

Is Winlink a secure private messaging service?

Q260 While monitoring transmissions from WL2K stations, I notice that the content appears as “gibberish”. Isn’t this illegal?

A260 The content looks that way because it is a compressed binary format called

“B2F.” This format is available to anyone, so the compressed data is not considered

encryption

or illegal for radio amateurs. Additional information about

B2F is at:

<http://www.winlink.org/B2F>

Data transferred through Winlink 2000 is not considered to be Secure.

Data transferred through Winlink 2000 using the Keyboard method is not compressed; therefore it is readable by other listeners.

(contradiction, “not considered to be secure” and then “keyboard method is not compressed therefore readable” implies normal messaging is secure)

Source: Winlink 2000 FAQ

https://www.winlink.org/sites/default/files/wl2k_faq_20150314.pdf

RMS EXPRESS TUTORIAL

An Introduction To Winlink2000's Program.

II. RMS Express Overview.

RMS Express is a [Winlink 2000](#) (WL2K) radio email client. It is intended to be used in applications that need to support only a single user and call sign but it may also be used to access one or two preset tactical addresses or alternate call signs. RMS Express includes support for other methods including direct telnet to WL2K Common Message Servers (CMS).

A. Why Winlink?

It allows a ham to send email from any location within contact range of an RMS Hub.

B. Why email?

Because, in today's world, almost everybody seems to know how to write an email message. It allows the receiver to get the message EXACTLY as the sender intended. There is no mispronunciation, no misinterpretation, no mistakes that frequently happen with voice messages. (There's also that old adage, “If it ain't on paper – it never happened!”) You can send email to ANY valid email address, @xxx.com, @xxx.net, @xxx.gov, @co.ozaukee.wi.us.

C. Security?

It is relatively secure. The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) does not permit encryption on amateur radio frequencies. On the other hand, Winlink uses a

compression technique that doesn't allow the frequency watcher to read the message – it looks like garbage. (The local Winlink guru has, for years, offered a substantial prize to anyone who could intercept and read a message – no one has claimed it.)

Source: <http://www.la3f.no/faste/digi/winlink/ExpressTutorial1130a.pdf>

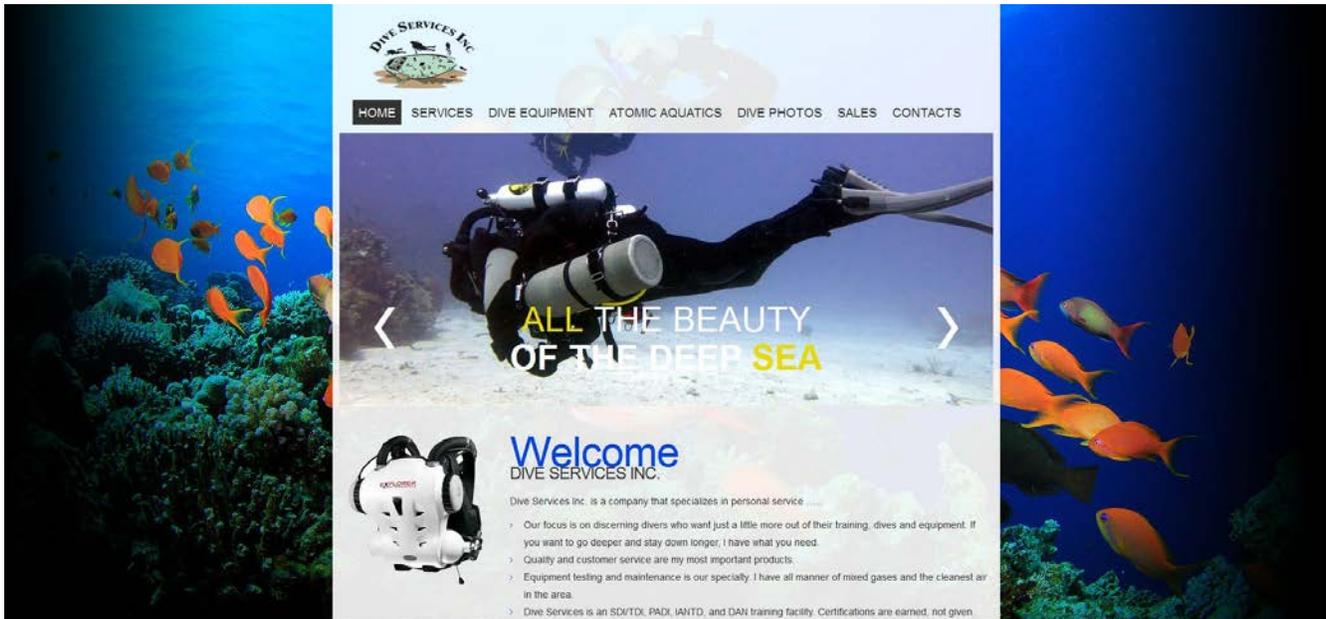
Users think it's secure.

The screenshot shows the homepage of 'The Survivalist Blog.net'. The header features the site's name in a large, stylized font, with 'WITH M.D. CREEKMORE' above it and 'LIVE BETTER, LIVE CHEAPER AND SURVIVE WHEN THINGS GET TOUGH' below. A navigation menu includes links for HOME, ABOUT, CONTACT, TEN THINGS TO DO NOW, TOP POSTS, BOOKS, PREPPER GEAR LIST, LINKS, and WRITE FOR US. On the left sidebar, there is a 'Prepper's Guide' section with a book cover titled 'THE PREPPER'S GUIDE TO SURVIVING THE END OF THE WORLD AS WE KNOW IT' by M.D. CREEKMORE. Below that is a 'Premium Sponsors' section featuring 'CHEAP AMMO IN STOCK' from LuckyGunner.com and 'INVINCIBLE FOOD STORAGE'. The main content area displays an article titled 'RMS Express – Secure Email Over Amateur Radio' by M.D. CREEKMORE, dated June 25, 2012. The article text discusses the use of RMS Express software and WL2K WinLink 2000 for secure email transmission over amateur radio. On the right sidebar, there is a search bar and a promotional box for 'Join The Wolf Pack', described as 'The Nations Largest Prepper Group' with over 14,000 members. A small advertisement for 'Advertise Here' is also visible at the bottom right.

Source: <http://www.thesurvivalistblog.net/rms-express-secure-email-over-amateur-radio/>

Is Winlink being used for commercial purposes or to avoid fee based email?

RMS owners are supposed to monitor the messages flowing through their server for content and legality.



This is the business page of KQ4ET who also owns a Winlink RMS. The contact information for the dive shop includes a Winlink address which means business is possibly being conducted over amateur radio.

Contact Information

BY CAR, TRUCK, OR BICYCLE ...



By Mail: 228 Matt Lane Virginia Beach Va 23454
Telephone: +1 757-581-8064
Email: customerservice@diveservicesinc.com
By Amateur Radio: RMS KQ4ET via Winlink 2000 HF
or kq4et@winlink.org "73"

Contact Form

Your Name *

First Name Last Name

Your E-mail Address

Phone Number

Area Code Phone Number

Your Message *

Preferred Contact? * E-mail
 Phone

Submit

Source: <http://www.diveservicesinc.com/contacts.html>

CLUB ACTIVITIES

Wine Appreciation
Yachting Luncheons/Dinners
Cruises
Commodore's Cruise
Radio Amateur Group
Paddle Tennis
Pickleball
Sunday Bridge Games
Epicurean Society
Family Activities
Bocce Ball
Events Open To The Public
US Sailing Team Support Fundraiser

RADIO AMATEUR GROUP

The Radio Amateur Group (RAG) at California Yacht Club provides many valuable and interesting services to the Club and to the Community. We provide service to boaters and others via our free, long distance Winlink HF and VHF Email System. We also provide communications and support for CYC Sail, Power Fleet, and Race activities. Just as important is the CYC Amateur Radio (HAM) community that we foster and provide facilities at the club to support. The RAG has its own multi-radio HF/VHF/UHF voice, packet and data club station with a club call sign of K6CYC, and has been in operation since 1984.

In 2014 the Radio Amateur Group will sponsor our sixth annual Field Day BBQ on Saturday, June 28 at 11 a.m. Complementary food including hot dogs, hamburgers and tri-tip sandwiches will be served starting at 1 p.m. Come and join

Source:

<<http://www.calyachtclub.com/Default.aspx?p=DynamicModule&pageid=361259&ssid=270118&vnf=1>>

Source:

<<http://www.sailnet.com/forums/electronics/124634-ham-v-ssb-frequencies-check-radio-unlocked-ham.html>>

This is not the same as ‘free’ wifi at Starbucks. It’s using amateur radio to avoid ISP fees and the RMS owners are responsible for any legal entanglements. It seems some RMS owners and users need to be reminded.

Date: 2015/04/29 19:17 From: W3QA Source: WEBMAIL Subject: Sysop Reminder

--SPECIAL MESSAGE--

All Winlink Sysops,

As a Winlink gateway station sysop and licensed operator you must monitor the traffic moving through your station. By monitoring, you can manage messages your users might create that violate the terms of your license. We have noted illegal content rising in recent weeks, especially for US licensees, where business content that benefits a licensed amateur, profane language, and certain third-party messages are violations of FCC rules. Please refresh yourself on your license's transmission content rules.

In case you didn't know, you have access to a sysop-only web app that lets you view and manage the messages posted or delivered through your station. Here's how to access it:

Log into the Winlink web site at <http://www.winlink.org> using the callsign of your gateway station. Click "My account" and log in. If you have never done this before, obtain your password as described on the login page. Once you are logged in click on the link "Sysop Message Monitor". This will list all current messages flowing through your station.

If you find you have received or sent messages with prohibited Message content, follow the suggested actions on the app page. You can review all Sysop Guidelines at:

http://www.winlink.org/content/join_sysop_team_sysop_guidelines

Thanks for your generous participation and contributions to the global Winlink system!

Lor W3QA For the Winlink Development Team 73 de w3qa Winlink Team