

British Top Band Direction-Finding Association

Recommendations to Organisers of all Direction-Finding Contests on the 1.8 MHz Band

1 GENERAL

It is most important that organisers ensure that transmitter operators and other helpers are fully conversant with the recommendations herein contained, together with the Rules for Qualifying Events and the National Final. This is particularly so if using operators who may be unfamiliar with regular D.F. practices.

The contest manager should make sure that each organiser has a copy of this guidance at least one month before the start of the event. Attention should be drawn particularly to section 5.

2 HIDDEN STATIONS

Stations should be hidden as well as possible making use of camouflage and any natural obstacles in the vicinity of the site. It MUST BE possible for competitors to approach and reach hidden stations safely, without, for example, having to run across motorways or main line railways. Organisers should bear in mind the adverse publicity which could arise should a serious accident occur. Only exceptionally should stations be hidden in motor vehicles or in caravans. Should this become operationally necessary, such vehicle should be parked well away from other vehicles and should use a concealed aerial, i.e. not a mobile whip. Care must be taken when erecting aerials to ensure that they avoid being accidentally damaged by competitors. It should be borne in mind that the competitors rely on the ground wave element of a signal and if a station is located a long way from the start it is essential that the aerial has as much vertical wire as possible. Stations MUST NOT be located on private property or public land that has a requirement to pay an entrance fee. Access must be available, without infringing Rule 8(b), via Public Highway, Bridle Way, Foot Path, Tow Path etc. It should be noted that disused railways may have reverted to private land-ownership and organisers should check their current status. Hidden stations and the starting point should be covered by one sheet of an Ordnance Survey map 1:50000 series and organisers must ensure that no doubt arises when any station is located close to the edge of the map.

The access routes to hidden stations should be clearly identifiable on the map, public and safe.

It is recommended that it be possible to keep in contact with the operators before, during and after the contest. Mobile phones or vhf radios can be used but check coverage and signal strengths first. Make sure that the operators know how important they are to the success of the contest and that they should contact the organiser as soon as possible if there is any problem. Be prepared for problems and, if possible, have a spare transmitter and operator available.

3 STARTING POINT.

Care should be taken to fix the start at some point where there is ample parking and adequate space for competitors to take bearings without any interference from power cables etc. There is no objection to having the start on private land provided that permission is first obtained from the owner. Particular care should be taken to avoid causing inconvenience to members of the public when leaving the start.

4 FREQUENCIES AND CALLSIGNS.

Transmitter frequencies must be separated by at least 10kHz.

Competitors should not be given the frequencies and callsigns of the transmitters until they have signed in (approx. 30 minutes) before the start of the contest.

It is advisable for transmitters to be crystal-controlled but VFO may be used provided that adequate frequency checking equipment is available.

Care should be taken to avoid frequencies known to be regularly used by beacons and coastal stations etc.

5 TRANSMISSIONS

Prior to the event the organiser must ensure that signals from transmitters operating on the contest frequency can be heard at the start with a normal D.F. receiver, using its normal aerial. It is desirable for the starter to be in radio contact (e.g. using the 2 metre band or by mobile telephone) with the hidden stations so that any problems arising may be speedily dealt with. In order to avoid giving any clues to the location of hidden transmitters to competitors en-route to the start, radio silence should be

maintained as completely as possible. In the event of any difficulty being experienced with transmissions at the start, organisers must strictly apply Rule No.4 with regard to approximate bearings given to competitors.

At the beginning and the end of random transmissions, a short C.W. signal which should take the form of 'TEST D.F. DE G.../P' at least twice, should be transmitted to aid positive identification. Where it is known that there is severe interference on the frequency, this C.W. may be used in place of telephony for the whole of the random transmission.

Hidden stations should make the same number of random transmissions on a pre-arranged schedule. However, should it become obvious that competitors are experiencing unusual difficulty in locating a hidden station, the operator should increase the frequency and/or duration of transmissions. For the last 15 minutes of the contest transmissions must be continuous and should end with an accurate location, including NGR of the station.

Transmitter operators must not engage in radio contacts as this can be very confusing for competitors. They must also rigidly adhere to the rule which states that random transmissions will be of a minimum duration of two minutes with a maximum silent period of fifteen minutes.

Signing in at hidden transmitters must be executed quickly with competitors being told to leave the area to avoid giving away the location to others in the vicinity. If challenged, transmitter crews must not deny that they are the hidden station.

6 TEA ARRANGEMENTS.

Organisers are responsible for arranging a rendezvous for tea after an event. This gives an opportunity for the presentation of any trophies and prizes to the winner etc. Organisers may wish to add a surcharge to the cost of meal to provide a contribution for the cost of any prizes which are usually presented to the winner and runner-up and to the first lady member of a competitor's team. In view of some difficulties which have arisen in the past, due to competitors not returning for tea after having booked in, it is recommended that tea monies be collected before the start of the event. Where competitors state that they do not wish to return for tea, it is now accepted that a 'non-dining' fee should be collected to cover the surcharge mentioned above.

Organisers should make it clear to the competitors and operators that the last team into each transmitter should, if possible, take the clock back to the tea. This will usually save time and allow everyone to get home earlier.

WLP March 2008