

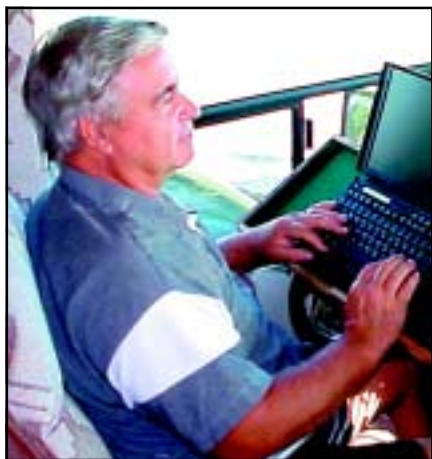
Introduction to Winlink 2000

One integrated digital system links the VHF/UHF packet networks, ham-to-ham radio messages and Internet e-mail—worldwide.

Would you like to be able to get the same level of e-mail service you enjoy on the Internet at home from your ham station while vacationing in your summer cabin miles from the nearest telephone, in your RV while on the road, offshore in your sailboat, or perhaps most importantly during an emergency when your local communications services have been disrupted? If so, Winlink 2000 is for you.

What is Winlink 2000?

Winlink 2000 (abbreviated *WL2K*) is a worldwide network of participating amateur stations bound together through the use of the Internet. By linking with any one of these stations on HF PACTOR or VHF packet you can exchange messages with other hams (who have packet or WL2K addresses), or with *anyone* with an Internet e-mail address. While WL2K interchanges messages with the existing amateur global VHF/UHF packet networks, it provides new services the packet system doesn't support. WL2K messages can have any number of addressees and can include attachments just like Internet e-mail. Messages are forwarded within the WL2K network using the Internet, assuring prompt delivery whether to another radio user or to an Internet e-mail address. Unlike the packet network, no



Tad, WA1FQO, uses Winlink 2000 to staying in contact while on the road.



Participating Winlink 2000 stations throughout the world.

“home” BBS is required. You may send and receive your messages from any of the participating WL2K stations.

What Hardware and Software do I Need to Access WL2K?

First of all, you need a “radio modem” and a computer. AX.25 packet is used on VHF, so any sort of *terminal node controller* (TNC) is fine. You can even put your computer soundcard to work as a TNC with *AGWPE* software, which you'll find on the Web at www.raag.org/sv2agw/inst.htm.

However, most Winlink 2000 users are connecting on HF, and for that application you need a *multimode processor* that supports PACTOR or (preferably) PACTOR II. A number of inexpensive processors such as the Kantronics KAM+ and KAM-98, AEA/Timewave PK-232, PK-900, DSP-1232 and 2232, the MFJ 1276 and 1278B, or the HAL DXP-38 support PACTOR. To gain the higher throughput of PACTOR II, you'll need to invest in the more expensive SCS PTC-II Pro or PTC-IIe processor. Early versions may not have PACTOR, so it is a good idea to make sure the used controller you purchase supports PACTOR. It might not be a bargain if an expensive upgrade is required. Upgrading an old PK-232 is \$100.

Your computer must be able to run *Windows 95, 98, ME, NT, 2000* or *XP* and will

need a serial port to connect to the processor. In addition, complete radio control is supported for most modern ham or marine SSB radios via their PC control ports.

WL2K uses a computer-to-computer protocol over the air so you need a *client* program in your computer to talk to a WL2K station. The program of choice is *AirMail 3.0* written by Jim Corenman, KE6RK. *AirMail* is available at no charge for amateur use from Jim's Web site at www.airmail2000.com. *AirMail 3.0* has a user interface that will seem familiar to anyone who has used an Internet e-mail program, and comes with an excellent help file to see you through the installation and operation of the system. *AirMail* also has comprehensive “help” files to assist you in getting started.

Lastly, you need a radio for the band you plan to use. Any modern-day VHF FM or HF SSB transceiver will work, although better performance can be realized on HF if the radio receives using a 500-Hz bandwidth filter.

How Do I Find a WL2K Station?

There are over 31 stations worldwide on the air as this is being written with more planning to join the network. Check the Winlink Web site (www.winlink.org) for the latest list of stations and frequencies. You'll notice that several frequen-

