

Equipment report, Nov. 1, 2023

Over the last year the station's broadcast antenna at the top of the pine tree has continued to function without problems and there has been no need to climb the tree.

Until February the station continued to broadcast with the old FX 30 exciter instead of the malfunctioning NiCOM transmitter. I found someone at CIRCUITBOARDREPAIR.NET in Madison who had never worked on a transmitter but was willing to look at ours. He turned out to be a supporter of community radio who worked on our transmitter in his spare time free of charge over several weeks. On Feb. 28 we got the transmitter back. Norm Stockwell tested it and reinstalled it, getting our station back to full power. (The station was off the air for about 1/2 an hour until broadcasting with the NiCOM resumed around 4:17 pm.) The transmitter has been working well since then.

The station has continued to operate with no backup power supply. The Madison Gas and Electric website says "Momentary outages, also known as 'blinks,' may be normal. Protective devices briefly interrupt the flow of power to increase overall system reliability. You may experience up to three blinks in a momentary outage." Such momentary outages have shut down our broadcast computer and put the station off the air as follows: 12/9/22 for 2-3/4 hr at mid day; 12/15/22 between 4:20 am and 7:35 am; from 10:20 pm on 7/28/23 to 6:03 am on 7/29/23; 9/5/23 from 7:30 to 9:40 am; 9/7/23 from 6:43 to 7:12 am. I emailed Rob Hecimovich of our former Soulwide partner to see if they had a backup power unit that they were not using. He could not remember if they had such a unit and, if they did, whether it had been put to another use.

Programming errors which put the broadcast software in a loop can also cause the station to temporarily go silent. This happened for 3 min. on 12/17/22 just before midnight. On 6/20/23 the station was off the air for about 4-1/2 min. around 8:30 am when the broadcast computer was rebooted after losing its internet connection. Failure of the Zara Radio software caused the station to be off the air from 10:01 pm on 10/7/23 until 8:23 am on 10/8/23 when the software was reinstalled.

On 12/17/22 Norm Stockwell came and fixed the crosstalk problem the station was having, with sports talk from WOZN AM coming in during daylight hours when they were broadcasting at their full 10,000 watts.

The Zara4 broadcast computer has worked ok since last fall. The AnyDesk software has continued to work whenever I needed a remote connection to Zara4, but sometimes a connection takes several tries, and sometimes it is unstable and a reconnection is needed. Sometimes the broadcast computer, while continuing to broadcast as programmed, will lose its internet connection. In such cases attempts to connect to it via AnyDesk will produce an error screen. The connection is restored by visiting the Skog garage and clicking the network image on the computer monitor, selecting the first ATT network which appears in the list that appears, and clicking the repair link.

Bob Park