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RMS Express via soundcard

Overview of RMS Express

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Using RMS Express via soundcard is a two-step process. First, the interface and, second, installation and use of RMS Express itself. But what does RMS Express do for you?

RMS Express is software for **Winlink** which allows communication in both VHF **packet** mode and in the HF **Winmor** mode. Using the "AGW Express Interface" discussed below with the RMS Express software and the SignaLink external sound card, you have both HF and VHF access to the Winlink messaging system. The beauty of RMS Express is having both VHF and HF bands available and everything is in a single package. There is no need to separately install AGW Packet Engine (if using the recommended UZ7HO sound modem) or a separate email program. RMS Express includes the packet engine, address book and email function.

Requirements:

1. A computer with a free USB port.
2. A SignaLink USB external sound card (or other external sound card such as Rig Blaster). This write-up does not include using a TNC.
3. AGW's packet engine (AGWPE) (download link IF you need to d/l it separately — it's in the AGWexpress setup package).**You will use this only if you don't want to use the UZ7HO SoundModem** (which is the recommended approach).
4. The AGW EXpress Interface. (download link) — has everything you need.
5. The RMS Express software. You do NOT need to download it separately — the AGWE interface will look for it on your computer and if not present, will give you a download and install option.

Packet engine choices are AGW Packet Engine or AGW Packet Engine Pro or UZ7HO Sound Modem (**UZ7HO preferred**). AGW Packet Engine free version is included in this setup.

Implementation

SignaLink

Your SignaLink device needs to be working before you can configure the software in the steps below. The "SL" is discussed in detail elsewhere on this site.

AGW Express Interface

This software solution uses the freeware version of the AGW packet engine software and it is included in the setup package. You do not need to go elsewhere to obtain it. The first step is to **download the interface software**. Also download the appropriate implementation guide for your version of Windows (sorry, Mac users). It is a **very complete guide. Print out the guide and follow it**. Take all of the default choices. **This download has all necessary software components installed.** There are no separate downloads — it's all in this package.

The download page on the W2YG site has very complete documentation links and how-to videos on all the necessary steps. Or use the guide that follows below, or both.

What you end up with

- A virtual serial port which is required by RMS Express
- An interface between RMS Express and your SignaLink
- RMS Express

Step-by-step installation and configuration

This configuration will use the UZ7HO SoundModem instead of the AGW packet, and is written for Windows 7. It installs with the full package from above. Steps:

1. Download the package. Click here. Scroll down to the link that says "AGW Express Interface."
2. Have your SignaLink configured and connected to your computer. Verify that it is the soundcard being used by the computer, and not the internal one. The SignaLink is identified as "USB Audio CODEC." To check this, find the audio icon (in your system tray, lower right) and RIGHT-click to open playback devices. Check that both playback and recording are using the SignaLink.
3. Execute the downloaded application. You will mostly accept defaults.
    1. It will install in **C:\Ham Software\AGW Express Interface\AGWE**
    2. You will "finish" and then come to "**Other Solution Set Components**." Continue.
    3. For the HW virtual serial port:
        1. IMPORTANT: choose **Standalone** Application and NOT the client-server
        2. It installs in your program directory.
        3. Suggest you DO install a desktop icon.
        4. Add to firewall exceptions if prompted.
        5. Take the default COM73. You may get a programming error about not connected to an object ... hit OK until it proceeds.

4. **Engine**: IMPORTANT: use **UZ7HO** and NOT the AGW packet engine
5. SoundModem config: Select SignaLink. It MUST be connected.
    1. Verify in next screen that the USB Audio CODEC is selected for both recording and playback.
6. Now you are at RMS Express. Take the **install** choice if not already installed.
    1. Click **OK** and NOT the Configure RMS button. If you get a msg about RMS Express not being installed at the usual location, click OK and you will get a prompt to install it. Do that. It will download separately.
    2. After download you will get a prompt to install.
    3. IF RMS Express is already installed, choose the configuration option.
7. Create RMS Express Setup and VHF Packet configurations
    1. Callsign including SSID if using one
    2. RMS Gateway is not needed
    3. You will not also connect RMS Express to a TNC
    4. OK your way out.
8. NOTE: if for some reason the installation does not finish installing all components, you may need to UNinstall AGW Express Interface before restarting the install. (CCLEANER Free version recommended)
4. **Startup** – You should have an **AGW Express Interface** icon on the desktop — click it — that's where you start. Several things should happen:
    1. SoundModem starts — quick popup window and then gone.
    2. HW virtual serial port (VSP) starts — quick popup window and then gone.
    3. Prompt to start RMS Express – YES
    4. After starting, if you close RMS Express you only have to start it from the desktop icon.
5. Audio Settings
    1. Right-click the speaker icon in your system tray and Open Volume Control
    2. Speaker volume slider must be all the way up: 100%
6. Possible problem work-arounds
    1. If you need to download the virtual serial port separately, link to reinstall just that, [click here](#).
    2. If when starting AGW Express you get a notice that the VSP cannot be found in its usual location, it's probably there but the control file for AGW Express is missing two entries. Here is the fix:
        1. Navigate to the AGW Express.XML file. It will be under **C:\Users\{your user name\AppData\Roaming\W2YG Software\AGW Express Interface**. NOTE: to be able to see that directory you may need to change your settings in the Windows Explorer (file browser). Under **Organize** click on **Folder and search options** under **View** and put a check on **Show hidden files ….**
        2. Check for this entry: **<HWVSPINSTALLED>YES</HWVSPINSTALLED>**. If it says NO, change to YES.

3. Check for this entry under <HWVCP>: **<PATH>C:\Ham Software\HW group\HW VSP3s\</PATH>** Insert that path if it is blank (or the actual path if you installed elsewhere).

Configuration of RMS Express

1. Files|RMS Express Setup
    1. Callsign ~~should include SSID in the SUFFIX box if used,~~ e.g. K5HLA-8 is the comm trailer. No, you put the entire call including any SSID in the callsign box.
    2. If you have a tactical callsign, fill in at Aux Call 1. NOTE: if you want to use a tactical call, coordinate with your EC and check the winlink2000 site for how to get it recognized by the Winlink system.
    3. Grid square: fill in.
    4. Check on "Warn about stations holding …."
    5. Path to propagation forecast program should be **C:\itshfbc**. If that's not already installed on your computer, get it from **http://www.greg-hand.com/hfwin32.html**.
    6. Service Codes: **PUBLIC EMCOMM** (note the space)
    7. Fill in your personal info. Optional but recommended.
2. Files|Preferences:
3. Set that up to suit yourself.
4. **Hybrid Network parameters**
    1. Click and allow update
    2. Fill in MPS1 with **N5TW**. Leave the others blank.
    3. Click **Register MPS via Internet** (internet connection required … duh ….)
5. Backup the databases — just click the button

Usage of RMS Express

It has the messaging, address book, in and out folders — all built in. There is no need to use a separate email program. Fortunately, it's fairly intuitive at this point. For a list of essential winlink addresses to put in your address book, go to the HLARC/HLARES ICS-217A form. It's on the EmComm tab of the website. Or download the address book from below.

Weekly check-ins

In order to test your equipment and software, and that of the Winlink system, a weekly check-in is encouraged.