Quick Start Guide for an Outpost Packet

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This Quick Start guide for Outpost Packet identifies the components and procedures you need to get started and the basic steps needed to make a successful packet connection.

It includes

- Needed component list
- Connecting up the system
- Starting the program
- Setting up the TNC
- Setting up BBS, the stations you will connect to
- Sending a message and retrieving messages

It is not a replacement for the excellent documentation that Jim Oberhofer, KN6PE, has provided on the Outpostpm.org web site.

The Outpost web site has a wealth of information on getting Outpost up and running.

http://www.outpostpm.org/

A good quick overview slide show is at :
http://www.outpostpm.org/docs/AlamedaOES-090107.pdf

Needed components for a Packet Station:

- A Terminal Node Controller (TNC). Outpostpm DOES support sound card modes such as using a Signalink in conjunction with AGWPE. A list of supported TNCs and sound card modes can be found here:

  http://www.outpostpm.org/support.html#ValidTncList

- A computer running Windows 98 or greater.
  You will need to install the Outpost program available at
  http://www.outpostpm.org/#Downloads

- A USB to serial cable to connect the TNC to the computer or if you have a computer with a RS-232 serial port, a cable to connect the computer to the TNC.

- A cable to connect the TNC to the radio. You can either make one or you might be able to order the correct cable from http://www.buxcomm.com. **If making your own cable, refer to the diagrams for the connectors for both the TNC and the radio.**

- An antenna. Often a mag-mount antenna can work depending on your location. Place the antenna on any ground plane available, i.e. power supply case, cookie tin, etc.

- A run of coax to connect the radio to the antenna

- A VHF radio preprogrammed with the local packet frequencies (*simplex*).
  Depending on your radio, you may have to change some settings to support packet. Check with your radio's documentation.

- A battery or power supply (capable of 10 amps minimum) for the radio and TNC along with the associated cables.

Connecting the Packet System:
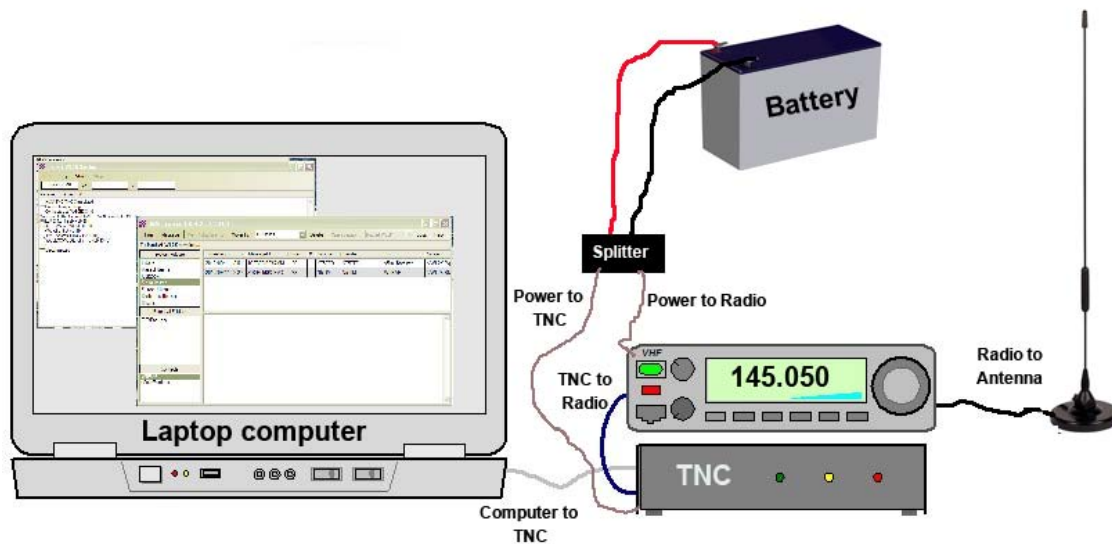
It is very important to correctly connect all of the packet components before you power on the radio, the TNC, and the computer.

1. Connect the radio to the antenna. Make sure that all connections are secure.

2. Connect the radio to the TNC using the radio to TNC cable.

3. Connect the TNC to the computer using a USB to serial cable or RS-232 serial cable. If using a USB to serial cable, plug it into a USB port of the computer.

4. Connect power to your computer, TNC, and the radio. CHECK POLARITY.

5. Turn on the radio.

6. Check that the radio is on an assigned packet frequency. A good one locally is 145.050 .

7. Turn on the computer.

8. Turn on the TNC.

You should now be ready to operate packet, but first you will have to set up the Outpostpm program.

Starting Outpost Packet Manager Program
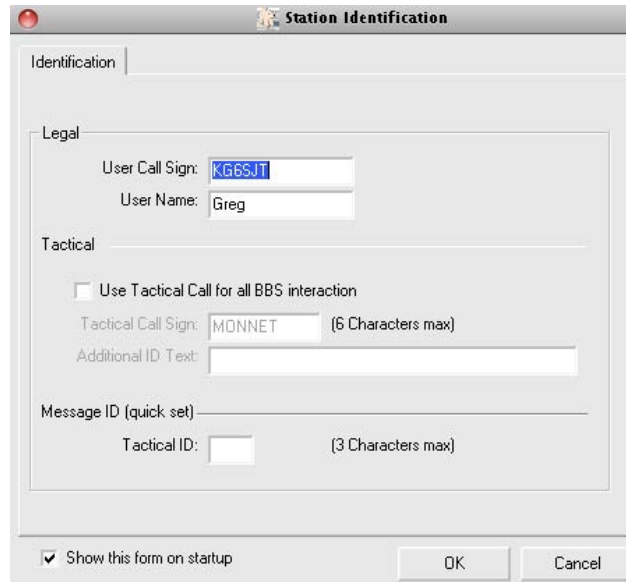
1. On the computer, double click on Outpost pmm icon.

You should now see the start up window for   **identification:**

Outpost PMM

2. Enter your call sign and name. If you have been assigned a tactical ID, please enter that as well. Click OK .

3. Next you will see the Outpost Main Window

Setting up the TNC

The first thing to do is set up your TNC. You may have to refer to your TNC's manual for configuration for packet radio.

You will also need to know which port your RS-232 serial or USB to serial cable is using.
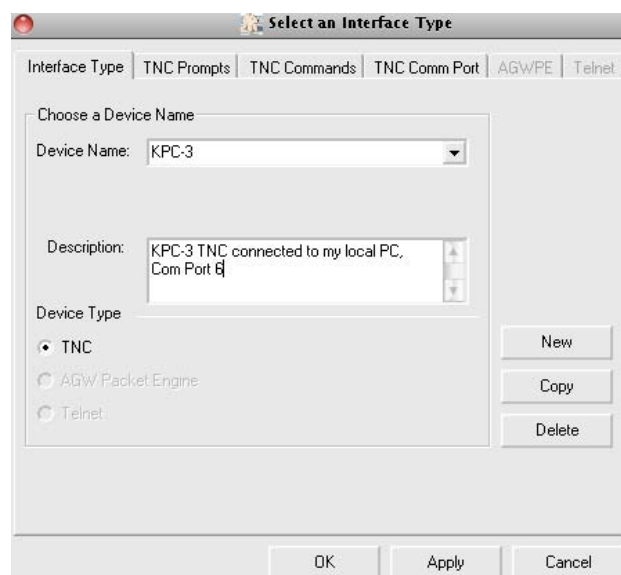
Go to your device manager control panel and select **Devices**, then select **Ports**. There you will see the connected serial ports.
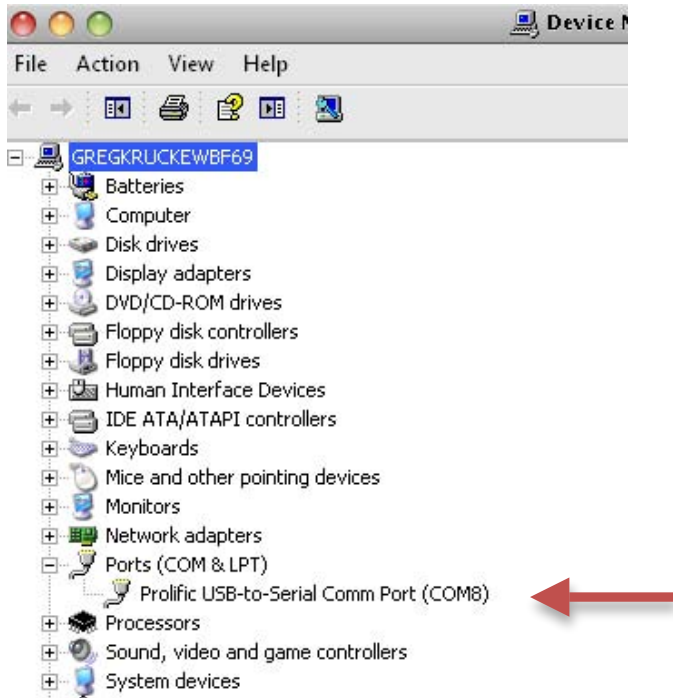
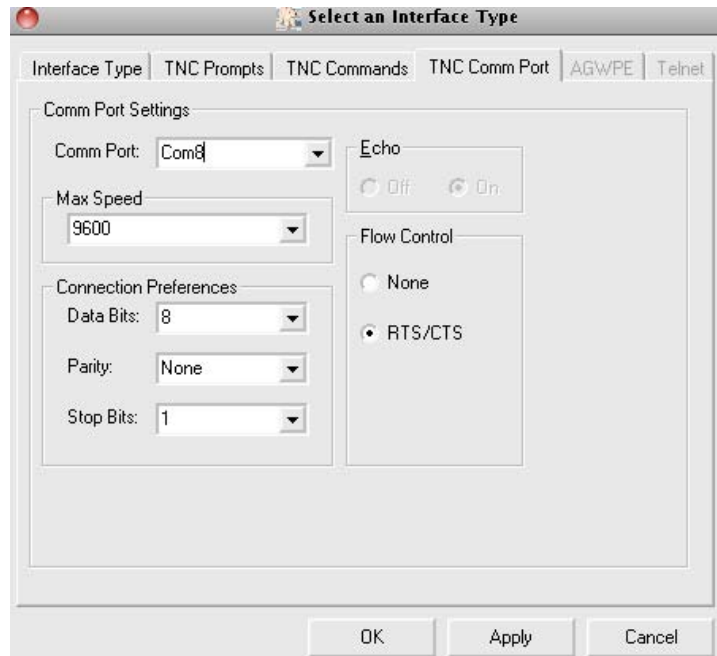You are now ready to set up your TNC in Outpost.

Select Setup TNC from the Setup menu.

Give your TNC a device name and a description.

Next click on the **TNC Comm Port** and fill in the information needed. Use:

- Max Speed 9600,
- Data Bits 8,
- Parity None
- Stop bits 1
- Click RTS/CTS to control flow of data.

We're getting close; now is the time to set up a BBS.

Before you can send a packet message, you have to set up a station to send to.

To set up a new BBS, Click on "new from the BBS window**".**

1. This is the name that you can use to identify the BBS. It can be the BBS call sign (K6WLS-1), personal reference (Ken Via Kberr), or other description that you wish to use.

2. Enter the connect name, often the call sign with the SSID of -1

3. Click the Set/Get TNC and select your TNC .
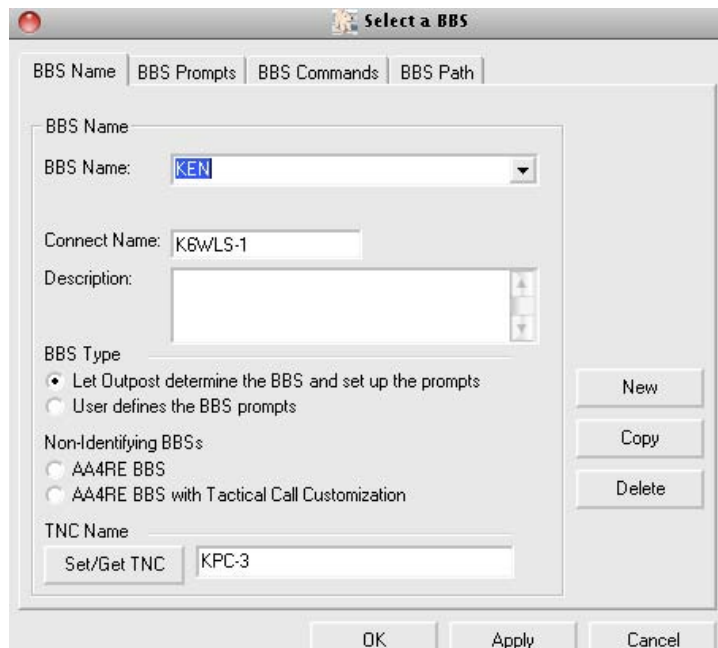
Depending on your TNC and the BBS you are connecting to, the default prompts and commands should work. Check the Outpost web site for details on your specific TNC. If the BBS is not directly accessible through RF, you might need to add a digipeater or KA-Nodes.
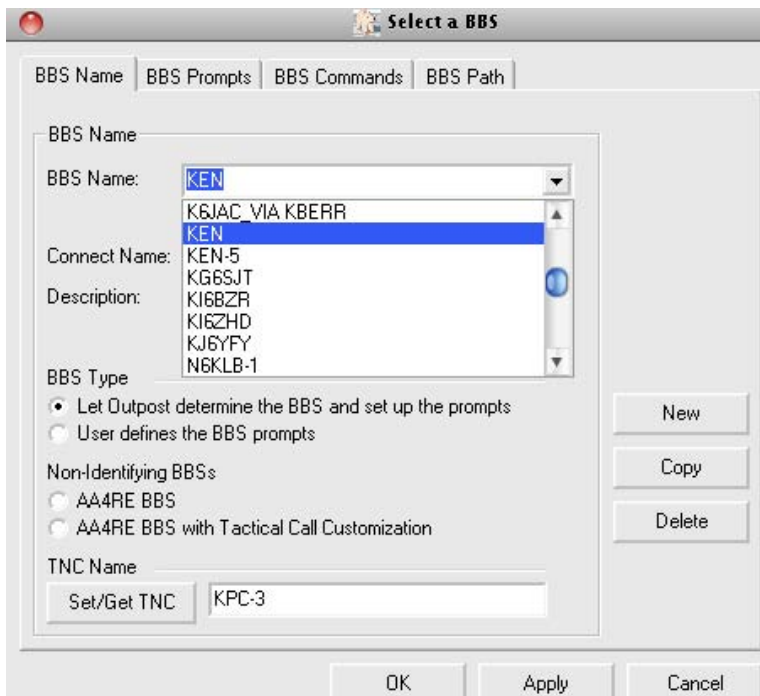See http://www.outpostpm.org/howto/htsukanrom.html
For more information on using KA-Nodes.
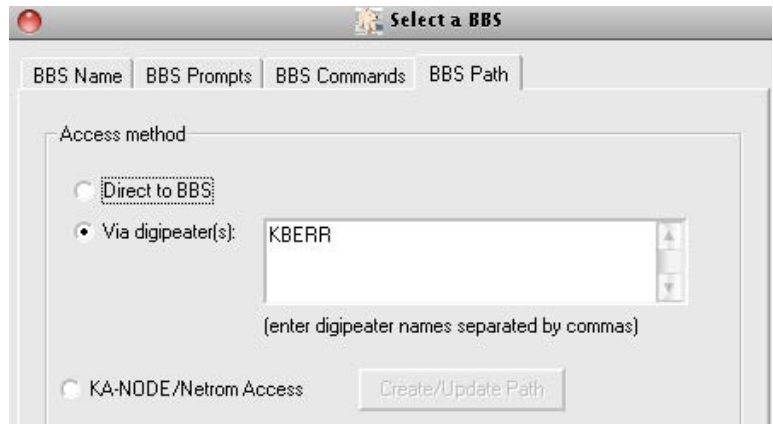
Select the BBS to send a Message to

From the **Set up Menu** select **BBS**…

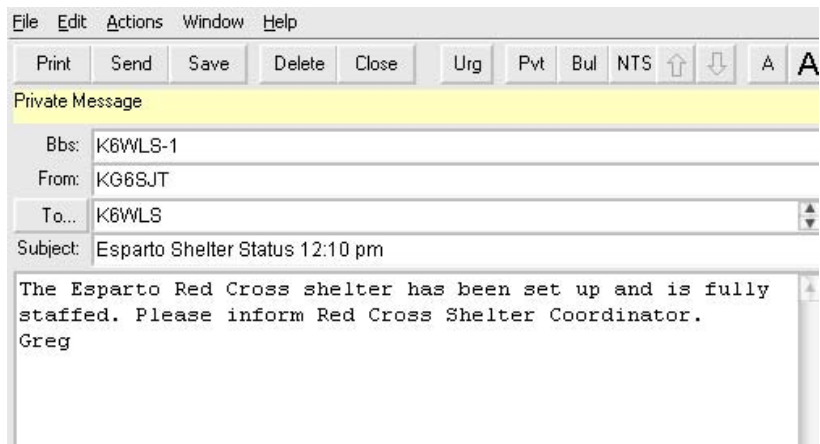When deployed, you MAY be assigned a BBS to connect to.

Create and Send a message

Click the New Button.

Make sure that you are sending
the message to the correct
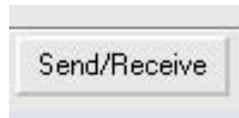BBS.
Your call sign should already
be in the *From* field.

Enter the call sign or tactical
name of the operator you are
sending the message to:

Click the Send Button

The message has now been placed in the outbox. You can queue up several messages if needed.
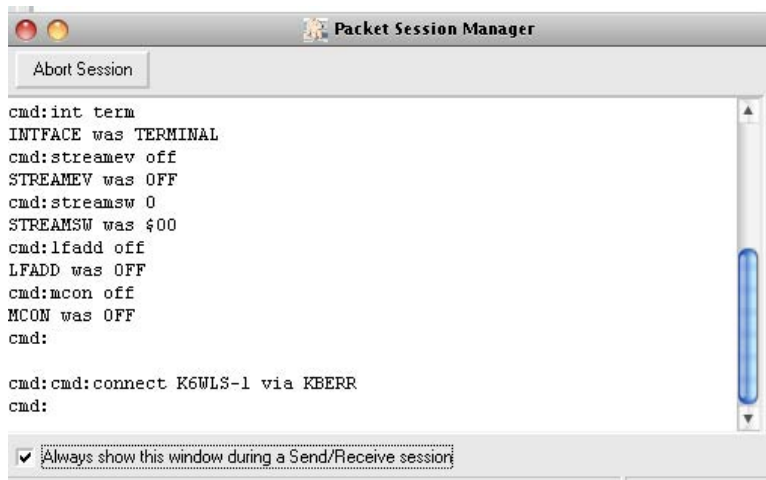
To actually send the packet message
Click on the **Send/Receive** button

This will start the process to send the message.

A window will open that shows the program's interaction with the TNC .

It takes a bit of time, so be patient.

After your message is sent, the program will check if you have any mail waiting on the BBS you are
connected to. If there is, it will be retrieved and displayed in **your In tray.**

Summary

If all the above steps have been followed and the system is working as expected, you have successfully

- Set up your Packet station
- Installed and loaded Outpost Packet Message manager
- Setup and configured your TNC
- Set up at least one BBS
- Created a message and sent it

Outpost Packet is a great packet mail manager being used by many ARES groups. We hope your ARES group will join us.

Refer to the Outpost Packet Manager web site, http://www.outpostpm.org/, for more information.

Problems: Refer to the manuals for your TNC and radio for troubleshooting techniques.

If you have any suggestions for the improvement of this Quick Start guide, please email:

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