
OutpostPMX

Packet Message Manager

Quick Start

August 2026

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Foreword

This guide provides some brief instructions on how to configure, setup, and run the OutpostPMX Packet Message Manager Application suite.

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Introducing OutpostPMX

I can't really talk about OutpostPMX without mentioning Outpost. The original Outpost Packet Message Manager was first released in 2003 and was developed using Microsoft Visual Basic 6. It served the Amateur Radio packet community for more than two decades, but both the development environment and the application architecture eventually reached the limits of what they could reasonably support. As Microsoft retired Visual Basic 6 and operating systems continued to evolve, maintaining and enhancing the original code became increasingly difficult.

With new capabilities being added over the years, additional companion applications were developed to provide terminal emulation, scripting, forms, reporting, and other specialized functions. What began as a single application gradually evolved into a family of programs commonly referred to as the **Outpost Suite**.

OutpostPMX continues that philosophy. Rather than being a single application, it is a collection of closely integrated Amateur Radio packet applications, with two programs initially making up the initial OutpostPMX release (other capabilities are planned):

- **OutpostX** – similar to the original Outpost, it is the main program that interacts with the BBS for exchanging messages. As you give it a try, you will see a lot of similarities with original Outpost.
- **OptermX** – this is a terminal emulator that provides Serial, Telnet, and AGWPE communications through a common interface. This replaces the Ipserial, Ipagwpe, and Iptelnet programs.

The big question is: what does OutpostPMX provide?

- Native support for Windows, Linux, and macOS
- Cross-platform architecture for future growth
- SQLite-based message storage
- Modern Python and Qt technology
- Stand-alone executables with no Python installation required
- Improved long-term maintainability
- Foundation for future enhancements
- Familiar Outpost operating workflow

If you've used Outpost before, then you'll feel right at home:

- Configure your station ID
- Configure your interface
- Configure your BBS
- Connect
- Download messages
- Read and compose messages
- Send and receive

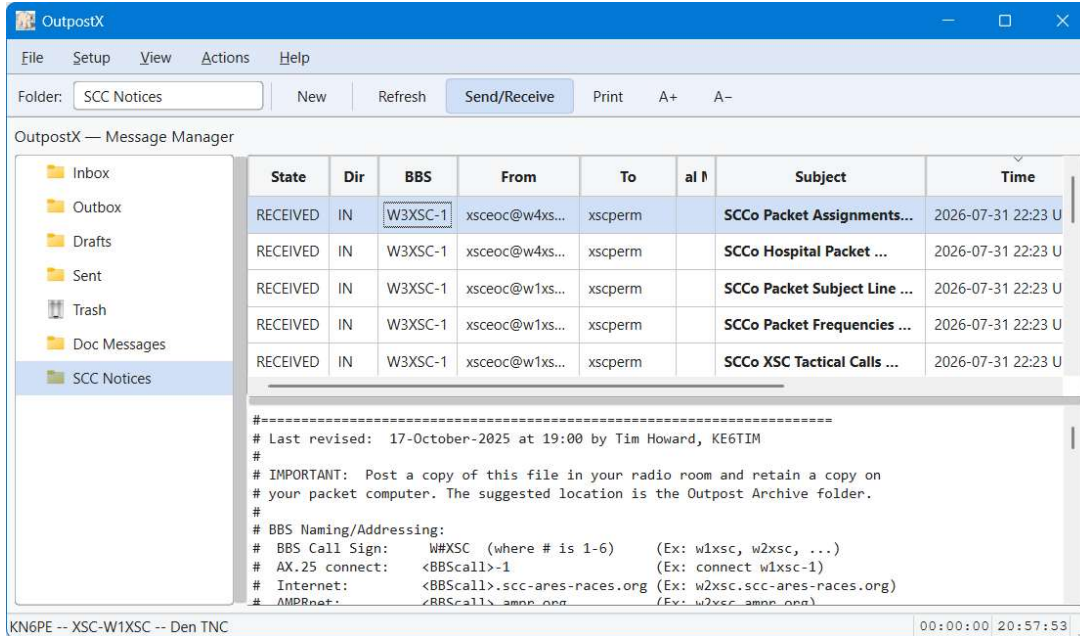
Although the software has been completely rewritten from the ground up, the design goal is the same: to make packet messaging as simple and reliable as possible. Experienced Outpost users should find the workflow very familiar, while new users can begin operating with only a short learning curve.

The remainder of this guide walks through configuring OutpostX and making your first successful connection to a packet BBS. Before long, you'll be downloading messages, composing replies, and becoming familiar with the modern OutpostPMX environment.

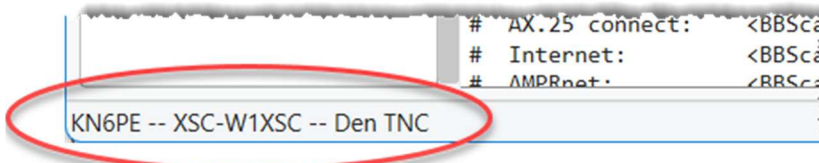
Really Quick Start Summary

Once you have OutpostX installed, here is what you are about to do...

1. Run OutpostX. You should see something like this (but without all my messages)...



2. Select the menu **Setup > Preferences**
3. Select and define your Station ID, then press **Save** and press **Activate**
4. Select and define your interface, then press **Save** and press **Activate**
5. Select and define your BBS, then press **Save** and press **Activate**
6. Press **Close** when done
7. Take a look at the status bar at the bottom to confirm the configuration (Station ID, Interface, BBS) is what you expect.



8. Turn on your radio, set the BBS frequency, and turn on TNC.
9. Press Send/Receive

The rest should look like Outpost.

Basic Configuration

Before You Begin

You will need a couple of things:

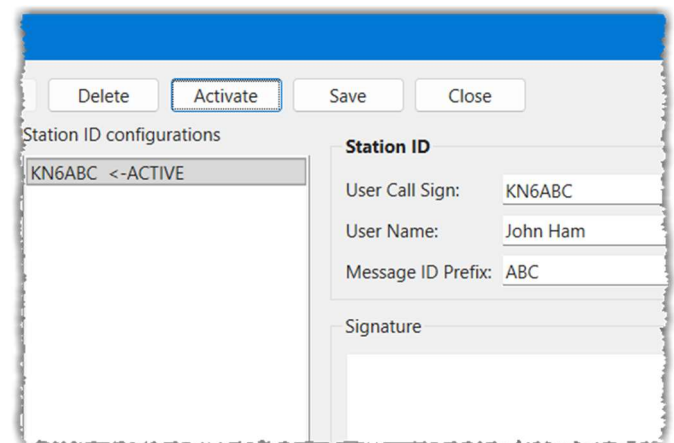
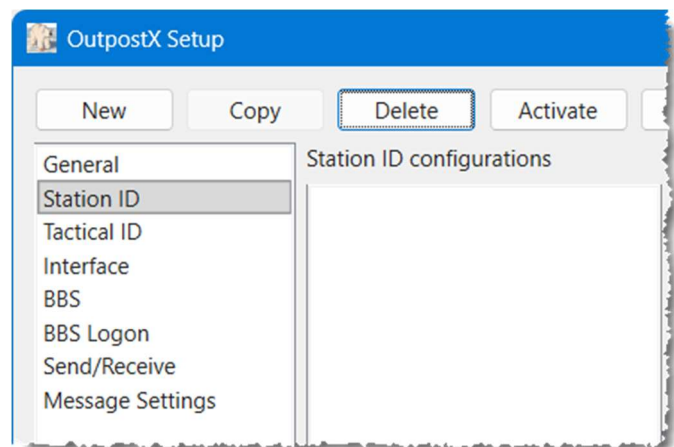
1. A full packet station. This includes:
 - a. PC (Windows, Linux, macOS) running the OutpostPMX software.
 - b. Terminal Node Controller and configuration, such as:
`COM3,9600,8,N,1`
`COM5,9600,7,E,1`
`/dev/ttyusb1,9600,8,N,1`
or the details to connect to a telnet station: Host Name and Port.
 - c. Radio and the frequency for the BBS to which you intend to connect.
2. Your legal Call Sign or Tactical Call Sign
3. BBS Connect Name.
W1ABC-1
KN6ABC-1

Create your Station ID Profile

From the OutpostX main menu, do the following:

1. Select the menu **Setup > Preferences...**, then **Station ID** on the left panel.
2. If your call sign was previously set up, it will be listed in the center panel: Station ID Configurations. Click on it to load and update it.
3. If this is a new call sign, press the **New** button at the top.
4. Fill in your call sign and name on the right panel.
Note: The Message ID Prefix will default to the last 3 characters of your call sign. You can change this to any 3 characters that you choose (such as your initials).
5. Press **Save**.
6. Press **Activate**. This lets OutpostX know that this profile should be used for subsequent Send/Receive sessions.
7. When done, press **Close**.

NOTE: Station IDs can be updated by coming back to this form and making changes.



Create your first Serial Interface Profile

From the OutpostX main menu, do the following:

1. Select the menu **Setup > Preferences...**, then **Interface** on the left panel.
2. If the interface was previously defined, it will be listed in the center panel: Interface Configurations and can be selected. Click on it to load and update it.
3. If this is a new interface, press the **New** button at the top.
4. On the right panel, give it a name and optionally, add a description.
5. The **Interface type** field is a dropdown. For a typical TNC, pick TNC (TAPR). This changes the rest of the section for Serial configuration.
6. In the Com Port Settings area, set the Port.
7. The rest of the settings should work fine but double-check them just the same!
8. Press **Save**.
9. Press **Activate** for this profile to be used for subsequent Send/ Receive sessions.
10. When done, press **Close**.

NOTE: Other interface types can be configured from here as well. See what is available from the **Interface type** dropdown.

Create your first BBS Profile

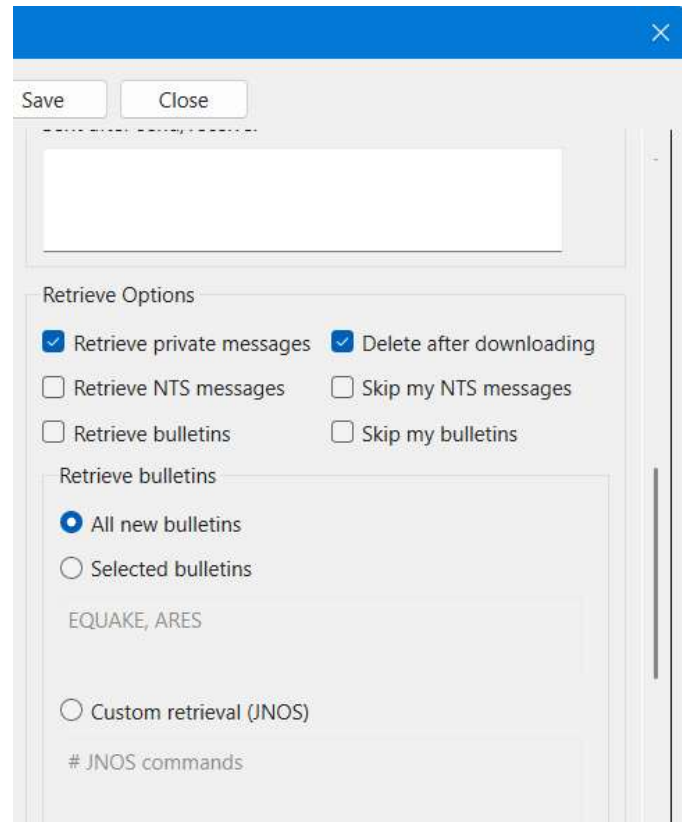
From the OutpostX main menu, do the following:

1. Select the menu **Setup > Preferences...**, then **BBS** on the left panel.
2. If the BBS was previously defined, it will be listed in the center panel: BBS Configurations and can be selected. Click on it to load and update it.
3. If this is a new BBS, press the **New** button at the top.
4. On the right panel, give this BBS a Friendly name and the connect call sign.
5. Optionally, add a description.

At this point, the rest of the settings will retrieve messages addressed to you.

- When done, press **Save**.
- Press **Activate** for this profile to be used for subsequent Send/ Receive sessions.
- When done, press **Close**.

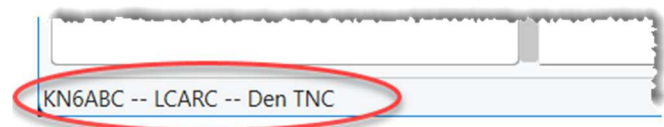
NOTE: BBS's can be updated by coming back to this form and making changes. Don't forget to press the **Save** button when done.



The screenshot shows a configuration window with a blue header and a close button. Below the header are 'Save' and 'Close' buttons. A large empty text box is present. The 'Retrieve Options' section contains several checkboxes: 'Retrieve private messages' (checked), 'Delete after downloading' (checked), 'Retrieve NTS messages' (unchecked), 'Skip my NTS messages' (unchecked), 'Retrieve bulletins' (unchecked), and 'Skip my bulletins' (unchecked). Below this is the 'Retrieve bulletins' section with radio buttons for 'All new bulletins' (selected) and 'Selected bulletins'. A text box contains 'EQUAKE, ARES'. At the bottom, there is a radio button for 'Custom retrieval (JNOS)' and a text box for '# JNOS commands'.

Checking your configuration

OutpostX will always display the Active configuration on the main form, bottom left portion in the Status Bar. This will include your **Call Sign** (Station ID), the selected **BBS Friendly Name**, and the selected **Interface Name**. This is the configuration that will be used to connect to a BBS.



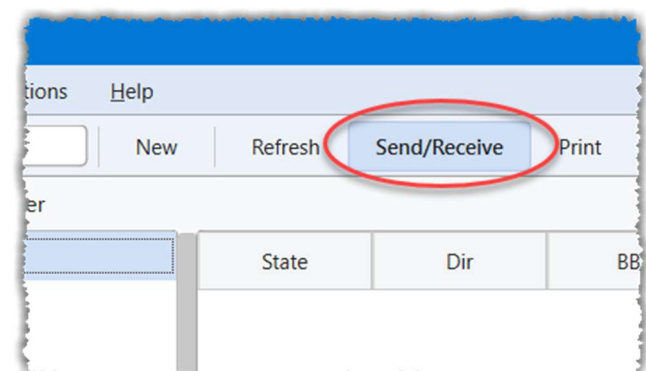
Testing your Configuration

The best test of the configuration is an actual connection to a BBS. Perform these steps:

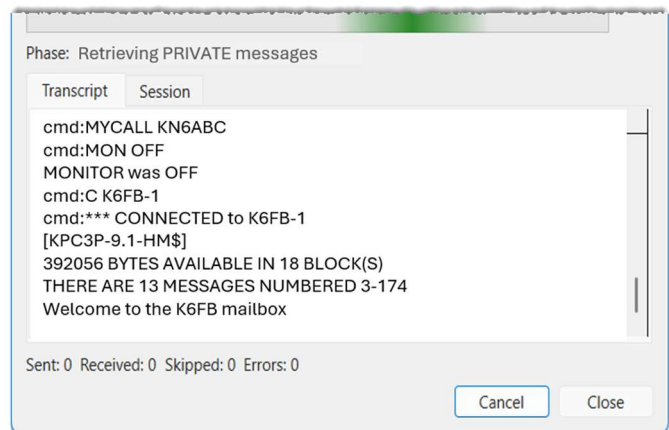
Initiating a Send/Receive Session

To run the Send/Receive Session,

- Check that the Radio, TNC, and PC are properly connected.
- Turn on the Radio. Set the frequency to the **BBS frequency**.
- Turn on the TNC.
- From OutpostX, Press **Send/Receive**.



5. The OutpostX Session Manager form opens and OutpostX will automatically send TNC commands to connect to the BBS.
6. OutpostX will then send BBS commands to check for messages addressed to you and then retrieve them.
7. When done, OutpostX will exit from the BBS, disconnect from the interface, and close.
8. If all of the above happens, then your configuration is good!



Creating Messages

Using Folders

OutpostX organizes its messages in a series of folders. Once a folder is selected, the contents of that folder are displayed. The first 5 folders support the program's message workflow.

Creating Messages: as a message is created, the following can happen:

- If you press **Send** on the message form, the message is saved to the **Outbox**. All fields **must** be filled in and are checked when **Send** is pressed.
- If you press **Save** on the message form, the message is saved to the **Drafts** Folder.
- If a previously saved message is opened, edited, and you press **Send**, then the message is moved to the **Outbox**.
- As long as it is not sent, these messages can be edited.

Sending Messages: During a Send/Receive session, the message is sent to the BBS. Once the message is confirmed sent, OutpostX moves the message to the **Sent** Folder. The date/time for this message is updated to the date/time the message was sent. Sent messages cannot be edited.

Receiving Messages: Messages retrieved from the BBS by OutpostX are placed in the **Inbox** and the subject is shown in **BOLD** typeface. Once the message is opened, the message is listed in regular typeface. Received messages cannot be edited. However, they can be forwarded or replied to.

Creating Folders

You can create additional root folders and subfolders below them. Do the following:

1. Put the cursor in a blank folder area.
2. Right-click on the mouse. Click on the menu "Add root folder". When prompted, give it a name, then press OK when done.
3. OR... put the cursor on an existing folder, right-click on the folder, and select "Add folder...". When prompted, give it a name, then press OK when done. This will create a subfolder.

NOTE: The first 5 folders are fixed, cannot be renamed or deleted, and are exclusively used for specific message workflow purposes.

4. Messages can now be dragged to and from any of these folders.

Creating a message

1. From the OutpostX tools bar, press **New**. A new message form will open with the following fields:
 - a. **Bbs:** This is a dropdown field. Pick the BBS from the list.
 - b. **From:** From Station ID. This is automatically filled in.
 - c. **To:** Enter a destination call sign or tactical call.
 - d. **Subject:** Enter a subject text.
 - e. Message body. Enter the message. Tabs are OK to help with the formatting.
2. Once all fields are filled in, press **Send**.
3. The message is saved in the Outbox and will wait for the next Send/Receive Session. The form is closed.

New Message

File Edit Actions Help

Send Save Print Preview Print Reply Reply All

Send

BBS: W1XSC-1

From: KN6ABC

To: KDEF

Subject: Stevens Creek Dam Status

To: Ops Chief
From: Stevens Creek Dam Watch

Stevens Creek Dam is now at capacity and water is starting over the spillway. IT is difficult to tell if there are cracks in the dam face because of last night's rain. But, there is obvious running water coming from the dam face.

Signed,
John KN6ABC

NEW Message | Type: PRIVATE | no flags | modified 297 chars

Adding a Signature

You can create a **Signature** that can be added to the bottom of your message at message create time. This signature will be specific for the user identified on the Station ID form.

1. Select **Setup > Preferences...**, then **Station ID** on the left panel.
2. In the Signature box, enter your signature text in the space provided. There is no limit to what you can add.

Press **Save** when done.

The next time you press **New**, the message form will open. To add a signature, press **Actions > Insert Signature**. Your signature will be appended to the end.

Delete Activate Save Close

Station ID configurations

KN6ABC <-ACTIVE
KN6PE

Station ID

User Call Sign: KN6ABC

User Name: John Ham

Message ID Prefix: ABC

Signature

Signed,
John KN6ABC

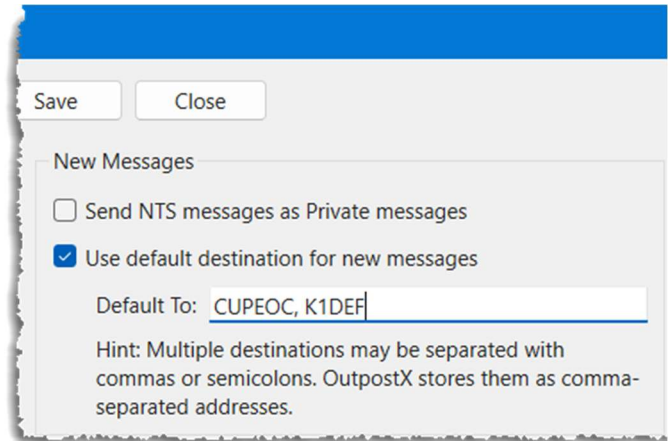
Setting a Default Destination

If you always send messages to the same location (e.g.: the EOC), then you can set up a default destination. If you intend to send messages to different users, skip this setup.

1. Select **Setup > Preferences...**, then **Message Settings** on the left panel.
2. Check the box “☒ **Use default destination for new messages**”. Enter a call sign, tactical call, or email address where messages are to be sent.
3. Default Destinations can either be a valid Call Sign or a Tactical Call.

NOTE: Default destinations can be overwritten on the message form at create time.

Press **Save**, then **Close** when done.



The screenshot shows a dialog box titled 'New Messages' with a blue header bar. At the top are 'Save' and 'Close' buttons. Below is a section with two checkboxes: 'Send NTS messages as Private messages' (unchecked) and 'Use default destination for new messages' (checked). Under the checked option is a text field labeled 'Default To:' containing the text 'CUPEOC, K1DEF'. A hint below the field reads: 'Hint: Multiple destinations may be separated with commas or semicolons. OutpostX stores them as comma-separated addresses.'

Message Numbering

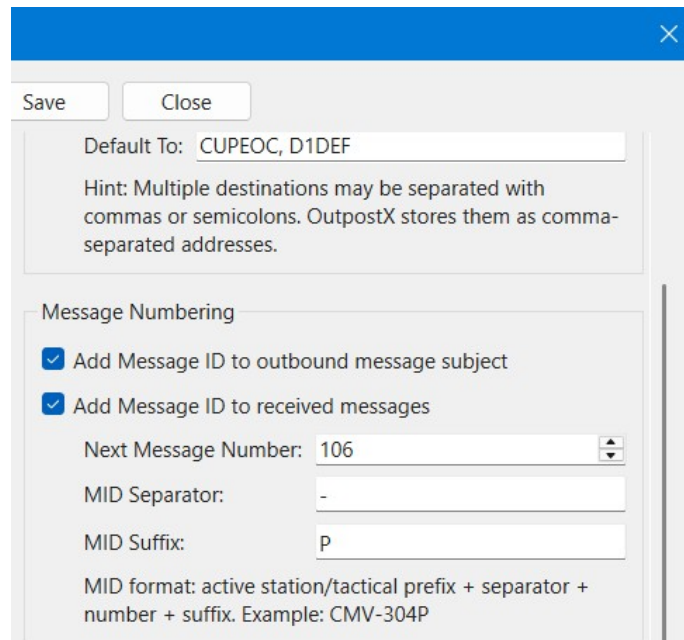
For casual OutpostX use, Message Numbering is usually optional. However, most emergency communications teams will set up message numbering to ensure the messages they send can be uniquely identified and traceable. Check your local packet message policies for guidance on this topic.

1. Select **Setup > Preferences...**, then **Message Settings** on the left panel. Scroll down the Message Numbering area.
2. Check the box “☒ **Add Message ID to outbound message subject**”.
3. If you want to assign a Message ID to received, messages, check the box “☒ **Add Message ID to received messages**”.

NOTE: the MID format is:
active station/tactical prefix + MID separator + number + MID Suffix.

Example: 6PE243 – no MID separator or suffix.
CUP-304P –MID separator and suffix.

Press **Save**, then **Close** when done.



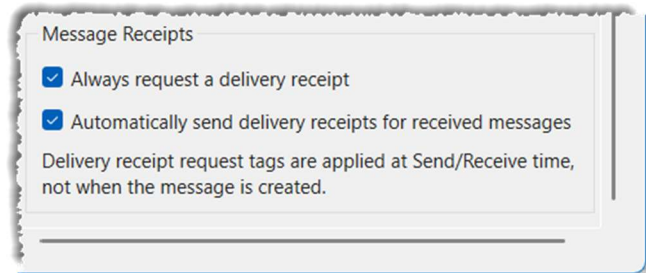
The screenshot shows a dialog box titled 'Message Numbering' with a blue header bar and a close button (X) in the top right. It has 'Save' and 'Close' buttons at the top. Below is a 'Default To:' text field with 'CUPEOC, D1DEF' and a hint: 'Hint: Multiple destinations may be separated with commas or semicolons. OutpostX stores them as comma-separated addresses.' The 'Message Numbering' section contains two checked checkboxes: 'Add Message ID to outbound message subject' and 'Add Message ID to received messages'. Below these are three text fields: 'Next Message Number:' with '106', 'MID Separator:' with '-', and 'MID Suffix:' with 'P'. At the bottom, a note reads: 'MID format: active station/tactical prefix + separator + number + suffix. Example: CMV-304P'.

Message Receipts

You can request message delivery receipts when sending messages to or receiving messages from other packet stations. Check your local packet message policies for guidance on this topic.

1. Select **Setup > Preferences...**, then **Message Settings** on the left panel. Scroll down the Message Receipts area.
2. If you always request a Delivery Receipt, check the box “☒ **Always request a Delivery Receipt**”.
3. If you always want to send a Delivery Receipt regardless of what the sender requested, check the box “☒ **Automatically send delivery receipts for received messages**”.

Press **Save**, then **Close** when done.



The Send/Receive Session

The best test of an OutpostX configuration is to try it. Final checklist:

1. Your radio and TNC are properly connected and powered on.
2. Your OutpostX TNC configuration matches your TNC settings.
3. Your radio is set to the correct BBS frequency.
4. Your OutpostX BBS configuration is for the correct BBS on this frequency.
5. Your OutpostX Station ID configuration is for your call sign or whatever is required.

General Process Flow

The OutpostX **Send/Receive Session** is initiated by pressing the **Send/Receive** button on the main OutpostX form. It handles sending all commands to the BBS that control sending, listing, receiving, and deleting messages on the BBS.

Essentially, the **Send/Receive Session** does the following:

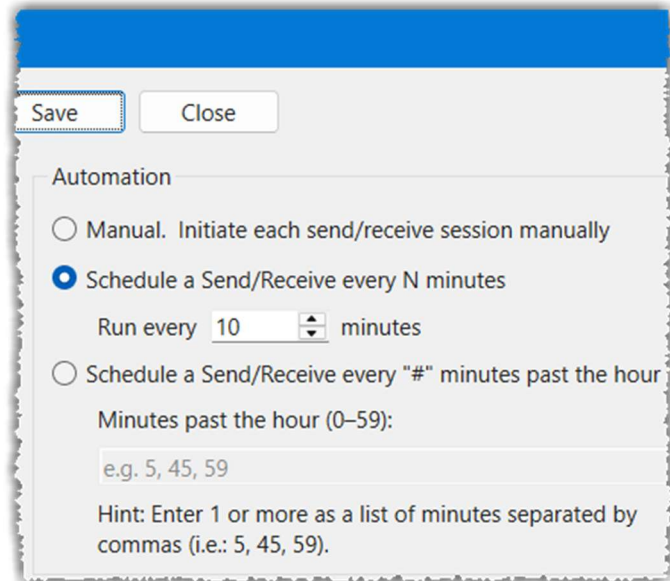
1. Initializes the Comm Port, AGWPE, or TELNET interfaces (**Setup > Preferences**).
2. Sends post-connect TNC initialization commands (**Setup > Preferences > Interface**, TNC Init Commands section).
3. Processes the BBS path if defined (**Setup > Preferences > BBS**, Path Options section).
4. Connects to the BBS (**Setup > Preferences > Interface & BBS**).
5. Sends any pre-Send/Receive BBS initialization commands (**Setup > Preferences > BBS**, Init Commands section).
6. Sends messages from the Outbox where the message's...
 - a. **BBS** field matches the connected BBS, and
 - b. **FROM** field matches the Call Sign or Tactical Call selected in the Station Identification.
7. If **Retrieve Private** is selected, lists and retrieves my messages (**Setup > Preferences > BBS**, Retrieve Options section).
8. If **Delete after Downloading** is selected, deletes the private message (**Setup > Preferences > BBS**, Retrieve Options section).
9. Send any **Delivery Receipts** (**Setup > Preferences > Message Settings**).
10. If **Retrieve NTS** is selected, lists and retrieves NTS messages (**Setup > Preferences > BBS**).
11. If **Retrieve Bulletins** or **Filter** or **Custom** is selected, lists and retrieves Bulletin messages.
12. Sends post Send/Receive BBS initialization commands (**Setup > Preferences > BBS**).
13. If a Tactical Call is used, transmits your legal call sign and tactical call as a legal station identifier.
14. Disconnects from the BBS.
15. Sends post-connect TNC initialization commands (**Setup > Preferences > Interface**).
16. Shuts down / disconnects from the interface.

Receiving Messages

Send/Receive Automation

There are three automation settings that determine when and how often OutpostX will connect to the BBS. Check your local packet message policies for guidance on this topic.

1. Select **Setup > Preferences...**, then **Send/Receive** on the left panel. Look for the **Automation** section at the top of the form.
 - a. For manual control, click on **Manual**. This means that you initiate a Send/Receive session whenever you press the **Send/Receive** button.
 - b. To initiate a connection at a fixed interval, click on **Schedule... every...** ; enter a value in minutes.
 - c. To initiate a connection at a variable interval, click on **Schedule... every “#” minutes past the hour** and enter one or more minutes.
2. Press **Save**, then **Close** when done.

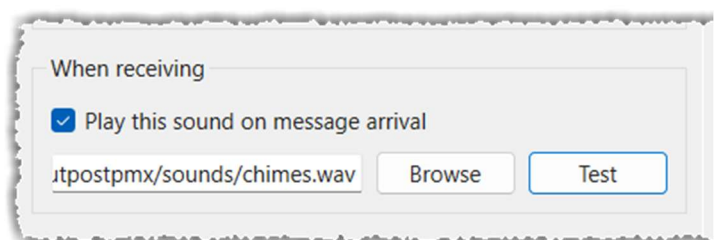


Announcing Received Messages

When retrieving messages automatically, there are times you may not notice when a message arrives. This setting will cause OutpostX to play a .wav file on receipt of a message.

1. Select **Setup > Preferences...**, then **Send/Receive** on the left panel. Look for the **When receiving** section.
2. Check the box “☒ **Play this sound on message arrival**”
3. Use the **Browse** button to select one of the .wav files that are included with OutpostX, or browse for your favorite sound.
4. Press the **Test** button to verify your sound card works and that the selected file is the one you want.

Press **Save**, then **Close** when done.



Selecting Messages for Retrieval

Most amateur radio BBSs support some or all of the following message types:

- Private (addressed to a single user, are usually deleted once downloaded)
- NTS (National Traffic System, requires special message handling once retrieved)
- Bulletins (retrievable by everyone, only the originator or sysop can delete them)

Retrieval settings are BBS-specific, meaning you can configure different BBSs to retrieve different kinds of messages.

To configure BBS retrieval:

1. Select **Setup > Preferences...**, then **BBS** on the left panel. Look for the **Retrieve Options** section.
2. Check the appropriate message types (and options) that you want to retrieve.
3. For ☒ **Retrieve bulletins**, there are three options.
 - a. ☒ **All new bulletins**. for most BBSs such as KPC3 PBBS.
 - b. ☐ **Selected bulletins**. Such as K6FB, F6FBB.
 - c. ☐ **Custom retrieval**. JNOS, TNOS, or SNOS

Press **Save**, then **Close** when done.

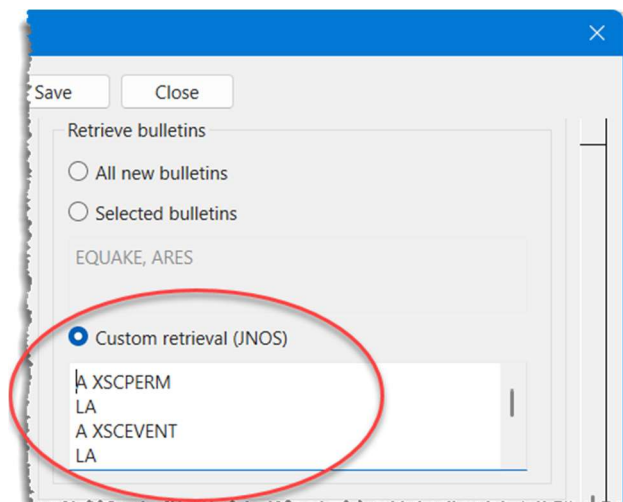
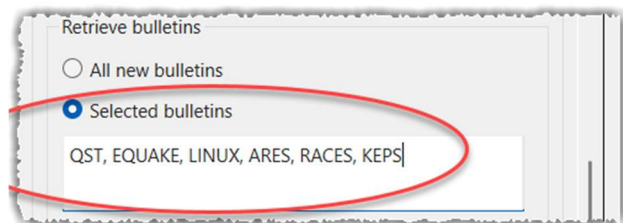
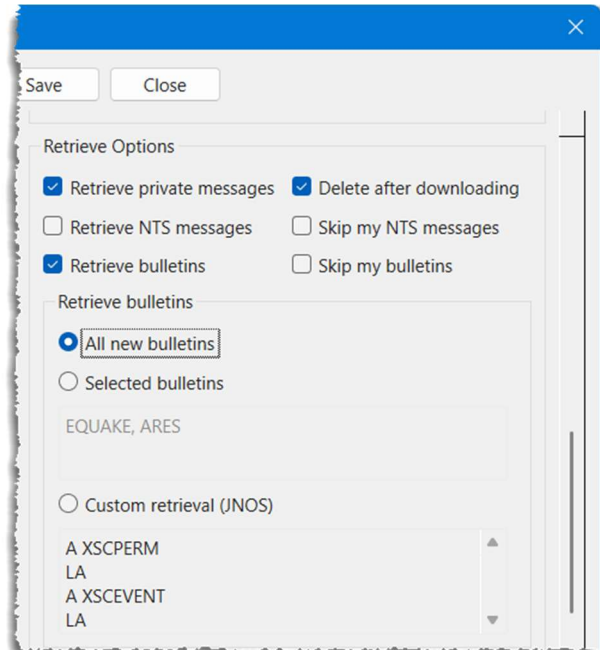
The **Selected Bulletins** option works with the **BBS List Filtered** cmd (**Setup > Preferences, BBS**, List Filtered command, defaults to "**L>**") and can retrieve specific BBS messages sent to a named area. This is an example of a specific bulletin message retrieval.

The **Custom retrieval (JNOS)** option was originally designed for the NOS family of BBSs (JNOS, TNOS, SNOS). It lets you define specific BBS commands to move to different BBS mailboxes. The most common JNOS commands are:

A [area_name] : Switches to a specific BBS area (mailbox).

LA : List **A**ll messages in this area (mailbox), both read and unread.

L> [address] : Lists all messages that have "address" in the To: field of the message.



Setting up for Tactical Operations

Tactical Calls

During an activation, amateur radio operators use tactical calls to identify an assignment with which message traffic is exchanged. Because several different operators may be assigned to a specific location over time, a tactical call makes the assignment *operator neutral*, thereby allowing the operators to change without having the assignment name change. OutpostX lets you do that too.

Picking tactical calls

Not all BBSs inherently support a non-call sign (tactical call) login. You will have to experiment with your BBS to see to what extent it supports a tactical call. Check with your local emergency communications team for guidance.

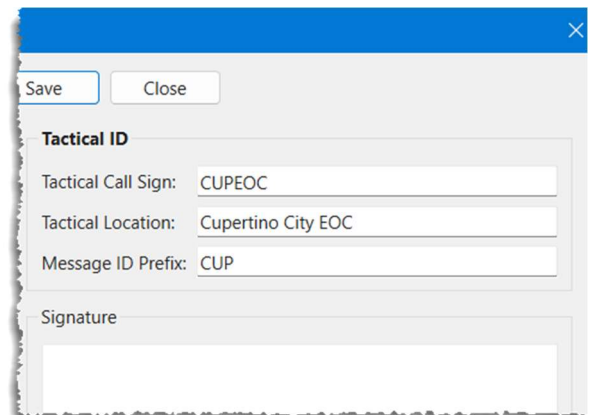
Confirm the BBS can handle your Tactical Call

1. Test a tactical call based on your BBS TYPE.
2. Run OptermX or PuTTY. Set up for serial access.
3. Verify the TNC Comm Port, and press **Connect**.
Verify you get a TNC **cmd:** prompt.
4. Set your TNC **MYCALL** to your Tactical Call...
5. Issue the connect command for your BBS...
6. Verify the BBS does not generate an error.
 - a. If you receive an Error, then you need to pick a different Tactical Call format.
 - b. If you get the BBS welcome text, then this Tactical Call format will work.

```
cmd:
cmd: mycall CUPEOC
MYCALL was KN6ABC
cmd:
cmd: c K6FB-1
[KPC3P-9.1-HM$]
393728 BYTES AVAILABLE IN 19 BLO
THERE ARE 8 MESSAGES NUMBERED 3-
Welcome to the K6FB mailbox. Adm
ENTER COMMAND:  B,J,K,L,R,S, or
LM
:
```

Set up OutpostX

1. Select **Setup > Preferences...**, then **Tactical ID** on the left panel.
2. If the Tactical Call was previously entered, it will be listed in the center panel: Tactical ID configurations. Click on it to load and update it.
3. If this is a new Tactical call sign, press **New**.
4. Fill in the tactical call and location.
Note: the Message ID Prefix will be blank and up to you to enter a Message ID Prefix.
5. Press **Save**.
6. Press **Activate** so OutpostX knows this is the profile it should use during the next Send/Receive session.
7. When done, press **Close**.



The screenshot shows a window titled "Tactical ID" with a blue header bar and a close button (X) in the top right corner. At the top, there are "Save" and "Close" buttons. Below them, the "Tactical ID" section contains three input fields: "Tactical Call Sign:" with the value "CUPEOC", "Tactical Location:" with the value "Cupertino City EOC", and "Message ID Prefix:" with the value "CUP". At the bottom, there is a "Signature" section with a large, empty text area.

Where to Go Next

Congratulations!

You have successfully installed, configured, and used OutpostPMX (Beta) to exchange your first packet messages. As you become more familiar with OutpostPMX, you may wish to explore additional capabilities. The following documents provide more detailed information:

Installation Guide

If you need to reinstall OutpostPMX, move it to another computer, or upgrade to a newer release.

User Guide... Not Yet!!! ... This is a bigger effort and OutpostPMX needs a bit more maturity under its belt. But I do see it as a complete reference describing every OutpostPMX feature, menu, and configuration option.

Release Notes

Describes new features, enhancements, and bug fixes for each release.

Explore Additional Features

As your operating needs grow, you may wish to learn about:

- OptermX – terminal emulator for serial, telnet, and AGWPE
- Message numbering
- Resending messages
- Tactical call operation
- Automatic Send/Receive scheduling
- Bulletin retrieval
- Message receipts
- Multiple BBS profiles
- Multiple interface profiles
- Telnet and AGWPE / DireWolf profiles

Join the Community

Join the Outpost users community to exchange ideas and ask questions.

Most of all...

Enjoy using OutpostPMX and thank you for helping keep Amateur Radio packet communications active and growing.

73,

Jim Oberhofer
KN6PE