December 2025

Newsletter of the County of Orange Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service

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EmComm Go-Kit Get-Together

Saturday, December 6, 2025 9:00 a.m.

Orange County Sheriff's Academy Gravel Parking Lot in Tustin

Orange County Sheriff's Department
Emergency Management Division

CRO's Nest

by Ken Bourne, W6HK, Chief Radio Officer Emeritus

Using and Disabling WIRES in Yaesu Radios

The net control operator of a RACES or EmComm net or drill is obligated to inform a station checking in if their signal is of poor quality or unreadable. A common situation occurs when the checking-in station is using a Yaesu transceiver with its WIRES system activated, which causes the first few words of the voice transmission to be obliterated for several seconds because of a loud DTMF tone. If that should occur during an emergency activation, urgent information might not be conveyed. The net control operator makes a bad mistake if he or she avoids mentioning this problem. Not all radio amateurs use a Yaesu transceiver, but those who do should make sure that their WIRES function is turned off or disabled before operating in a RACES or EmComm net, drill, or activation.

In this article I will discuss WIRES and how it can be disabled on a Yaesu transceiver.

WIRES (Wide-coverage Internet Repeater Enhancement System) and its latest incarnation, WIRES-X, is an internet-based communication system developed by Yaesu to extend the range of amateur radio communications. The system uses local nodes—stations connected to the internet via PCs—as access points that repeat communications from conventional amateur radio stations. When these local nodes are interconnected through the internet, amateur stations worldwide can communicate simply by connecting to a local node within their radio range.

WIRES-X, the latest version, adds robust digital capabilities, supporting Yaesu's System Fusion radios and the C4FM (Continuous 4-Level Frequency Modulation) digital voice mode. With WIRES-X, users can transmit and receive not only voice but also digital data such as text messages, images, and audio files. The system supports both analog FM and digital C4FM.

The WIRES-X system is built on several core components:

- WIRES-X Server: Managed by Yaesu, this central server handles internet connectivity and user (node) management.
- WIRES-X Nodes: These are stations (either repeaters or personal setups) connected to the internet via a PC and the HRI-200 interface. Nodes can operate in analog or digital mode and serve as access points for local radio users.
- Rooms: Virtual meeting spaces on the WIRES-X network where multiple nodes can connect and communicate simultaneously. Rooms can be open (public) or closed (private).
- User Stations: Mobile or fixed stations (handhelds, mobiles, or base radios) that access the WIRES-X network by connecting to a local node within radio range.

In WIRES-X operation, DG-ID is crucial for digital access control, while DTMF IDs are used for analog node access and

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certain control commands. Rooms facilitate group communications, and the News function enables asynchronous sharing of information.

Digital Nodes use C4FM digital modulation, supporting high-fidelity voice, text, images, and metadata (e.g., callsigns, GPS). Analog Nodes use conventional FM and support DTMF (Dual Tone Multi-Frequency) signaling for access and control. Analog nodes can only repeat analog audio and DTMF codes, with limited data capabilities. With bridging, WIRES-X allows communication between digital and analog users, though some features (like image transfer) are only available in digital mode.

Here is how to enable, use, and disable WIRES-X on Yaesu FT-991A/FT-991 transceivers:

- Enable WIRES-X
  - Set mode to C4FM
  - Set DG-ID (MENU(SETUP) > "153 WIRES DG-ID" > SELECT > Set DG-ID > ENTER > BACK).
  - Tune to node frequency.
  - Press F(M-LIST), then touch [X] to initiate WIRES-X.
  - Connect to desired node/room via list, search, or DTMF ID.
- Use WIRES-X:
  - Communicate as usual.
  - Use menu options to manage favorites, news, and settings.
- Disable WIRES-X
  - Touch [DISCNCT] to disconnect from node/room.
  - Press and hold WIRES-X key to exit WIRES-X mode.
  - For analog, transmit #99999 via DTMF.

Here is how to enable, use, and disable WIRES-X on Yaesu FT2DR / FT3DR / FT5DR transceivers:

- Enable WIRES-X:
  - Set A-band to node frequency.
  - Set mode to C4FM.
  - Set DG-ID (press and hold [F MENU] > [WIRES-X] > [5 DG-ID]).
  - Press and hold [GM/X] key; [X] flashes, then lights solid when connected.
- Use WIRES-X:
  - Use touchscreen to browse/search nodes/rooms.
  - Communicate, manage news, and favorites.
- Disable WIRES-X:
  - Press and hold [GM/X] key to exit WIRES-X mode.
  - For analog, transmit #99999 via DTMF.

Here is how to enable, use, and disable WIRES-X on Yaesu FTM Series (FTM-400XDR, FTM-300DR, FTM-100DR, etc.) transceivers:

- Enable WIRES-X:
  - Power on while holding [D/X] and [GM] keys to enter HRI-200 mode (for node operation).
  - Set frequency and DG-ID as needed.
  - Use front panel or microphone to initiate WIRES-X.
- Use WIRES-X:
  - Use display/menu to select nodes/rooms.
  - Communicate, manage news, and favorites.
- Disable WIRES-X:
  - Press and hold WIRES-X key or select disconnect in menu.
  - For analog, transmit #99999 via DTMF.

Here is how to disable WIRES tones on VX Series, FT-60, FT-8800/8900, and other Yaesu analog radios

- Access SET menu (see model-specific instructions).
- Select WIRES/INET/DTMF submenu.
- Set to "MANUAL" or select a blank DTMF memory (••••••).
- Exit menu to disable WIRES tones and prevent accidental DTMF bursts.

To temporarily turn off the WIRES function on many Yaesu handheld radios, such as the FT-60 and VX-6R, simply press the WIRES key (often the "0" key or a dedicated WIRES button) momentarily. This toggles the WIRES mode off without disabling it in the menu. The FT-60 "INT" icon disappears from the display when WIRES is off.

On mobile radios like the FT-8800 or FT-8900, press the left VOL knob momentarily while holding the Main band Dial to select a blank memory (••••••). This turns off WIRES tones without disabling the feature in the menu.

Turning off WIRES temporarily deactivates the function. It can be re-enabled easily. **Disabling** WIRES involves changing menu settings to prevent accidental activation (e.g., setting INT.OFF or INT.MEM with blank DTMF memory). ✸

EmComm Go-Kit Get-Together: December 6th

All EmComm operators are welcome to join OCRACES at our informal get-together to discuss and share emergency communications go-kits. The goal is to learn some "best practices," as well as to pick up some "tips and tricks" from others. This is a great opportunity to become familiar with a variety of portable communications, antennas, and electrical power equipment to better respond when a disaster occurs, or to participate in the popular "Parks on the Air (POTA)."

The event will start at 0900 hours on Saturday, December 6, 2025, at the Orange County Sheriff's Regional Training Academy gravel parking lot (just north of the paved parking lot), located at 15991 Armstrong Avenue in Tustin. You can use the what3words app (what3words/// settled.jokers.retina) to navigate to the location.

You are encouraged to bring your portable equipment and set it up for display near your car, especially if you have novel or complete solution(s). If so, get there early to have your display set up and ready by 0900. However, bringing your equipment is not required since a key goal of the event is to learn from others and get ideas to help build your EmComm Go-Kit.

If you are thinking of setting up to share your EmComm Go-Kit equipment, please let OCRACES Chief Radio Officer Scott MacGillivray, KM6RTE, know so that he has an idea of how many setups to expect.

Plan to meet up at the blue canopy in the gravel parking area at 0900 hours for a brief overview and discussion. Afterwards, be sure to check out the setups and displays.

The OCRACES 60-meter ACS net, which begins at 1000 hours every Saturday morning on 5371.5 kHz USB ("channel 4"), will probably be conducted from this December 6th event, with a 20-watt portable transceiver and a Hamstick dipole on a short tripod mast. If propagation is poor that day, Tri-Cities RACES, which will be at the event, has offered the use of their 100-watt portable station and larger antenna to run the net.

After the event and setups are broken down (around noon?), all are encouraged to meet for lunch at The Mess Hall at FLIGHT located only a few blocks away at 1705 Flight Way, Tustin (what3words: ///bump.attracts.blesses). It is like a food court, with several different types of food options.

The lunch will replace the usual annual OCRACES Holiday Dinner, and the Go-Kit event is in lieu of the OCRACES monthly meeting.

CRO Scott thanks Bill Ehart, KM6ZHO, for helping to plan and coordinate this event. ✸

Take Online Course to Become a Ham

Orange County Sheriff's Department PSRs (Professional Services Responders) who wish to join the OCRACES Unit by becoming licensed amateur radio operators now can take an online course to obtain a ham license. ARRL The National Association for Amateur Radio® has introduced a fully-interactive two-day online course for ham radio licensing. The ARRL Technician Class LIVE Video Course includes everything needed to prepare for the FCC Technician Class amateur radio license exam. Enrollment is open now for the inaugural course, which will take place December 20-21, 2025.

Join ARRL Education Specialist Wayne Greene, KB4DSF, for this interactive online class. "We're going to have fun!," said Greene. "I'll guide you through operating your first ham radio to how to communicate through amateur radio satellites. We are going to get fully immersed in every question and answer with the info you need to pass the test!"

In addition to live instruction, course participants will receive the popular Technician Class prep book authored by ARRL National Instructor Gordon West, WB6NOA, which has helped thousands of new hams get licensed with fast results. One-year of ARRL Membership is also included, ensuring these new hams will have quick access to all ARRL benefits, services, and programs.

The course Includes:

- Two days of LIVE instruction with expert ARRL Education Specialist Wayne Greene, KB4DSF
- Technician Class prep book by Gordon West, WB6NOA
- One-year of ARRL Membership

Those who remember ARRL's recorded video courses of the past will recall how valuable it is to see and hear lively video instruction. This new course will ensure students have an even more personal, interactive experience. Greene will present the material in bite-sized sections, demonstrating just how much fun amateur radio is!

Visit the ARRL Shop to complete the paid enrollment for a special introductory price of $99. Registrants will receive a follow-up email with instructions for registering for the live video course after completing your order. If you have any questions regarding the course, please the ARRL Education and Learning Department at 860-594-0285 or email ead@arrl.org. ✸

FCC Extends Renewal Filing Deadline

ARRL The National Association for Amateur Radio® reports that the FCC has extended the filing deadline to March 5, 2026, for amateur radio licenses that otherwise were due to expire from October 1, 2025, to March 5, 2026. The announcement is included in an FCC Public Notice (DA-25-943) released on Monday, November 17, 2025.

The news follows the reopening of the federal government on November 13, following a lengthy 43-day shutdown. Since reopening, many federal agencies, including the FCC, have resumed activities, though reducing backlogs and rebounding to full operations may take some time. This includes significant delays in filing amateur radio license applications.

The FCC Public Notice includes:

For personal radio licensees (i.e., Amateur, Ship, Aircraft, GMRS, and Commercial Operator Licenses), renewal filings originally due on October 1, 2025, through and including March 5, 2026, are now due on March 5, 2026. Further, we confirm that licensees whose licenses have expired and whose renewal filing deadlines have been extended above may rely on their timely renewal filing (by the extended deadline) to support continued operation pursuant to section 1.62 of the Commission's rules.

ARRL Volunteer Examiner Coordinator (ARRL VEC) Manager Maria Somma, AB1FM, explained that the announcement means that amateurs whose license expired, or will expire, between October 1, 2025, and March 5, 2026, may continue to operate upon completing a license renewal filing by March 5, 2026.

Somma added the FCC ULS systems are intermittently available again, which include the license manger system, FCC license search, and application search databases, as well as the CORES system.

FCC System Issues Affecting Application Processing:

The FCC had also briefly resumed accepting application filings via its Electronic Batch Filing (EBF) system on late Wednesday afternoon, November 19. "The EBF system is used by ARRL VEC and all VEC organizations to file exam sessions, new and upgraded licenses, as well as individual and club license filings, none of which are not being processed at this time," said Somma.

On Thursday morning, November 20, an official alert was posted to the FCC website about FCC systems experiencing significant performance degradation. While some applications were successfully processed the previous afternoon, it appears that currently the EBF system is no longer accepting applications. Here is what the FCC posted:

The Federal Communications Commission announces that due to the recent lapse in funding, the Commission suspended most operations from October 1, 2025, through November 12, 2025. As a result of the high volume of filings following the activation of the Universal Licensing System (ULS), Antenna Structure Registration (ASR), Tower Construction Notification System (TCNS) and Electronic Section 106 System (E-106), these online systems are currently experiencing significant performance degradation. Users may encounter the following issues until further notice:

- *Substantial delays in retrieving search results (searches may take several minutes or time out entirely)*
- *Slow or delayed processing of new applications, modifications, renewals, assignments/transfers, and other filings*
- *Intermittent timeouts during submission of applications or attachments*
- *General sluggishness when navigating pages, viewing license/registration details, or uploading documents*

FCC technical staff and contractors are actively investigating the cause and are working to restore normal system performance as quickly as possible. This issue is being treated with the highest priority.

While the degradation persists, users are strongly advised to:

- *Postpone non-urgent or time-sensitive filings when practicable*
- *Refrain from repeated submission attempts if a timeout occurs (wait several minutes before retrying)*
- *Utilize the "Save for Later" feature where available to preserve work in progress*
- *Consider preparing complex filings offline and submitting during off-peak hours if deadlines permit*

The Commission will post additional notices when system performance has been fully restored or if additional information becomes available.

For assistance, users may contact the FCC Licensing Help Desk at (877) 480-3201 (Option 2) or submit an online Help Request (https://www.fcc.gov/wtbhelp).

FCC technical staff and contractors are actively investigating the cause and are working to restore normal system performance as quickly as possible. This issue is being treated with the highest priority. The FCC will post additional notices when system performance has been fully restored or if additional information becomes available. ✸

Geostationary Ham Satellite Project

In the "ZR > BEACON" section of *Zero Retries*, an email newsletter edited by Steve Stroh, N8GNJ, is an item called "Opinion: futureGEO is the Most Important Amateur Radio Initiative of this Decade. Why is no one Talking About it?" This is from the "Great Minds Think Alike Department" at *Zero Retries*. Cale Mooth, K4HCK (who is one of the *Zero Retries* Pseudostaffers), wrote the following article on *Amateur Radio Daily*, an email newsletter curated by K4HCK.

You might not know it, but plans are currently in progress to launch a geostationary amateur radio satellite that would provide multi-mode communications coverage to Europe and most of North America. Led by ESA and [AMSAT-DL], the project is currently called futureGEO and would be the pinnacle of achievement for the amateur radio hobby.

futureGEO is likely to be very similar to the QO-100 satellite that covers Europe, Africa, the Middle East, and a large portion of Asia. The major difference of course would be the inclusion of North America within futureGEO's footprint, opening up geostationary satellite ops to one of the largest ham radio populations in the world.

What makes futureGEO so compelling is the showcase of modern radio and software technology, as well as the relatively low barrier to entry to satellite communication. Like QO-100, futureGEO may feature analog and digital transponders as well as a fully integrated software defined radio stack. What that opens up is every existing ham radio mode, analog and digital, utilized through an easily accessible stationary satellite.

...

AMSAT-NA has relayed updates from AMSAT-DL and contributed to a proposal in 2023, but very little promotion has been published to their website. Earlier this year I asked about futureGEO updates at the AMSAT booth at both Hamvention and Huntsville but they weren't able to relay even basic talking points. IARU is credited with starting the conversation, but there's no mention of the project on their website.

Stroh says, "K4HCK's experiences with AMSAT-US6 are similar to mine…pretty inexplicable—those that "should" know…seem ignorant. Perhaps something else about a Western Hemisphere AR GEO (besides FutureGEO) is going on behind the scenes that's "super secret." But, my experience is that the (U.S.) Amateur Radio rumor mill is powerful and leaky. If something was happening, something would have leaked by now. My conclusion is that nothing substantive is going on, other than FutureGEO.

K4HCK continued: *If this project interests you, I'd highly encourage you to find a way to help promote it. Present about it at an upcoming club meeting. Mention it on the air on the local repeater. Post to your favorite Facebook Group. It's up to us.*

Stroh said he wholeheartedly agrees with K4HCK. Stroh said he playfully (at first) proposed to K4HCK to form an ad hoc promotion committee for a Western Hemisphere Amateur Radio GEO. Stroh questions whether to really do that. He invites radio amateurs to let him and K4HCK know their opinions.

And, while K4HCK joined AMSAT-UK, in a previous issue of *Zero Retries*, Stroh proposed to join AMSAT-DL because they are working on futureGEO). ✸

SKYWARN Recognition Day 2025 Canceled

NOAA's National Weather Service (NWS) has announced the cancellation of SKYWARN Recognition Day (SRD) 2025. This event is normally on the first Saturday in December each year.

The necessary time and resources required to plan a comprehensive national event for SKYWARN Recognition Day 2025 are not available this year. Thus, the difficult decision was made to cancel this year's event by the NWS.

The NWS will work with ARRL and SKYWARN spotters to brainstorm ideas to redevelop a spotter appreciation event in 2026.

ARRL The National Association for Amateur Radio®, which has a Memorandum of Understanding with NWS, emphasized the strength of the long-standing partnership behind the event. "ARRL is proud of the continued partnership with the National Weather Service to promote and recognize SKYWARN and the volunteers around the country. We look forward to working together to revitalize and promote SKYWARN Recognition Day again next year," said Josh Johnston, KE5MHV, ARRL Director of Emergency Management.

Established in 1999 by the National Weather Service and ARRL, SKYWARN Recognition Day celebrates the critical contributions SKYWARN volunteers make in supporting the NWS mission to protect life and property. Amateur radio operators constitute a significant portion of these volunteers, providing essential communication links between NWS and emergency management agencies when traditional communications fail. ✸

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

Countywide Peer-to-Peer Exercise
by Scott MacGillivray, KM6RTE

Based on the successful previous exercises, the next countywide Winlink Peer-to-Peer (P2P) practice exercise is planned for the morning of Saturday, December 13, 2025. This exercise provides an opportunity to gain experience using the Winlink P2P Operating Mode.

The exercise will again focus on sending a Winlink P2P message with an attached form to "Drill Ops" located at Loma Ridge in central Orange County. Details are fully described in the instructions currently being finalized and will be distributed prior to the exercise.

This is an informal practice exercise (organized by me) and not associated with any organization. Your participation is solely for your own personal benefit, and the exercise is not to conflict with any official city or county government activities.

Importance of Winlink P2P

For those not familiar with Winlink P2P, it is one of the four Operating Modes that Winlink supports and does not rely on intermediate Radio Message Server (RMS) or "gateway" for connection to the internet. It is valuable to understand how to operate this mode since it is expected to be a critical Winlink mode used after a major disaster when phone, text, and internet services are not available in our area. I highly recommend that you take advantage of this exercise to gain experience with P2P. However, make sure your Winlink equipment can operate using Conventional Mode (i.e., using local a "gateway") before participating in this drill. The main purpose of this drill is not to verify that your Winlink equipment works but instead focuses on becoming familiar with how to operate P2P mode.

Individuals and organizations interested in taking advantage of this practice exercise may do so. This includes any operators that can reach Loma Ridge (Central Orange County) directly or through a Winlink gateway operating as a relay.

More information on Winlink Global Radio Email, may be found at https://www.winlink.org/.

Amateur Radio Weekly and *Daily*

Amateur Radio Weekly is an email newsletter that helps promote amateur radio as a hobby and as a community resource, by highlighting and sharing the most exceptional ham radio content on the web. It is most interested in promoting the cutting-edge ideas, technology, and methods found in amateur radio today. It is curated by Cale Mooth, K4HCK. Sign up at https://hamweekly.com/.

Amateur Radio Daily is a daily complement to *Amateur Radio Weekly*. While the weekly publication aims to surface important, high-quality news and content relevant to the world of amateur radio in a given week, the daily publication aims to surface more time-sensitive news and events that simply can't fit into a highly curated, weekly email format. For example, *Amateur Radio Daily* is more likely to feature special-event stations, expeditions, and club activities, as well as ham radio adjacent topics such as shortwave and space exploration.

Random Wire

Random Wire is a blog and reviews published by Tom Salzer, KJ7T, on the *Random Wire* website, which cover various topics related to amateur radio and technology.

Reviews (https://www.randomwire.us/) cover a wide range of products and topics, including radio equipment like handheld radios and Meshtastic devices, and general computing topics. Examples include:

- TD-H8 and TD-H3 radios, highlighting features like the display and belt clip.
- H2T, a Meshtastic device, which gave the device a positive recommendation.
- HD radio, discussing its features and performance.
- CS7000-M17 transceiver.

Lance Rzepiejewski, KO6CXL

Congratulations to OCRACES Member Lance Rzepiejewski, KO6CXL, who upgraded his ham license from Technician Class to General Class, scoring 100% on the examination! He looks forward to enjoying the HF bands and checking into the OCRACES Saturday morning 60-meter nets.

December 2025

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1 Weekly 2 m ACS Net	2	3	4 San Bernardino Microwave Society Mtg	5	6 Go-Kits/ Portable Stations & 60 m ACS Net
7	8 Weekly 2 m ACS Net	9	10	11	12	13 Weekly 60 m ACS Net
14	15 Weekly 2 m ACS Net	16	17	18	19	20 Weekly 60 m ACS Net
21	22 Weekly 2 m ACS Net	23	24 Christmas Eve	25 Christmas Day	26	27 Weekly 60 m ACS Net
28	29 Weekly 2 m ACS Net	30	31 New Year's Eve			

Upcoming Events:

- **December 4, 1900 hours:** San Bernardino Microwave Society 70th Anniversary Meeting, American Legion Post #216, 1024 S. Main Street, Suite B, in Corona
- **December 6, 0900-1200 hours:** EmComm Go-Kit Event, OC Sheriff's Academy parking lot, Tustin
- **December 25:** Merry Christmas!
- **December 31:** New Year's Eve

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
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—Mondays, 1900 hours

OCSD RACES Coordinator
Lee Kaser, KK6VIV, (714) 628-7081

Chief Radio Officer
Scott MacGillivray, KM6RTE, (714) 392-9095

Assistant Chief Radio Officer
Joe Selikov, KB6EID

Radio Officer
Scott Byington, KC6MMF

Assistant Radio Officer
Randy Benicky, N6PRL

Chief Radio Officer Emeritus
Ken Bourne, W6HK

County of Orange RACES

Orange County Sheriff's Department, Emergency Management Division
2644 Santiago Canyon Road, Silverado, CA 92676-9791
Telephone: (714) 628-7081 • Fax: (714) 628-7154
Email: LKaser@OCSheriff.gov

County of Orange RACES

OCSD Emergency Management Division
2644 Santiago Canyon Road
Silverado, CA 92676

Telephone: (714) 628-7081
Fax: (714) 628-7154
E-mail: LKaser@OCSheriff.gov

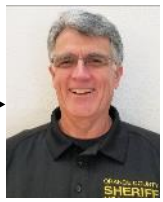
Visit Our Web Site
https://ocraces.org
It's Where It's @!

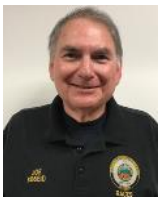
Questions or Comments?
Contact *NetControl* Editor Ken Bourne, W6HK
kbourne.ocsd@earthlink.net

"W6ACS ... Serving Orange County"

Meet Your County of Orange RACES Members!

Officers →


Scott MacGillivray
KM6RTE


Joe Selikov
KB6EID

Scott Byington
KC6MMF

Randy Benicky
N6PRL

OCSD RACES Coordinator →

Lee Kaser
KK6VIV

Heide Aguire
K3TOG

Joel Bishop
AJ6ZP

Ken Bourne
W6HK

Eric Bowen
W6RTR

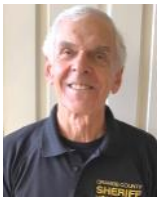
Bill Ehart
KM6ZHO

Bill Griffin
KO6JHY

David Janisch
KN6HEE

Ted Lavino
KG6LZP

Steve Livingston
NJ6R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K0PGE

Fran Needham
KJ6UJS

Chi Nguyen
KE6MVS

Dick Palm
KN6RVU

Lance Rzepiejewski
KO6CXL

Robert Stoffel
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Ken Tucker
WF6F