



# Propagation

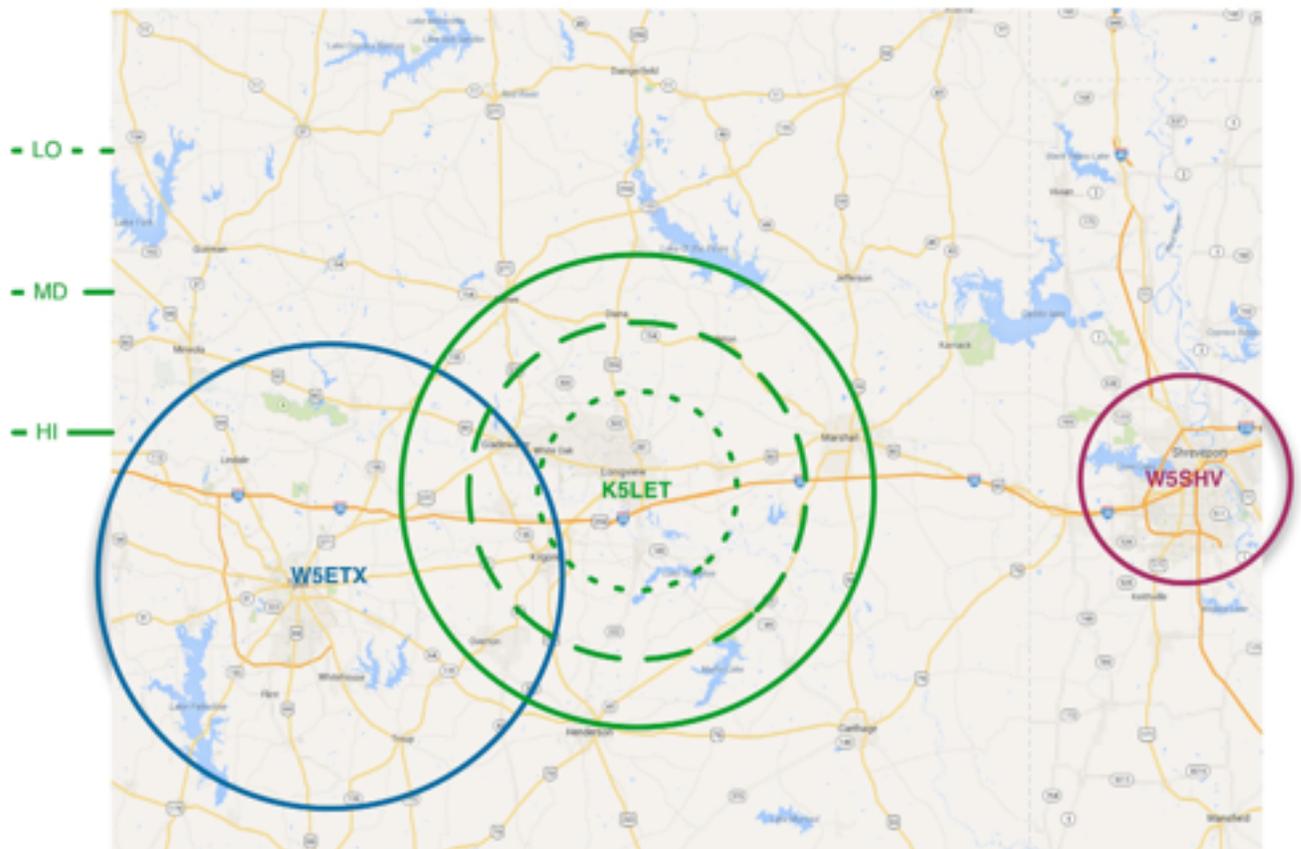
## D-Star Repeater Project Update

Gary Lewis WG5L has told us that the new D-Star repeater is on the air and is performing quite well as of Friday February 28th after some critical “tweaking” by Jerry Richie WA5OKO. Work on the repeater has been under way for several months, and after the final electronics components were received from Icom and installed at the repeater site the prized installation became active in the D-Star universe. After the tweaking session, Gary traveled around the area and did signal testing, resulting in the chart below. Though the K5LET repeater has quite a large coverage area, unfortunately the gap between Shreveport’s D-Star repeater and the Tyler machine’s coverage footprint was not quite eliminated due to the somewhat limited footprint of Shreveport’s machine located in the downtown area. There has been some discussion concerning improving the W5SHV footprint in the future.

## Inside...

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Current K5LET D-STAR Repeater Approximate Range for Vehicular Mobile



## *February Meeting Presentation: Insulation Breakdown Testers*



Tom Wilbeck N5KGN points out the features of a typical insulation breakdown tester to February's meeting attendees. Note Todd Hoover N5TJH attending the meeting from the frozen north via laptop using Skype (left).

(Photo: Priscilla Quinn AA5PQ)

February's presentation featured Tom Wilbeck N5KGN exposing attendees to the dark science of Insulation Breakdown Testers. These testers can be used in a variety of situations to test electrical cables for continuity, shorts and resistance among other things, making them quite handy for ham installations. He explained that the units can send thousands of volts down a cable to perform its checks, so caution and knowledge of testing procedures and equipment is imperative for safety and reliable test results. These testers, also known as Meg/Ohm Meters, come in a variety of styles and prices depending upon the budget and needs of the user. The testers have been in use for many years with some equipment being manufactured as early as 1923 in a number of different countries. Some of the best (and most expensive!) units are currently being manufactured in Australia, however they can easily be purchased by Amazon or eBay or many other online services for a wide range of prices depending upon the features needed. (cont.)

## *February Meeting Presentation (continued)*

During his presentation, Tom demonstrated how to safely and effectively use a tester to diagnose possible problems with antenna feed line, including how some units can even determine where along the cable a short may be located. He disclosed how telephone and other utility companies rely on such equipment to find cable faults in underground installations, oftentimes saving thousands of dollars in time and expenses to repair those cables, both copper and fiber (using different test sets) depending upon the applications. In most cases, hams could use this sort of equipment for testing cable prior to installing it on a tower, and even afterward to ensure that the proper signal reaches the antenna prior to operation.

## *East Texas Regional Amateur Radio Tailgate Sale*

Details on the upcoming LETARC/LUARC Annual Spring Tailgate Sale are rapidly being finalized according to Todd Hoover N5TJH, who is coordinating the event. This third annual event is being hosted by LETARC and LUARC—the LeTourneau University Amateur Radio Club—and will be hosted on the campus in the same location as last year. For those who will be attending for the first time, the event will occupy the south parking lot of the Glaske Center for Science and Technology, adjacent to the soccer fields at the south end of the campus.

This year's event will be held on Saturday, April 12th from 0730 to 1100, rain or shine, and will be sponsored by a growing variety of amateur radio clubs in northeast Texas and along the I-20 Corridor including clubs from Cedar Hill, Marshall, Athens, Tyler, Minden, Shreveport, (ARCOS and SARA), Palestine and Texarkana. Todd has a goal of recruiting fifteen clubs to sponsor the sale. Last year's event had a registered

attendance of 158 people, and Todd's estimate is that we will have two hundred attendees. Main Trading Company from Paris will have a booth at the event, and more door prizes than ever before will be awarded throughout the swap meet.

The swap meet is free—there is no admission charge! Any and all persons are welcome, so bring a friend. If you decide to have a display of items for sale, be sure to bring your own table(s) and chair(s) and remember that no electrical power will be provided. LUARC will be providing coffee for the duration of the event, but no concessions will be available. Tailgate parking is on a first-come, first-served basis so be sure to come early for a good spot.

For more information, contact the Spring Tailgate Sale event coordinator, Todd Hoover N5TJH. He may be reached via [n5tjh@gmail.com](mailto:n5tjh@gmail.com) or on his cell phone at 903.399.3266.

## *How I got into ham radio..*

I got into ham radio, like many people, through a somewhat circuitous route. My grandfather was a radio operator for the 7th Infantry Division in the South Pacific during World War II. During his exploits, his unit overran a Japanese position. He was tasked with sorting out the captured Japanese radio desk. One particular piece of equipment

found its way back to Texas after the war: a Japanese army straight key.

As a boy, my brother and I used to play with this priceless artifact. My grandfather was no ham, but he did try to teach me code when I asked. I learned SOS, T, M, and finally Y so I could at least tap out my name. (Continued)

## *How I got into ham radio (continued)...*

Meanwhile, my dad, also no ham, was big into AM DXing. He sometimes worked the graveyard shift at one of the countless refineries on the east side of the Houston area where I grew up. The long nighttime hours provided ample opportunity to tune into AM broadcasts from all over the region and even the 50,000W stations located around the country. At home he would tune into WHO from Des Moines, Iowa; show me on a map how far away the signal was coming from and I was truly amazed. "A signal that normally only covers a portion of Iowa making it all the way down here?! Wow."

For Christmas he bought me a Radio Shack receiver that covered AM, FM, Shortwave, and even VHF. Together we would listen to the BBC, WWV and all sorts of international stations coming in on shortwave. "Man, this is way better!"

Some time later, I happened across a 2m net one evening and listened in. I actually knew a couple of the guys that were talking as family friends. I got a copy of *Now You're Talking* and read all I could about the world of ham radio. I got within one question of passing my Tech No-Code and took a few more attempts failing no better. I mothballed the idea of ham radio somewhere around the age of 12.

It wasn't until years later I found myself attending Stephen F. Austin State in Nacogdoches and met up with a couple of then faculty members that were hams. I found more information about radio online, bought a copy of the Gordon West Tech study guide and got right to work. I sat for my Tech about a month later and passed. I found a cheap, used 2m HT off eBay and was "in" - finally.

I spent several months learning from "lunch bunch" meetings with members of the Nacogdoches Amateur Radio Club as well as the countless elmers in the club. I still had that itch to learn code. (Especially after seeing some proficient operators working CW at special events.) I studied the code on weekends for several months. Then, almost a year after I was first licensed, I passed my code test. I also managed to pass the written General the same night. I went home, cut a 20m dipole and my very first HF contact that night was with a DX station in the Cooke Islands (South Pacific)! I've been permanently hooked ever since.

That's how I got into ham radio. How about you?

Tommy Gober, N5DUX

*Our thanks to Tommy. If you have your own story, please share it with us! Send it to [letarcnewsletter@yahoo.com](mailto:letarcnewsletter@yahoo.com).*

## *Club Dues*

Club dues are still being accepted for 2014. Please fill out a membership application (even if you're already a member) to ensure that all your information is current. You may find the application in PDF form at <http://letarc.org/main/about/> on the right side of the page. Dues are \$25 and \$35 for single or family memberships and can be mailed to PO Box 5613, Longview TX 75608 or brought to a meeting.

## *VE Session Report*

John Zenter AE5OY, LETARC President and VE Team Liaison reports that John Hearne of Marshall passed both his Technician and General examinations at the February 15th Volunteer Examiner session. Congratulations, John!

## *Suggestions for Activities*

We are still open to suggestions for club members to participate in any sort of community activities to provide communications services. Please send your ideas/suggestions to [letarcnewsletter@yahoo.com](mailto:letarcnewsletter@yahoo.com)

## *Upcoming Events*

|                  |  |
|------------------|--|
| March or April   | Service Project - Paint Upstairs Restrooms and Classroom               |
| April 12th       | Annual Tailgate Sale   |
| April/May/June   | Possible Licensing Classes   |
| June 13th & 14th | HamCom in Plano ( <a href="http://www.hamcom.org">www.hamcom.org</a> ) |

### **Next Meeting:**

Saturday, March 15th at 9:00 a.m.  
American Red Cross Building, Upstairs  
SE Corner of Hwy 31 and Loop 281

### **Next VE Session:**

Saturday, March 15th at 2:00 p.m.  
LeTourneau University Glaske Building for Science & Technology

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Longview/East Texas Amateur Radio Club (LETARC)  
PO Box 5613  
Longview, TX 75608