

MERCURY AMATEUR RADIO ASSOCIATION

MARA - NORTH AMERICA - NORTH EAST

Newsletter - February 2007

WEATHER

This month is usually not the best time of the year to do outside antenna work - contrary to the belief that antennas put up in miserable weather work better!

Now would probably be a great time to stay inside and make antenna plans for Spring.

ANTENNA BITS AND PIECES

Last month I mentioned EZNEC free antenna modeling software. The web URL for downloading it is <http://www.eznec.com/demoinfo.htm> The demo version allows you to play around with the antennas described in last month's newsletter.

A web site with lots of links for antenna related software is <http://www.ac6v.com/antsoftware.htm>

Not solely antenna software, HAMCALC by George Murphy, VE3ERP, is now in version #86. Lots of ways to calculate stuff related to ham radio. Free too! Download it

at <http://www.cq-amateur-radio.com/HamCalcem.html>

With all kinds of software available, who says you have to wait for the weather to improve to work on your antennas!

--- MARA NE ---

It used to be that you could find places that sold ceramic and glass insulators. Now sources are few and far between.

Material for center and end insulators can be found at your home building supply places. Things like plastic pipe for plumbing and electrical serve just fine.

Even better, make friends with a plumber or electrician and scrounge some job leftover scraps.

Another source of insulator material is a plastics supply place for small pieces of plastic sheet or bar.

Hams used to be noted for being cheap... er, thrifty! Keep up the tradition.

--- MARA NE ---

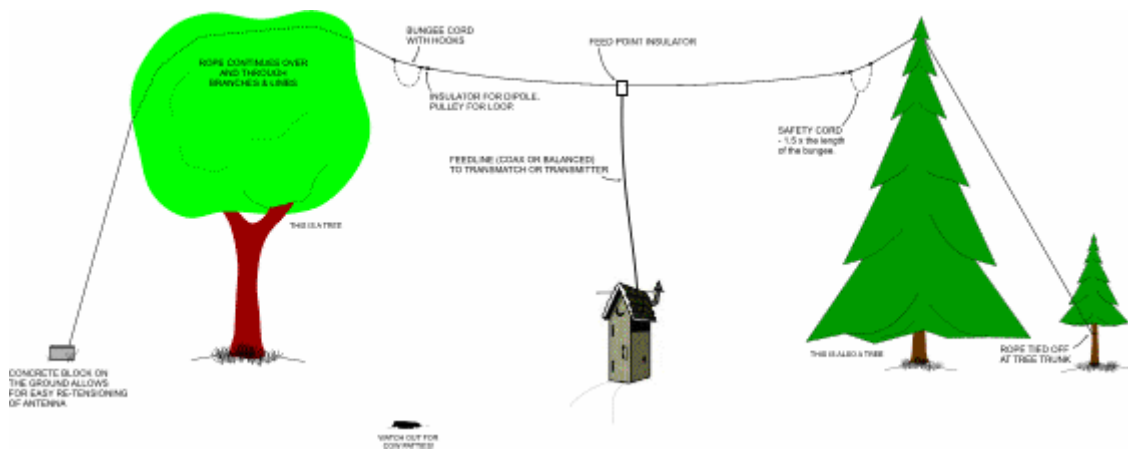
Use stainless steel nuts, bolts, flat and star lock washers for any mechanical connections. They are more expensive but worth it over time. Avoid the plain steel type as they will quickly rust.

--- MARA NE ---

Rope for support lines can be found in the same home building supply places. Use the 5/16" to 3/8"

--- MARA NE ---

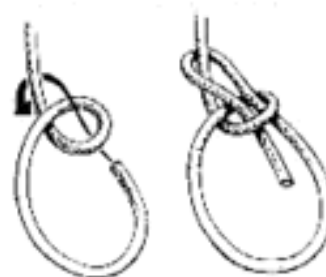
diameter sizes. Smaller sizes will cut into or through the tree limbs. Get the slipperiest one you can find. Expect to replace it every few years as the sun's ultraviolet will eventually cause it to break down. Better to replace it when you can use the old line to pull up a new one rather than to start all over again.



Inspect your antenna installation at least once a year. Make sure the insulators are in good shape, and that all electrical joints are solid. Test the support ropes to make sure that they slide freely over the tree branches. Check bungee cord (if you use it) to ensure that it hasn't lost its stretch and that the covering is still intact. Check the condition of the coax and the seal at any exposed ends. Repair any problems that you find.

--- MARA NE ---

Knot tying seems to be a fading skill. Most people cobble something together and hope for the best. One knot that you can use, that will stay tied, and can still be untied later is the bowline.



BOWLINE

YOU KNEW THIS WAS COMING!

So, you've checked out the antenna and its OK, you've been brave enough to power up the rig, and you haven't seen any smoke escaping!

You've even listened to a Saturday morning net (or two).

An old pile of QST magazines and HR OUTLET catalogues fell over, exposing your long lost microphone.

You can't think of any more excuses!

Why not call in to the net?

MARA NE SSB NET – 3.8725 MHz @ 0730 Eastern time – every Saturday morning

You don't need to be a MARA member, paid or otherwise to check in.

We would love to hear you.

--- MARA NE ---

See you next month,

Dave
VE1VQ