking pool, although 460.375 was later removed. A third new channel is supposed to be in the works.

To accommodate the 453 MHz channel(s), scanner listeners should reprogram the custom table ranges in their digital trunkers so they match the two ranges programmed in the D.C. police radios. Otherwise, they risk missing transmissions.

BASE	OFFSET	STEP
453.450	380	12.5
460.025	480	12.5

# # #

P.G. FIRE/EMS REASSIGNS FIREGROUNDS

On Nov. 20, Prince George's County Fire/EMS changed the way it assigns fireground channels. Channel 4 (495.0625) remains the primary north-side operations channel for the 1st, 2nd, 4th and 6th battalions with the exceptions noted for channels 9 and 10. Channel 9 (494.9125) is now the operations channel for Stations 31, 41, 10 and 49. Channel 10 (495.4125) is the operations channel for Stations 34, 44, 55, 12, 1 and 11. Channel 3 (494.7875) remains the south-side fireground channel, with the exception of channel 8 (494.8875) which is used for joint responses with Alexandria on the Woodrow Wilson Bridge or as a fire command or fire/police coordination channel. 494.8875 is also police channel 6.

# # #

CULPEPER ABANDONS LOW BAND

As of February 28, Culpeper County fire/EMS has abandoned its low-band radio system. Culpeper County uses a Motorola 800 MHz trunked system with the same system ID as Fauquier County but with a unique set of frequencies. Mutual aid communication with Fauquier County is accomplished using one of Fauquier County's fire talkgroups (from "zone 11") and patching it with the Culpeper County talkgroup (from "zone 12"). Culpeper County FD talkgroups will be designated as "zone 12" in the northern Virginia fire trunked radios.

# # #

FREE STATE TRUNKING

***by Mike Agner* KA3JJZ**

Hi all; it's been awhile since we've had a newsletter, and we do have some movement in the trunking scene in Maryland. So without further ado…

Anne Arundel – An announcement from Motorola came out in mid-December saying it has landed a $6.9 million contract to install a P25 system at BWI/Thurgood Marshall airport. Not much more is known as of this writing; whether it will be able to associate with the current Anne Arundel system (or will it wait for AA to throw the digital switch?) is not known. It's assumed that the MTA police will utilize this system. [BWI had licensed 866.2625, 866.725, 867.275, 867.325 and 867.8625, but that license may have expired in January.]

Cecil County - This system missed the implementation date back in December, and is now working with the FCC to resolve the problems. So the old 46 MHz system is still up – for now. [Thanx Brent KB3MIX on the RadioReference Maryland board mja].

However, while the system is in limbo now, previously there was some testing going on in the frequencies as listed in the RadioReference database. Examination of the signals using Etrunker with ESK showed that they were utilizing some other features of the system. It's unlikely much more information will be gleaned from this system, as it seems that it will be using Pro-Voice/ESK, which will render them completely unmonitorable by scanners.

Charles County – While the 800 MHz system is up and running, evidently some of the VHF patches are still being used as of this writing. 155.535 is the command center for special ops [used for helicopter patches]; 155.64, 155.61, 155.085 and 158.775 are still on the air [fire/EMS dispatch/simulcast is migrating from 158.775 to 155.085]. [Thanx 'Indianheadman' on the RadioReference Md. board mja]

Federal – This information comes by way of Kevin Eiler:

Veteran's Administration in Baltimore (Perry Point) is utilizing four channels. This repeater system will be in place until the NIH Baltimore trunk is up and running:

409.3250	r	[d026]	Ch. 1 Disaster (419.15 in)
408.0000	r	[d026]	Ch. 2 Engineering (417.0 in)
408.3750	r	[d026]	Ch. 3 EMS/IRM (419.15 in)
409.4375	r	[d026]	Ch. 4 Police (418.4375 in)

Speaking of the NIH Baltimore trunk; it's up, but still run as separate repeaters, rather than as a trunk. The reason for this is not known. It's low power — about 25 watts — utilizing Motorola Quantar repeaters. When the trunk finally goes live, it will be a Motorola mixed type, analog and 9600 baud audio. The freqs are: 406.4, 406.7125, 407.3875, 408.3625, 409.2375, 409.5, 409.8625, 410.1, 410.4125 and 410.625.

Notice they don't correspond with the new UHF alignments mandated after Jan 1 2005. This information is a bit dated – originated Summer 2005, so updates are requested.

As has been reported in *Monitoring Times* and elsewhere, military installations are beginning to move to new 380 MHz APCO25-compliant trunk systems marketed by M/A-COM. Encryption is often used on these systems. In an announcement published in the December 2004 'Milcom' column by Larry Van Horn, it confirms that DES encryption is available for secure communications. In addition, the article mentions that the systems will be narrowband.

As of this moment, there appears to be three installations, with more on the way; one at Ft. Meade (which as of this writing is running in the clear), a separate one for NSA (running encryption), and a third at Ft. Detrick in Frederick. [The first area 380 MHz trunked system was a Motorola system installed at Walter Reed].

Folks using PRO96 or PRO2096 scanners can download the free PRO96Com program to monitor the data on the control channel of such systems. This is a Trunker-like utility that allows one to read data from the control channel, but works only when the control channel is running at 9600 baud. Check the RadioReference database to be sure. Additionally, a utility known as UniTrunker reportedly has the ability to decode a P25 control channel. Both of these utilities have links on the Trunked Data Decoders Wiki at Radioreference.

The Uniden BCD396T (and quite possibly the upcoming BCD996T) are the only two scanners currently able to successfully trunk in this band. The Uniden scanners Wiki at RadioReference has complete pages on both of these scanners. Both the Trunked Radio Decoders and the Uniden Wiki pages will be linked onto our Scanners page shortly.

Future Migrations - Per Kevin Eiler, here is a list of various agencies that either have moved, or are planning to migrate to new systems in the near future:

Bureau of Immigrations & Cust Enfo. is Astro high band
IRS is Astro UHF
DEA is Astro UHF
FBI is Astro high/UHF [though from what I've heard, they're using Nextels a lot more mja]
Md. Dept of Labor & License Regulation is Astro high band
Health & Human Svc, Office of the Inspector Gen is Astro
Next up to make the switch will be GSA/Federal Prot PD
F&WS [U.S. Fish and Wildlife service, I think mja]
U.S. Park Police
U.S. Capitol Police
USCG "LANT" (Atlantic) channels are Astro/Racal
MTA is looking at an LTR or MA/COM UHF TRS. The MTA 900 MHz TRS will shut down in December, moving to UHF. This is a low-power TRS, running at about five watts [handhelds? mja].
GM trunk will go off the air as the plant is closing.
Maryland Stadium Authority/Baltimore Ravens looking to get an 800 trunk and move off UHF.
Baltimore City PD to add more data only channels on UHF/800.
Baltimore City DPW will move off 490 MHz to the city trunk with new talk groups [This data originated last summer; updates are badly needed mja].

Harford County - The 800 digital system is up and running. Most, if not all, of the old 460 MHz channels are now used by MDTs. To trunk this system, one of the digital trunktrackers from Uniden or Radio Shack is required; the popular PRO-97 or 2055 will not work on this system.

We have a Harford County ARC250 file on our library page, to get any newcomers started. It's likely it will need some minor updates as time goes by, but it's a good starting point.

Somerset County - The 800 EDACS system is up and running. Police are utilizing Pro-Voice, which renders them unmonitorable on any scanner. Fire, however, is analog. The conventional 46 MHz frequencies previously used have been abandoned; the new dispatch frequency is 155.6625, a narrowband allocation. This makes them only the second county in Maryland to utilize narrowband on VHF (the other being Kent county). [Thanx go to WCRadioGuy, on the RadioReference Maryland forum mja]

That's it for now. 73s and stay warm…..*Mike*

Anybody without Internet access who would like info referenced in Mike's column should contact Alan.

# # #

THE FUTURE OF RADIO

Review by Alan Henney

Occasionally a new device comes along that gets one thinking about how technology is evolving. Recently, it was the Solutions Radio sold by one of our radio hobbyist colleagues, Andrew Leyden, which got me thinking.

Andrew's company, PenguinRadio, sells a different kind of radio known as the "Solutions Radio." What makes this radio different than the others? For one, it does not have an antenna or a receiver as we know it.

It hooks to the Internet via a broadband or dial-up connection. The radio then connects to a server, such as PenguinRadio's, which allows the Solutions Radio to access hundreds of

Internet radio stations and podcasters. The user has the option to customize a radio station "play list" or use those pre-selected by PenguinRadio.

Add a WIFI bridge or game adapter, and the radio becomes wireless. Someday, we probably won't think of radio in terms of AM or FM, but rather as Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP). Radios, whether they are wired or wireless, will use various methods to connect to the Internet. The listener will use an Internet connection of some kind, enter an Internet address, and start listening!

I purchased one of these radios from Andrew around Christmas. The price including shipping was about $250. Unlike XM and Sirrus, there are no service fees to use the Solutions Radio.

The Solutions Radio was developed by Youcom.nl, a Dutch radio equipment supplier, with software support from Andrew's company based in the Washington, D.C. area. The radio itself is made in Thailand. Youcom.nl, Andrew notes, developed the Solutions Radio in response to a request from a church in Holland that wanted to find a way for parishioners to hear sermons while in their homes. The company has sold more than 10,000 units in Europe.

The Solutions Radio includes a built-in three-inch speaker, but features RCA jacks for connection to a stereo system. It is capable of connecting to the Internet through both dial-up and Ethernet.

Andrew says he created the radio's play list using a database of thousands of online radio stations he compiled. He pulled out the MP3 radio stations which the Solutions Radio receives. Unfortunately Real Audio and Windows Media Player do not work with the hardware.

For more info:
http://www.penguinradio.com/
http://www.solutionsradio.nl/
http://www.youcom.nl/

# # #

Please address all correspondence to Alan. We encourage readers to submit material and write articles that relate to the hobby. All submissions are subject to editing for style and content. When submitting material please make certain we can contact you should we have any questions. We welcome frequency and visitor requests, but please include a reply envelope.

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# # #

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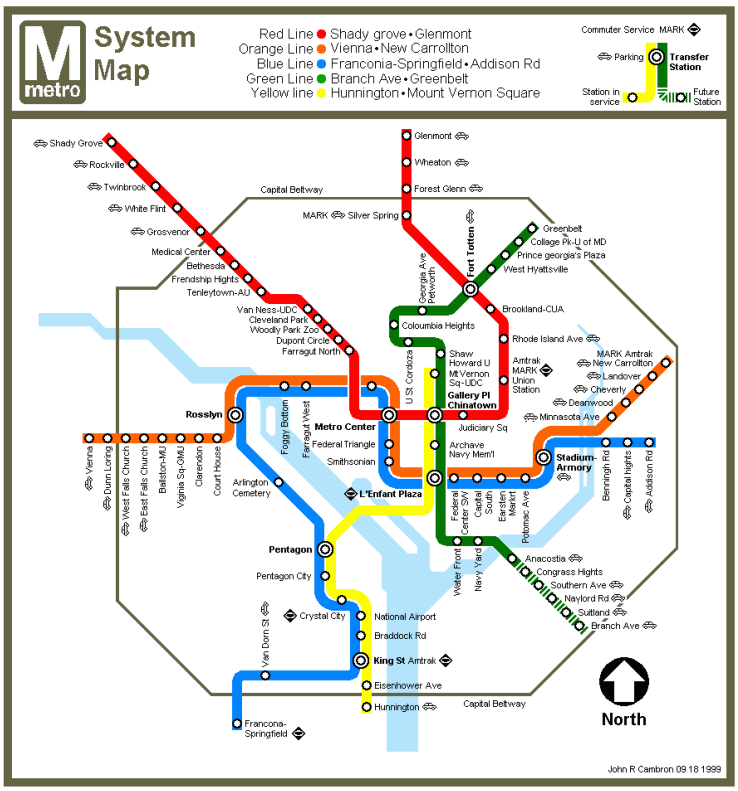
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