

Meeting Notice**Thursday, January 13, Kansas City Emergency Management Operations Center**

635 Woodland, Ste. 2107
 Kansas City, MO
 816-784-9042

Gather at 11:30 a.m.; meeting at 11:45 a.m.; program at 12 noon; lunch to follow



Site Security. In October of last year, a wave of transmitter site break-ins occurred in Houston and Austin, TX. There were also similar acts of vandalism in Florida. Little if any damage was done during the break-ins. In most cases, circuit breakers were opened; nothing more. While it is not certain if the events are related, the acts have reminded stations of the importance of effective security measures at sites. Craig Watz from the FBI, a specialist in homeland security, will discuss various ideas and suggested practices. The chapter will provide lunch. ☺

Certification Exam Dates		
<i>Exam Date</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>App. Deadline</i>
Feb 4-14, 2005	Local Chapter	Closed
Apr 19, 2005	NAB	Mar 1, 2005
Jun 3-13, 2005	Local Chapter	Apr 22, 2005

Last Month's Meeting

By Ben Weiss

The December meeting was held at Zarda Barbecue in Lenexa. A brief business meeting was held. A preview of upcoming programs was presented, as well as a review of the next Certification exam window. Because there wasn't a lunch sponsor, a drawing was held to buy lunch for a meeting attendee. The winner was Steve Epstein.

After lunch, the group shuffled around the corner to the facilities of CVP. The program was presented by Dan Stark of Stark Raving Solutions. Stark recently worked with CVP to update its production facilities. The most significant change for the facility was to move the operation from discrete studio operations to a networked infrastructure. One major benefit was the reduction of noise sources in each studio. Once the work was completed, the rooms were so quiet that a new problem was discovered: the air conditioners were a previously unknown noise source.

Stark provided the tour and showed the CAD plans he created to design the facility.

Chairman's Chat

By Steve Epstein, CPBE CBNT

Where do you need to be?

In today's fast-paced, interconnected world, it is a relatively simple matter to see satellite pictures only a few minutes old, download files from halfway around the world

and converse with friends instantly without a telephone. Despite these capabilities, do you still have to make a trip to the transmitter or a remote site to do anything other than maintenance? If so, why?

This point has been driven home lately as I oversee a facility with a studio and two remote transmitters at separate locations. For a variety of reasons, the remote controls are useless. Yes, they provide the functions needed to comply with FCC regulations, but they do not allow sufficient flexibility to troubleshoot or repair remotely. One remote location is 40 minutes southwest of the studio, the other is 30 minutes southeast of the studio. Even though the two transmitters are only about 25 miles apart, thanks to the Missouri river, there is no way to get directly from one to the other, making it a 70-minute trip. Needless to say, time spent (wasted) driving can be considerable, as is the cost off the off-air time.

Yes, remote control can be expensive, but so can off-air time. Interfaces to meters, control points and warning circuits can all be found today from a variety of sources. Some can be home-brewed from relays and other components that may be left-over spares or found in decommissioned equipment. Telephone interfaces—especially modems—are common today. They are on nearly every PC—even the old ones that have been removed from service. These can be used for a variety of purposes, even if you are not skilled at writing software. I/O boards are available from numerous manufacturers that cost less than \$200. Most offer a Windows interface that is easy to set up and control over a dialup phone line or through the Internet. An added bonus may be the ability to send text messages, or offer voice capabilities, both of which make it easy to interface with just a cell phone, instead of requiring a computer.

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Something else that is quite common today is an SMTP interface. This is essentially an e-mail client. Properly configured e-mails could easily be sent directly to a database to provide a long-term record of meter readings and status at the remote site.

Next time you "must" make a trip to the transmitter, see if you can implement some additional remote control that would allow you to at least diagnose the problem and, ideally, correct it remotely.

Regardless of what you use, make sure it offers some level of security through passwords. Any modem in an auto-answer mode is a target for hackers. The last thing you need is 12-year old script kiddie who has figured out how to control your transmitter and is enjoying it. Along those lines, having caller ID and a log at the remote site might not be a bad idea if an intruder does find a way in.

SBE Certification Program to Introduce Certification Specialties

Beginning in April 2005, the SBE plans to inaugurate several Certification Specialties. The Specialties will target areas of broadcast engineering knowledge that are becoming harder to find or are of a specialized nature. The first specialty will assess proficiency in maintaining AM directional antennas. A one-day seminar on AM directional antennas is also in the works. Those who wish to take a SBE Specialty exam will need to already hold a current SBE Broadcast Engineer or higher certification.

SBE Compiling Break-in List

The recent rash of break-ins at station transmitter sites in some areas of the country has caught the attention of many broadcast engineers and also that of local, state and federal law-enforcement agencies. There has been speculation that some of these incidents may not be just random acts, but pre-planned activities by terrorist operatives. Be sure to report any break-ins or other malicious activities to your local police department and FBI office but also let the SBE know. SBE General Counsel Chris Imlay is keeping a log of break-ins and is sharing this information with the FBI in Washington, DC. Send any information to Chris at cimlay@sbe.org. You can read more about the recent break-ins in Imlay's column in the December issue of the *SBE Signal*.

Leader Skills 2005 Scheduled

The SBE has scheduled Course I of the SBE Leader Skills Seminar for June 7 to 9, 2005, in Indianapolis. The SBE Leader Skills Seminar provides management and people skills training for broadcast engineers. Dick Cupka will lead the seminar. The course fee is being determined and

will announced soon. Mark the dates and make plans to attend or send someone from your station. Both the individual and the company will benefit.

Los Angeles Tower Felled by Plane Crash

The Associated Press reports that a private plane crashed into the tower of KFI-AM Los Angeles at 9:45 a.m. on Dec. 19. The single-engine Cessna 182 brought the 760' tower down. The two people on the plane were killed. Their identities have not yet been released.

The plane was en route to Fullerton Airport from El Monte, both in California, when it crashed. Fullerton airport is about one mile from the tower site. The FAA reports that the pilot did not issue any distress reports.

KFI's tower has resisted earthquakes and a brush with a private plane once before. The tower survived the previous air incident. The tower's guy wires were replaced in March 2004 after 47 years of use.

KFI reports that the station was off the air for about an hour before switching to an auxiliary tower at the same site at about 5kW. Within a day, the station was able to increase its power to about 25kW. The station is licensed for 50kW into the main antenna.

SBE 2004 Awards Nominations Open

Every year, the SBE holds its annual awards program to recognize the outstanding efforts of SBE chapters and members. SBE members and chapters are eligible to be nominated. Some awards are based on chapter statistics such as attendance and percentage of certified members. Other categories require a nomination. The 2004 nomination form is available for download as a PDF on the SBE website.

The categories for chapter awards are Best Regional Convention or Conference, Best Chapter Newsletter, Most Interactive Chapter, Best Chapter Frequency Coordination Effort, and Best Chapter Website. The individual awards are Broadcast Engineer of the Year; Educator of the Year; Technology Award; Best Technical Article, Book or Program by An SBE Member; and Best Article, Paper or Program by a Student Member.

Nominations are due in the SBE National Office by May 31, 2005.

Next EAS Required Monthly Test: January 25
The RMT is sent on the last Tuesday of the month


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The SBE National Awards Committee will review the nominations and choose the winners, who will be announced in June 2005. The awards are presented at the SBE National Meeting, which will be held in conjunction with the Broadcast Engineering Expo in Dallas in October.

Helicopter Crashes After Striking TV Tower Guy Wire

On Dec. 1 an Army helicopter out of Fort Hood in Texas crashed near the broadcast tower for KXXV-TV, which is licensed to Waco, TX. Seven soldiers of the 4th Infantry Division, including a brigadier general, were aboard the Blackhawk helicopter.

Weather conditions were foggy that morning. According to a statement from KXXV, the lights on the station's tower were not working after severe weather from the previous week. The station had notified the FAA and a Notice to Airmen (NOTAM) was issued.

The Black Hawk was en route from Fort Hood to the Red River Army Depot in Texarkana. The pilot had been given visual flight clearance, but moments before the crash he requested to change to instruments. The flight plan was supposed to steer the aircraft clear of the tower site. An investigation into the accident is underway.

Wireless Bureau Seeks Comment on Migratory Bird Collision Report

In a Public Notice issued Dec. 14, the FCC seeks comment on the report of Avatar Environmental regarding migratory bird collisions with communications towers. The report was filed with WT Docket No. 03-187.

On Aug. 20, 2003, the Commission released a Notice of Inquiry, *In the Matter of Effects of Communications Towers on Migratory Birds*, to develop a record on how and to what extent migratory birds may be affected by communications towers. The NOI sought comment on existing scientific research concerning the number of migratory bird collisions with communications towers and the role that specific factors, such as lighting, height and type of antenna structure, weather, location, physiographic features of sites and migration paths, may have in increasing or decreasing the incidence of such collisions.

To help the Commission evaluate the scientific studies, it retained Avatar, an environmental risk consulting firm. After reviewing the scientific studies referred to by the comments and reply comments, Avatar submitted a report of its findings. In a section entitled "Conclusions and Recommendations," Avatar explained that "[a]lthough most of the causes and possible solutions for increased avian mortalities associated with communication structures remain speculative, a few conclusions have been advanced with some degree of confidence within the scientific community studying this problem."

The report noted the following:

- The greatest bird mortality tends to occur on nights with low visibility conditions.
- All other things being equal, taller towers with lights tend to represent more of a hazard to birds than shorter, unlit towers.
- Towers with guy wires are at higher risk than self-supporting towers.
- Certain avian families tend to be more affected than others, among them vireos, warblers and thrushes.
- There are no studies to date that demonstrate an unambiguous relationship between avian collisions with communication towers and population decline of migratory bird species.

The report states that more research is warranted to identify specific causes and possible solutions to the problem.

The FCC seeks comment on the Avatar report. Comments are due on or before Jan. 13, 2005, and reply comments are due on or before Jan. 28, 2005.

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Congress Passes Satellite Transmission Bill

Satellite companies will be able to retransmit broadcasters' television signals for another five years but would have to offer those signals on a single dish, under legislation approved by Congress. The bill represents a setback for satellite providers like Echostar Communications, who has argued that capacity constraints require it to split its signal onto two channels Reuters reported.

Broadcasters had complained that less-popular channels are commonly shunted onto the second dish, which some customers choose not to install.

Echostar, the no. 2 satellite provider under its Dish Network name, said any move to consolidate signals onto one dish would cost the company \$100 million, according to Legg Mason analysts.

Satellite providers will have 18 months to phase out the two-dish arrangement under the measure, which passed both the Senate and the House of Representatives as part of a \$388 billion year-end spending bill.

The retransmission agreement allows satellite customers in remote areas not served by broadcast TV to view network shows. That provision was set to expire at the end of this year. A similar measure passed the House of Representatives in October.

Echostar said it was disappointed that it has only 18 months to eliminate its two-dish configuration. However, the company said it would work to meet this tight deadline and to minimize the impact on consumers.

Echostar also suggested that the new law require terrestrial broadcasters, who have been slow to roll out full-power digital transmissions of their signals, to do some fast work as well. Over the next several years, it said, the bill will allow satellite TV carriers to begin offering distant high-definition TV network channels to many consumers if the local broadcasters lapse on their promises to Congress to begin broadcasting full-power HDTV to their viewers.

The digital white area provision will motivate local broadcasters to build their towers and broadcast at full power in order to serve their communities, the company said. The changes will also help accelerate the digital transition and ensure the return of the 700MHz spectrum to the government.

The Digital Transition Coalition, a coalition of consumer groups, said the new legislation could provide relief to

millions of television viewers, especially those in rural areas who cannot receive local network programming in digital.

Strongbad Tackles Radio

A popular Internet Flash cartoon, Strongbad, has some advice for breaking into radio. View it online at www.homestarrunner.com/sbemail120.swf.

Chapter Newsletter Help Still Needed

Submit a story, provide a news item, forward some stations news. All submissions qualify for recertification points. ☺



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Upcoming Meetings and Events

January 13 - KC EMOC
 Facility Security

February 10 - KCPL
 Facility Tour

March 10 - location TBA
 Engineer Appreciation Lunch w/ RF Specialties

Upcoming meeting dates
 Mark your calendar now

April 14
May 12
June 9

Do you have a suggestion for a program topic?
 Please share it with Matt Kinnan or Mike Rogers.

Prepare to be Certified

The SBE introduced newly designed certification sample-test software at NAB2004. The new software runs on Windows and replaces the previous DOS-based software.



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