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Sea of Cortez and Pacific Mexico Nets

Communications nets have protocols for the participants to use. The protocols are designed to enhance the communications of the nets. Most nets are controlled nets. That means you must ask the Net Control station to speak. Since radio communications is one to many, you can imagine what would happen if everyone talked at once.

Ensenada Nets

For many the first stop in Mexico is Ensenada. At this time, the Ensenada VHF net is on channel 69 Monday through Saturday at 0800 local. The protocol is to call back to Net Control, when asked with your boat name only. When acknowledged, you may talk and provide your traffic to the net.

The CanMex Marine Band HF SSB Net meets daily at 0730 locally for 30 minutes during the cruising season. The net starts on 4A (4146.0 kHz) for local check ins and moves to 6A (6224.0 kHz) and then 8A (8294.0 kHz) depending on vessel traffic and propagation. When asked for check ins, call back with your vessel name and Marine call sign.

1. Marine Band Call Signs are assigned to your vessel by your country's communication regulatory group such as the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) in the US, Industry Canada for Canadian vessels. Marine call signs for the US and Canada typically have 3 letters followed by three numbers. Example WDA 5497

Sea of Cortez and Mainland Mexico

Sonrisa Net

Sonrisa is a controlled Amateur net. Net Controller asks for vessels who wish to check into the Sonrisa Net. To check into this net provide only the suffix for your Amateur call sign using the phonetic alphabet. For example, KJ6CBF would call out Charley Bravo Foxtrot and AD7XL would be X-Ray Lima.

The net controller will compile a list of vessels call signs wishing to check in. At some point the net controller will go down the list and invite check ins one by one by responding with the vessel Amateur suffix. When your suffix is announced provide the following:

1. Your full Ham Call Sign phonetically
2. Your vessel name
3. First names of the people on board
4. Your current location
 - a. Latitude and Longitude degrees and minutes only
 - b. Or the name of your anchorage if in a well-known location such as Aqua Verde.



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5. If underway, your point of departure and your destination, present course and speed
6. A brief description of the weather at your current position.
 - a. Wind direction and velocity, sea state, sky conditions (clear, clouds, fog, raining, etc.)
7. The Controller will normally ask if you have "traffic" for any other vessel.
 - a. Tell the Controller you have Traffic for vessel by boat name.
 - b. If the vessel you have traffic for in the net, the Controller will authorize you to pass your traffic and you may hail the other vessel.
 - c. If you wish to have a long conversation, it is requested that you either reserve the Sonrisa frequency for a follow up conversation after the net is concluded for the day, or pick another frequency and time for the two vessels to get together via radio.
8. If during the Net you hear a vessel that you wish to contact, when there is a break in the transmissions, call out "Contact" and the Controller will ask for the Contact station to come ahead with your transmission.
9. Net control will also ask If anyone has general information for the Net or does anyone have any "QSTs" for the net.
 - a. Again call in with your suffix and wait to be recognized to pass along your information.

Amigo and Southbound Nets

Both the Amigo and Southbound Nets operate on Marine Band frequencies. This means you use your Ship Station License Marine Band Call Sign.

The check in protocols for these Nets is largely the same as Sonrisa, with the principal difference being that when the Net Controller solicits a list of vessels by vessel name.

1. Respond to Net Controls request for check ins with your vessel name (e.g., Nirvana).
2. When the Net Controller call your vessel's name and says come ahead with your check in
3. Give your boat name, the radio call sign,
4. First names of the people on board
5. Your current location
 - a. Latitude and Longitude degrees and minutes only
 - b. Or the name of your anchorage if in a well-known location such as Aqua Verde.
6. If underway, your point of departure and your destination, present course and speed
7. A brief description of the weather at your current position.
 - a. Wind direction and velocity, sea state, sky conditions (clear, clouds, fog, raining, etc.)
8. The Controller will normally ask if you have "traffic" for any other vessel.
 - a. Tell the Controller you have Traffic for vessel by boat name.
 - b. If the vessel you have traffic for in the net, the Controller will authorize you to pass your traffic and you may hail the other vessel.
 - c. If you wish to have a long conversation, it is requested that you either reserve the Sonrisa frequency for a follow up conversation after the net is concluded for the day, or pick another frequency and time for the two vessels to get together via radio.



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9. If during the Net you hear a vessel that you wish to contact, when there is a break in the transmissions, call out "Contact" and the Controller will ask for the Contact station to come ahead with your transmission.
10. Net control will also ask If anyone has general information for the Net or does anyone have any "QSTs" for the net.
 - a. Again call in with your suffix and wait to be recognized to pass along your information.

Picante Net

The Picante net is hosted daily from the Nuevo Vallarta/La Cruz area by Bob and Rob during Cruising Season on 6212.0 kHz daily. While this is a Marine frequency, the net utilizes little to no protocols. As Bob likes to say "you have to follow the rules to talk on the net and the rules are, there are no rules." The goal of the net is to make sure all the Pacific Puddle Jumpers radios are functioning properly before heading south. They do a good job of finding problems, but I believe the net has non-licensed members.

General Comments

1. DON'T WORRY ABOUT GETTING TONGUE TIED - we all do from time to time and there are NO grades assigned regarding the precision of your communication!
2. These Nets are run by sailors just like you and me who are living aboard and cruising their vessels up and down the length and breadth of Mexico's Pacific waters.
3. The daily Net Controllers are all volunteers aboard cruising vessels.
4. Many of us have been cruising these waters for a number of years and can be an invaluable source of information and help to you, should the need arise, whatever it may be.
5. The Nets are managed, again by a volunteer Net Manager, who ensures that there is a Net Controller for each day - most Controllers will control the Net on the same day of the week, day in and day out, unless away from their boat ashore or in a marina where SSB radio communications can be problematic because of interference.
6. We ask that you follow the protocol for two reasons: most of the Controllers keep a running log of where vessels are when they check in, where they're bound and etc., which from time to time becomes very helpful when a family member ashore hasn't heard from a vessel and asks for help finding someone, or even more importantly, passing along urgent information to the vessel crew in the event of an emergency ashore.
7. The second reason is that it helps expedite the check in process and minimizes the total time that all vessels have their radios tuned in to check in, hear weather information, and hear where fellow cruisers may be; during the Fall/Winter/Spring cruising months here in Mexico it is not uncommon to have thirty or more vessels check in to the Nets every day.
8. Most ports have VHF net. Check with locals to find out what channel. Most local nets do not check in each cruiser every day, but do check in arrivals and departures.

* Thanks to Bob Davis on s/v Nirvana and Net Manager for the Sonrisa net for the Sonrisa, South Bound, and Amigo net information.