

**Hurricane nets by KD5BJ**  
HWN.org

With Hurricane Beryl in the neighborhood, I explored what hurricane nets look like how they might differ from a regular SKYWARN<sup>®</sup> Net since one of these days we might be reporting information, relay to them, or reporting to if a hurricane affects our area.

The information here included is published on the Hurricane Watch Net at [hwn.org](http://hwn.org).

The Hurricane Watch Net and the operations of WX4NHC at the National Hurricane Center is manned entirely by volunteers. They activate when a system has achieved hurricane status and is 300 statute miles of populated land mass or at the request of the forecasters at the National Hurricane Center.

The National Hurricane Net relies on 40 experienced member net control operators, which include seasoned ex-military and/or MARS operators, and those who have achieved experience through public service roles. They are strategically located throughout the US, Canada, Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean. Many are bilingual operators.

The Hurricane Watch Net serves three purposes:

The first purpose is to disseminate the latest advisories issued by the National Hurricane Center. They do so for marine interests, Caribbean Islands and Central American nations, and other interests where public media is not readily available.

The second is to obtain real-time ground-level weather conditions and initial damage assessments, from amateur radio operators in the affected area and relay that information to the forecasters at the National Hurricane Center by way of WX4NHC (the amateur radio station located at NHC). They collect measured weather data, but accept also estimated data. The information sought is wind speed, wind gusts, wind direction, barometric pressure, the quantity of rainfall in a given time, storm surges, and damages. They line up reporting stations. They ask the operators' locations, names, and weather measuring capabilities in advance of the storm's arrival.

The third purpose is to function as a backup communications link for the National Hurricane Center, National Weather Service Forecast Offices, the Canadian Hurricane Centre, Emergency Operations Centers, Emergency Management Agencies, Non-Governmental Organizations, and other vital interests. This can involve military relief operations for the protection of life and property before, during, and after a hurricane event.

Stations within a watch or warning area are encouraged to report their local weather conditions. Those who are already experiencing a wind speed 30 miles per hour or greater or a falling barometer should definitely report to the Net Control Station.

As the hurricane approaches landfall, the Net will narrow requests to a specific area or call for stations experiencing certain conditions such as winds at 50 miles per hour or greater.

Along with the weather reports received often come reports on damaged roads, power outages, structural damage, phone and communications outages, and of course reports on casualties. These non-weather report items are usually relayed to other nets in operation on the 20, 40, and 80-meter amateur radio bands who are focusing on Health and Welfare, or by the crew at WX4NHC to the appropriate agencies that stay in touch with the National Hurricane Center.

The Hurricane Watch Net for Beryl activated on Sunday at 13:00 local time on the usual 20 meters 14.325 USB and on 70 meters on 7.268 LSB. If propagation dictates it, they will conduct two nets simultaneously on both frequencies. Many will be using marine radios which come with the two frequencies already programmed in. Marine radios do not have VFO nor RIT.

They follow the storm until it lands and then they report the potential major inland flooding and spin-up tornados. They remind us that in 2004 Hurricane Ivan was responsible for nearly 130 tornados from Florida to Pennsylvania.

They remind us also never to be tempted to go out during the eye of the storm to check our property because it is impossible to know when the back side of the eye is coming. The winds can go from zero to full speed in a blink of an eye and debris becomes deadly projectiles. Once the storm has passed be careful to downed powerlines. They ask to keep clear the two 20 meters and 70 meters frequencies for hurricane communications.

A Hurricane warning is issued when a storm packing 74 mph winds or higher is 36 hours from landfall. A hurricane watch is issued when hurricane conditions are possible.