April 2026

Newsletter of the County of Orange Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service

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Next OCRACES Meeting

County/City/ EmComm

Thursday, April 2, 2026, at 7:00 p.m., on Zoom

CRO's Nest

by Ken Bourne, W6HK, Chief Radio Officer Emeritus

Push-to-Talk over Cellular (PoC)

RACES members have noticed offers on Amazon, Walmart, and other websites for nationwide unlimited-range walkie-talkies from various manufacturers. They are advertised as two-way radios with unlimited range using Push-to-Talk over Cellular (PoC). Many radio amateurs are not familiar with this type of radio, since it's not used on the ham bands, but RACES members wonder if these radios can, nevertheless, be used for emergency communications.

PoC is a technology that enables instant voice communication—similar to traditional walkie-talkies—over broadband cellular networks (3G, 4G, LTE, 5G) and Wi-Fi. Unlike conventional amateur radio and Land Mobile Radio (LMR) systems, which are limited by radio frequency propagation and infrastructure, PoC radios transmit voice and data as digital packets over existing mobile operator networks, providing virtually unlimited range wherever there is cellular or Wi-Fi coverage.

Modern PoC radios combine the instant group calling of LMR with the flexibility, coverage, and data capabilities of smartphones, supporting advanced features such as GPS tracking, multimedia messaging, and integration with dispatch and management platforms.

When a user presses the Push-to-Talk (PTT) button, the radio captures and compresses the voice signal, which is then transmitted as data packets over the nearest LTE/5G tower or Wi-Fi access point. These packets are routed through the internet to a PoC server (cloud-based or on-premises), which manages call control and talkgroup routing, and then delivers the audio to all intended recipients. This architecture allows for instant, one-to-many or one-to-one communication across vast distances, provided there is network connectivity.

Rapid Radios PoC walkie-talkie provides unlimited nationwide range over cellular networks.

PoC radios typically require a SIM card for cellular connectivity and can also operate over Wi-Fi. Some advanced models support dual SIMs, eSIMs, or multi-carrier switching for redundancy and coverage optimization.

PoC radios support both group and individual calls, enabling users to communicate with entire teams or specific individuals at the push of a button. Group structures can be pre-defined or dynamically created via dispatch platforms, supporting flexible operational workflows.

By leveraging commercial cellular networks, PoC radios provide coverage wherever there is LTE/5G or Wi-Fi service. This eliminates the range limitations of traditional radios, making PoC ideal for organi-

(Continued on page 2

CRO's Nest *Continued from page 1*

zations with dispersed teams.

Modern PoC radios incorporate advanced digital audio processing, including AI-based noise suppression, echo cancellation, and high-powered speakers. This ensures clear, intelligible communication even in noisy environments such as emergency scenes.

Integrated GPS modules allow for real-time location tracking of personnel and vehicles. Dispatchers can monitor positions, play back historical routes, and set up geofences for automated alerts when users enter or exit designated areas.

PoC platforms support text messaging, image and video sharing, and file transfer, enabling richer communication beyond voice. Some devices include integrated cameras and barcode scanners for field data capture and evidence collection.

Many PoC radios feature dedicated emergency buttons, man-down and lone worker alerts, and programmable safety functions.

PoC radios can be managed and monitored via web-based dispatch consoles, which provide centralized control over talkgroups, messaging, GPS tracking, call recording, and incident management. Integration with Computer-Aided Dispatch (CAD), Automatic Vehicle Location (AVL), and Radio over IP (RoIP) gateways enables hybrid deployments and interoperability with legacy radio systems.

PoC radios offer nationwide or even global coverage wherever cellular or Wi-Fi networks are available, compared to the limited range of amateur radio and LMR systems, which depend on line-of-sight, repeaters, and licensed frequencies. But it doesn't work if the cellular system goes down. RACES, then, would be critically important for emergency communications.

Scalability is another key advantage: PoC platforms can support thousands of users and dynamic group structures without the need for additional infrastructure investment. Adding new users or locations is as simple as provisioning devices and SIM cards.

PoC can be integrated with existing LMR, DMR, TETRA, and P25 systems via RoIP gateways, enabling seamless communication between legacy radios and PoC devices.

Professional PoC platforms offer robust security features, including end-to-end encryption (AES-256), user authentication, and centralized management.

The primary limitation of PoC radios is their dependence on cellular or Wi-Fi networks. In areas with poor or no coverage—such as remote wilderness, underground facilities, or disaster zones where infrastructure is damaged—PoC radios may be unable to communicate. This contrasts with RACES and LMR systems, which can operate independently of public networks and are often designed for mission-critical reliability.

Most PoC radios require active SIM cards and data plans, incurring ongoing subscription fees. While some vendors offer hardware-only models with provide-your-own-SIM options, many platforms lock users into proprietary service plans, which can become costly over time, especially for large fleets.

Although PoC systems typically achieve near-instant call setup (often under one second), network congestion, backhaul issues, or server outages can introduce latency or service interruptions. Mission-critical applications require platforms with robust redundancy, failover, and quality-of-service guarantees.

Continuous connectivity, GPS tracking, and multimedia features can drain batteries faster than traditional radios, which are optimized for low-power operation. While modern PoC radios offer high-capacity batteries and fast charging, users must manage charging routines to ensure uninterrupted operation during long shifts or emergencies.

While enterprise-grade PoC platforms implement strong encryption and authentication, the use of public networks introduces potential vulnerabilities to cyberattacks, eavesdropping, or data breaches.

Most PoC radios require connection to a central server via cellular or Wi-Fi networks. True peer-to-peer or mesh networking is rare.

PoC radios are increasingly adopted by emergency medical services, fire departments, and law-enforcement agencies for their wide-area coverage, rapid deployment, and integration with dispatch and CAD systems. PoC enables units to communicate across city, county, or state lines without complex repeater relays or interoperability issues. With real-time AVL and GPS tracking, dispatchers can instantly locate and deploy the nearest available unit, reducing response times by up to 60% in some deployments. The ability to share images, video, and telemetry data enhances incident management and decision-making. PoC can supplement existing LMR systems, providing backup communication if one network fails. During disasters, PoC radios can provide group coordination as long as cellular or Wi-Fi networks remain operational. Emergency features such as SOS buttons, GPS tracking, and weather alerts enhance personal safety. In total network outages, traditional emergency radios (NOAA, AM/FM) remain essential for receiving broadcasts, but PoC radios add the critical capability of two-way coordination. But when cellular goes down, RACES remains an essential emergency communications resource. ✸

ARRL Offers Dual-Band Handheld Yagi

ARRL has announced a dual-band 2-meter/70-centimeter handheld yagi antenna. This directional antenna can be used to make satellite contacts, hunt for hidden transmitters, and even capture signals from weather satellites. A duplexer, carrying case, and a full set of instructions are included.

ARRL's dual-band handheld yagi antenna has two elements on 2 meters and three elements on 70 centimeters, plus a duplexer.

It can be assembled and disassembled in minutes and reportedly has excellent gain for its size.

Click here for details on ARRL Item No. 0090. The retail price is $99.95. This antenna is expected to ship in early April 2026.

Other ARRL antennas include an end-fed half-wave antenna kit, ARRL Item No. 0612, retailing for $79.95, and a dual-band moonbeam for 6 and 10 meters, ARRL Item No. 0084, retailing for $320.95. ✸

Closeup of duplexer on ARRL's 2-meter/70-centimeter yagi handheld antenna. The duplexer handles up to 10 watts input and allows for simultaneous operation on the two bands, applicable for satellite operation.

Ham Radio Tips & Tales, Volume II

Ham Radio Tips & Tales, Volume II: More Amateur Radio Hints, Tips, Techniques, Insights, Opinions, Bemusement provides projects, proven techniques, and laugh-out-loud stories for every amateur radio operator.

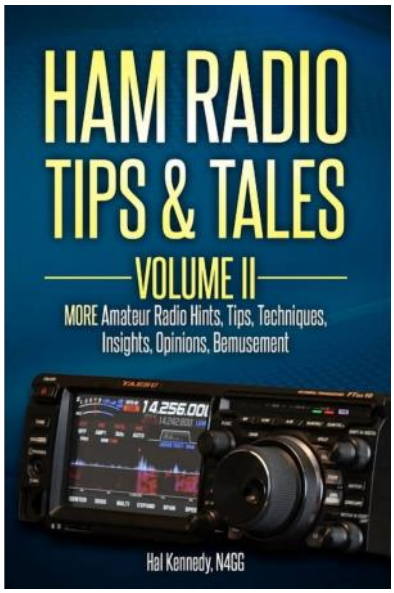
Building on the success of *Ham Radio Tips & Tales*, this all-new Volume II by author Hal Kennedy, N4GG, offers a collection of 38 original chapters filled with hands-on guidance, humor, and lessons learned from more than 60 years in amateur radio.

Inside you'll find actionable advice for every operator—whether you're updating your station, experimenting, or just getting started. Some of the many topics include lightning protection, grounding, shack design, coax splicing, baluns, antenna tuners, and antenna modeling—all explained clearly and without advanced math. Every chapter draws on technically-sound real-world experience you can use to build and maintain a station that performs well and is fun to operate.

You'll enjoy new stories about the history of radio, *The GEARVAKf Bulletin*, beer-can antennas, DXing with flea power, and oddities like the Elser-Mathes Cup and the Wouff Hong. The book's stories capture the fun of hands-on station building and communicating with friends around the world.

Ham Radio Tips & Tales, Volume II is ideal for contesters, DXers, builders, portable operators, and newcomers alike. It's both a reference and a reminder that ham radio is an immensely enjoyable pastime.

As in the prior book, humor runs through it all. Ham *Radio Tips & Tales, Volume II* reminds us that ham radio can be much more than just a hobby. It can encompass a lifetime of learning, experimenting, and connecting with others.



Open this book to any chapter and learn something new, laugh along the way, and discover (or rediscover!) the joy of amateur radio.

- Ham Radio Tips & Tales, Volume II: More Amateur Radio: -Hints, -Tips, -Techniques, -Insights, -Opinions, -Bemusement, (Paperback)
- Author: Independently Published
- ISBN: 9798272185129
- Format: Paperback
- Publication Date: 2025-11-17
- Page Count: 294
- Price: $16.95 when ordered online from Walmart ✸

FCC Updates Covered List of Foreign Routers

RACES members are concerned about the security of their emails and other computer-routed communications. Chinese and other foreign-made routers are a special concern. On Monday, March 23, 2026, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) updated its Covered List to include all consumer-grade routers produced in foreign countries. Routers connect computers, phones, and smart devices to the internet. This followed a determination by a White House-convened Executive Branch interagency body with appropriate national security expertise that such routers "pose unacceptable risks to the national security of the United States or the safety and security of United States persons."

The Executive Branch determination noted that foreign-produced routers (1) introduce "a supply chain vulnerability that could disrupt the U.S. economy, critical infrastructure, and national defense" and (2) pose "a severe cybersecurity risk that could be leveraged to immediately and severely disrupt U.S. critical infrastructure and directly harm U.S. persons."

President Trump's 2025 National Security Strategy stated: "the United States must never be dependent on any outside power for core components—from raw materials to parts to finished products—necessary to the nation's defense or economy. We must re-secure our own independent and reliable access to the goods we need to defend ourselves and preserve our way of life."

Malicious actors have exploited security gaps in foreign-made routers to attack American households, disrupt networks, enable espionage, and facilitate intellectual property theft. Foreign-made routers were also involved in the Volt, Flax, and Salt Typhoon cyberattacks targeting vital U.S. infrastructure.

The determination included an exemption for routers that the Department of War (DoW) or the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) have granted "Conditional Approval" after finding that such device or devices do not pose such unacceptable risks. Producers of consumer-grade routers are encouraged to submit an application for Conditional Approval using the guidance attached to the determination. Applications should be submitted to conditional-approvals@fcc.gov.

As outlined below, the March 23rd action does not impact a consumer's continued use of routers they previously acquired. Nor does it prevent retailers from continuing to sell, import, or market router models approved previously through the FCC's equipment authorization process. By operation of the FCC's Covered List rules, the imposed restrictions apply to new device models.

The FCC's Covered List is a list of communications equipment and services that are deemed to pose an unacceptable risk to the national security of the U.S. or the safety and security of U.S. persons. Under the Secure and Trusted Communications Networks Act, the Commission can update the Covered List only at the direction of national security authorities. In other words, the Commission cannot update this list on its own and is required to implement determinations that are made by our national security agency experts.

Equipment on the Covered List ("covered" equipment) is prohibited from getting FCC equipment authorization. Most electronic devices (including consumer-grade routers) require FCC equipment authorization prior to importation, marketing, or sale in the U.S. Covered equipment is banned from receiving new equipment authorizations, preventing new devices from entering the U.S. market.

The Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency encourages organizations to use the Covered List for risk management analysis in their regulatory compliance efforts.

Following a similar National Security Determination in December, and a follow-up Determination in January, the FCC recently added the following to the Covered List: "Uncrewed aircraft systems (UAS) and UAS critical components produced in a foreign country—except, (a) UAS and UAS critical components included on the Defense Contract Management Agency's (DCMA's) Blue UAS Cleared List, until January 1, 2027, (b) UAS critical components that qualify as "domestic end products" under the Buy American Standard, 48 CFR 25.101(a), until January 1, 2027; and (c) devices which have been granted a Conditional Approval by DoW or DHS—and all communications and video surveillance equipment and services listed in Section 1709(a)(1) of the FY25 National Defense Authorization Act (Pub. L. 118-159)".

New devices on the Covered List, such as foreign-made consumer-grade routers, are prohibited from receiving FCC authorization and are therefore prohibited from being imported for use or sale in the U.S. This update to the Covered List does not prohibit the import, sale, or use of any existing device models the FCC previously authorized.

This action does not affect any previously-purchased consumer-grade routers. Consumers can continue to use any router they have already lawfully purchased or acquired.

Producers of consumer-grade routers that receive Conditional Approval from DoW or DHS can continue to receive FCC equipment authorizations. Interested applicants are encouraged to submit applications to conditional-approvals@fcc.gov.

For more information, see the FCC's FAQ page. ✸

Next OCRACES Meeting: April 2nd

The next County of Orange RACES meeting will be on Thursday, April 2, 2026, at 7:00 p.m., on Zoom. This meeting will be open to all County and City RACES and EmComm members, to discuss the scenario for the next City/County RACES & EmComm ACS Drill, which will occur on Saturday, May 2, 2026. During this meeting, we will begin planning for that drill. We will also discuss future projects that all RACES and EmComm units can work on together, to enhance our auxiliary communications capabilities in serving our agencies.

The April 2nd Zoom meeting will be hosted by Joe Selikov, KB6EID. Members should check their emails for he meeting ID and passcode. RACES PSRs are reminded to register on the InTime Calendar.

OCRACES weekly ACS nets remain on Mondays at 7:00 p.m. on the OCRACES 2-meter repeater and on Saturdays at 10:00 a.m. on 60 meters (5371.5 kHz USB). ✸

ARRL Hosts HamSci 2026 Workshop

The worlds of amateur radio and ionospheric science came together once again on Saturday, March 14, and Sunday March 15, 2026, at the 9th annual HamSCI Workshop. HamSCI 2026 was hosted by ARRL and held at Central Connecticut State University, near ARRL Headquarters in Newington.

HamSCI—the Ham Radio Science Citizen Investigation program—encourages radio amateurs to collect data that scientists use in their research on ionospheric phenomena. This year's workshop featured 17 oral presentations, 3 tutorials, 5 demonstrations, and 31 posters, and drew researchers from Virginia Tech, Saint Francis University, Dartmouth College, Boston College, and others.

The keynote speaker at Saturday evening's banquet was NASA astrophysicist and Citizen Science Officer Dr. Marc Kuchner.

One overriding theme of the conference was that you don't need to be a scientist to contribute valuable data. HamSCI's basic Personal Space Weather Station, which costs around $100, can observe space weather effects both as a single-point measurement and as part of a larger distributed network. The group has made data collection fun, with such activities as the Solar Eclipse QSO Party and Meteor Scatter QSO Party. One presentation demonstrated how ham observations and measurements captured ionospheric effects during two recent solar eclipses.

At Sunday morning's poster session, University of Scranton student Owen Ruzanski, KD3ALD, described a project to develop a dashboard for HF contesting, DXing, and general operations using data from the Personal Space Weather Station and other remote sources. The project is intended to enhance the real-time propagation assessments sought by amateur radio operators.

ARRL thanked the many partners supporting HamSCI 2026, including The University of Scranton, New Jersey Institute of Technology, the National Science Foundation, NASA, Amateur Radio Digital Communications, and others. ✸

RSGB Welcomes Members Across the World

Many RACES members are members of the American Radio Relay League (ARRL). But did you know you could also join the Radio Society of Great Britain (RSGB)? RSGB membership is open to anyone with an interest in amateur radio, wherever they are in the world. RSGB publications are well-respected around the globe. RSGB has members in over 50 countries, making up around 10% of total membership. You can meet some of their international members by following the link on their new webpage at rsgb.org/international-members.

Choose between digital membership (which is the same price for overseas members as for those in the UK), or regular membership (with a paper copy of their magazine).

- ***RadCom*** – monthly members' magazine, packed with the latest news, reviews and advice. Available via the RSGB app (for mobile, tablet, and web).
- ***RadCom Basics*** – bi-monthly digital publication which explores key topics in a straightforward and accessible way
- ***RadCom Plus*** – digital technical supplement

As an RSGB member you can also:

- Take advantage of exclusive member-only services and offers
- Treat yourself with your member discount in the RSGB shop – receive at least 15% off our extensive range of books and merchandise
- Take part in a member-only contest ✸

Countywide RACES/EmComm News

"RACES/ EmComm News" provides an opportunity to share information from all City & County RACES/ACS units and EmComm organizations and supportive amateur radio clubs in and near Orange County, as well as from Cal OES and federal agencies.

Please send your news to *NetControl* Editor Ken Bourne, W6HK, at:

kbourne.ocsd@earthlink.net

Amateur Radio Exam Sessions

Sponsor: Western Amateur Radio Association
Date: April 16, 2026
Time: 5:30 p.m. (walk-ins allowed)
Contact: George T. Jacob
(562) 544-7373
Email: jac2247@gmail.com
VEC: ARRL/VEC
Location: La Habra Community Center
101 W La Habra Blvd
Pre-registration preferred.
La Habra CA 90631-5401

Sponsor: IVC Wireless Technology Club N6IVC
Date: April 17, 2026
Time: 8:00 p.m. (no walk-ins / register or call ahead)
Contact: Sepehr Sahraian
Email: exams@ivc.radio
VEC: Sandarc CA
Location: Irvine Valley College
Register at website
5500 Irvine Center Dr
Irvine CA 92618-0301
Website: https://ivc.radio/exam-sessions/

Sponsor: Orange County ARC
Date: April 17, 2026
Time: 5:30 p.m. (no walk-ins / register or call ahead)
Contact: Kenneth O. Simpson
(714) 651-6535
Email: VEtesting@w6ze.org
VEC: ARRL/VEC
Location: Orange County Red Cross
600 Parkcenter Dr Rm 213
Santa Ana CA 92705-3518
Website: https://hamstudy.org/sessions/W6KOS-OC/all

Sponsor: The PAPA System
Date: April 25, 2026
Time: 10:00 a.m. (no walk-ins / register or call ahead)
Contact: Rick Norton
(562) 698-7758
Email: rick@rnorton.com
VEC: Greater LA VEC
Location: Sizzler Restaurant
1401 N Harbor Blvd
Fullerton CA 92835-4105
Website: https://hamstudy.org/sessions/WM6M-OC/all

Orange County Amateur Radio Club (OCARC)

The next meeting of the Orange County Amateur Radio Club (OCARC) will be on Friday, April 17, 2026, at 7:00 p.m., at the American Red Cross (George M. Chitty Building), 600 Parkcenter Drive, Santa Ana). Patrick Bolan, KJ7ZSU, will give a presentation on Geochron world clocks. Patrick is the owner of Geochron, a company known for manufacturing mechanical and digital world clocks. He modernized the company by creating the digital Geochron Atlas, which features a specialized ham radio bundle for radio amateurs. The Geochron Ham Radio Bundle includes features like live DX propagation, ADF log uploading, Maidenhead grid, and satellite tracking. Patrick transitioned Geochron from solely mechanical clocks to high-resolution digital displays. The Geochron Digital Atlas offers multiple layers, including weather tracking, aurora, and maximum usable frequency (MUF).

South Orange Amateur Radio Association (SOARA)

The monthly SOARA member meeting will be held on Monday, April 20, 2026, at 6:30 p.m. at the Norman P. Murray Community and Senior Center, 24932 Veterans Way, Mission Viejo. Visitors are welcome.

Claremont Repeater Association (CLARA)

The Claremont Repeater Association (CLARA) will hold its bimonthly tailgate party on Saturday, April 18, 2026, at 5:00 a.m. at the Crossings at Corona, in the parking lot near Jerome's Furniture. Bring chairs and anything else you need (table, EZ-UP, heater). Food can be purchased at nearby restaurants.

San Bernardino Microwave Society (SBMS)

The next meeting of the San Bernardino Microwave Society will be on Thursday, April 2, 2026, at 7:00 p.m. PDT, at the American Legion Hall, 1024 S. Main Street, in Corona. To watch the SBMS meeting live, go to the American Television Network Live on YouTube and click on the "Live Now" window.

April 2026

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1	2 OCRACES Meeting	3	4 Weekly 60 m ACS Net
5 Easter Day	6 Weekly 2 m ACS Net	7	8	9	10	11 Weekly 60 m ACS Net
12	13 Weekly 2 m ACS Net & SOARA Meeting	14	15	16	17 Orange County Amateur Radio Club Meeting	18 Weekly 60 m ACS Net
19	20 Weekly 2 m ACS Net	21	22	23	24	25 Weekly 60 m ACS Net
26	27 Weekly 2 m ACS Net	28	29	30		

Upcoming Events:

- **April 2, 1900-2100 hours:** OCRACES meeting, online on Zoom
- **April 2, 1900 hours:** San Bernardino Microwave Society Meeting, American Legion Hall, 1024 S. Main Street, in Corona
- **April 5:** Easter Day
- **April 13, 1830 hours:** South Orange Amateur Radio Association (SOARA) meeting, Norman P. Murray Community and Senior Center, 24932 Veterans Way, Mission Viejo
- **April 17, 1900 hours:** Orange County Amateur Radio Club (OCARC) meeting, American Red Cross (George M. Chitty Building), 600 Parkcenter Drive, Santa Ana
- **April 18, 0500 hours:** Clairemont Repeater Association bimonthly tailgate party at the Crossroads at Corona, in the parking lot near Jerome's Furniture.

Mission Statement

■ **To provide emergency communication services for the County of Orange under the guidance of the Orange County Emergency Manager and Emergency Management Division Personnel**

■ **These services include, but are not limited to:**

- **Support to the County of Orange Emergency Management Division with auxiliary communications capabilities from County Emergency Operations Center radio room and field locations to and from:**
  - **The general population,**
  - **Orange County city RACES, EmComm, and Public Service organizations,**
  - **Adjacent counties, and**
  - **State and Federal Government organizations**
- **Provide voice and digital communication services in the event of the loss of existing communications infrastructure including public service radio services, cellphone service, internet service, conventional power, and any combination of these services**

County of Orange RACES Frequencies

60 m: 5371.5 kHz USB (dial) (Channel 4) (OC ACS Net—Saturdays, 1000 hours)
6 m: 52.620 MHz output, 52.120 MHz input, 103.5 Hz PL (down for repair)
2 m: 146.895 MHz output, 146.295 MHz input, 136.5 Hz PL*
2 m: 146.595 MHz simplex
1.25 m: 223.760 MHz output, 222.160 MHz input, 110.9 Hz PL
70 cm: 446.000 MHz simplex
70 cm: 448.320 MHz output, 443.320 MHz input, 141.3 Hz PL (private)
70 cm: 449.100 MHz output, 444.100 MHz input, 110.9 Hz PL (private)
70 cm: 449.180 MHz output, 444.180 MHz input, 107.2 Hz PL (private)
70 cm: 449.680 MHz output, 444.680 MHz input, 131.8 Hz PL (private) (down)
*Primary Net—Thursdays, 1900 hours

OCSD RACES Coordinator
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Assistant Radio Officer
Randy Benicky, N6PRL

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County of Orange RACES

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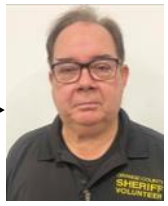
Visit Our Web Site
https://ocraces.org
It's Where It's @!

Questions or Comments?
Contact *NetControl* Editor Ken Bourne, W6HK
kbourne.ocsd@earthlink.net

"W6ACS ... Serving Orange County"

Meet Your County of Orange RACES Members!

Officers →



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Bill Griffin
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David Janisch
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KG6LZP

Scott MacGillivray
KM6RTE

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KJ6UJS

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KE6MVS

Dick Palm
KN6RVU

Lance Rzepiejewski
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Robert Stoffel
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