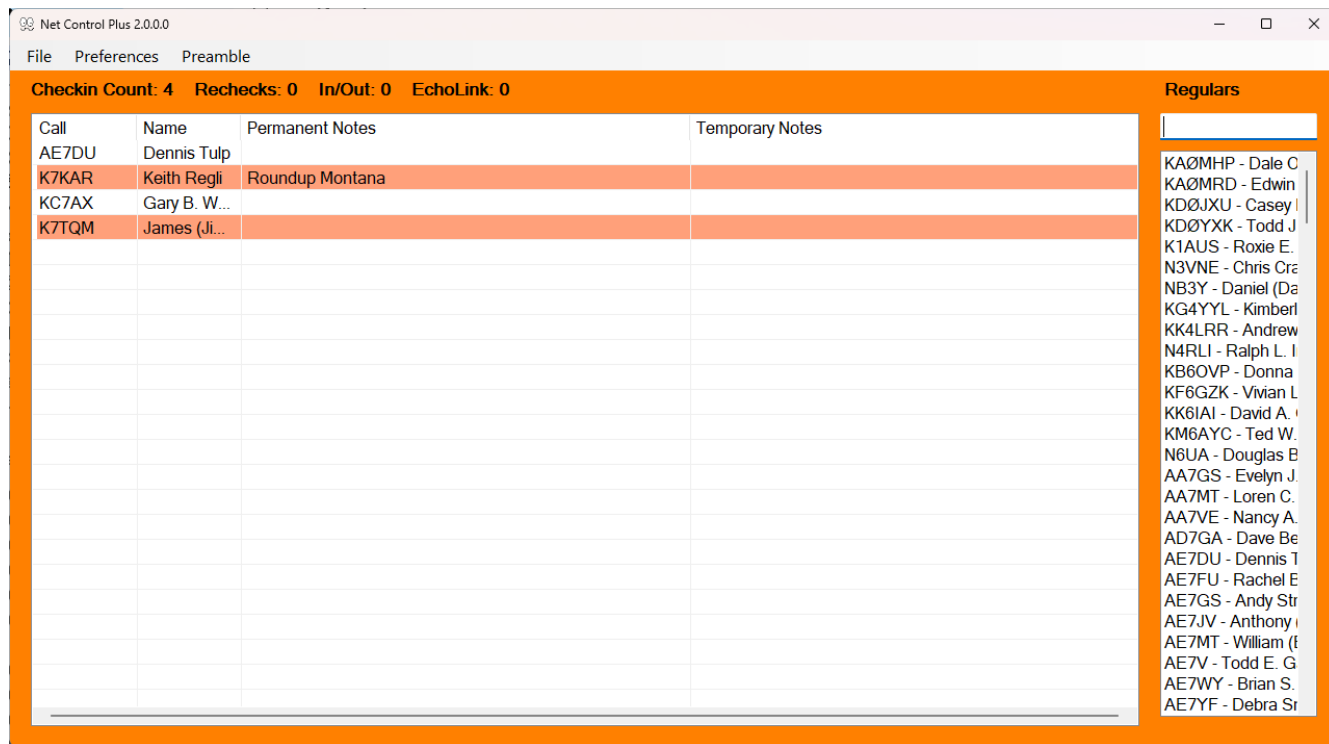# Net Control Plus (V2.0)

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This little program is designed to make the job easier for a net control operator. It is primarily aimed at local, social nets but can be used for more formal nets. The default operational files that are packaged with the program are used by my local 2-meter net. They can easily be updated for any other local net as they are just text files.


The image above shows the main screen for NetControlPlus. The list view on the left is the active log; the list box on the right shows the "regulars", or calls of those who often check in to the net; the text box on the right is where the NCS (Net Control Station) enters calls for checkins. As a call is entered in the text box the program looks for calls that might match in the regulars list and changes that list to show only those calls that match. Clicking on a call in the regulars list will move it to the active log. If there is only one call in the regulars list, pressing the Enter key will move it to the active log. The following sequence would enter K7KAR as a checkin:

Entering k reduces the list slightly, entering ka reduces it to two matching calls and entering kar reduces it to one match. Hitting Enter or clicking on the call then moves it to the active log.
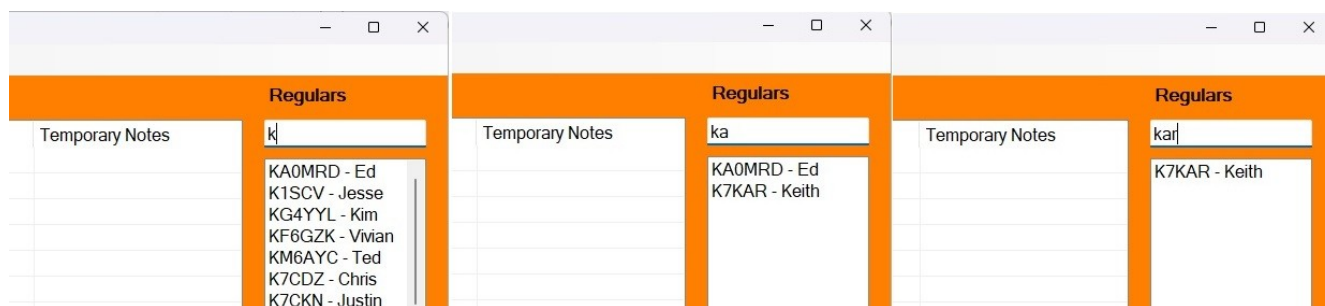
In this case "Use Names" is unchecked in the Preferences menu. If we check the "Use Names" then any names that match the letters in the box will also be included. If you miss the call but hear "Keith" you could enter that and find my call.
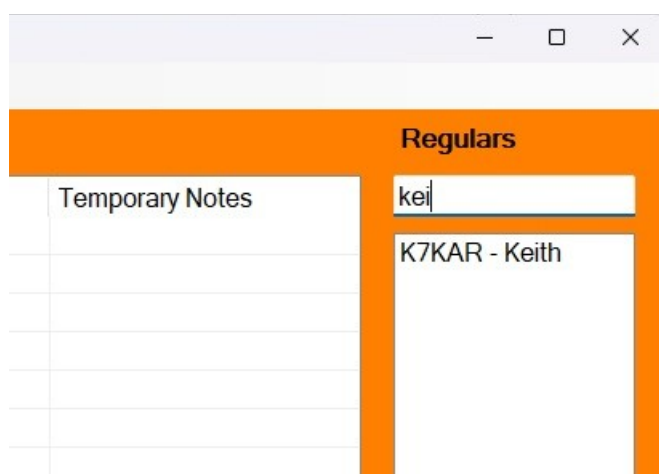
A couple of special cases need to be considered. Suppose you want to enter K7KA, but K7KAR is in the regulars list. You must add a space and the name for K7KA in the Entry box, or the system will think you want to add K7KAR. The other case is entering K7KA when K7KAR and K7KAA are in the regulars list. Again you must enter a space and the name before K7KA can be entered.

On the Preferences menu you can also select "Multiple Checkins" which allows the same call to be checked in multiple times. The text above the checkin list is calculated as follows:

Checkins = total number of rows in the checkins list
Rechecks = total number of unique calls in the checkins list
In/Outs = total number of lines marked as In/Out (see below)
EchoLink = total number of lines marked as Echolink (see below)

The file menu allows load an existing log, load an alternative preamble file, load an alternative regulars list, edit the current regulars list or add a roll call list.

An additional preference is to Auto Add calls to the Regulars list. You can also add a call to the Regulars list by right clicking on it in the Checkins list and selecting Add to Regulars. For existing regulars you can edit the name and permanent notes fields (left click) and then right click on the call to

"Update in Regulars". The Reglulars.txt file will be updated and sorted. When you load a Roll Call list they will automatically be added to the Regulars list.

A Roll Call list is used for nets where the NCS calls a known list of regulars rather than taking checkins as they come. Loading a Roll Call list adds the calls to the Checkins list, but leaves the text for each entry grayed out. Clicking on a grayed out call changes it to act as a regular checkin (black text and salmon background). If an NCS acidentally activates a call in the list, they can deactivate it (make the text gray) by right clicking on the call and selecting "Unmark Roll Call".

When a new call appears in the active log it will have a "Light Salmon" background. That indicates they haven't yet had their turn on the net. Left clicking once on the call in the active log will toggle it to a white background. Right clicking on a call in the active log will allow you to mark it as an In/Out checkin (Yellow background), an EchoLink checkin (Green background), or to remove it from the list.
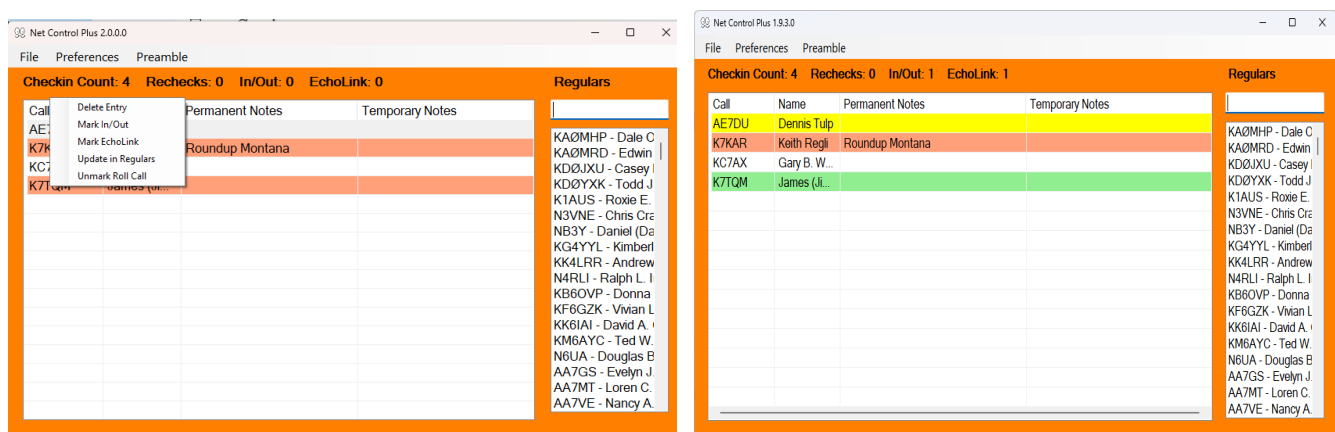
Clicking the Preamble menu will bring up Notepad with the preamble for the net. Since it is just a text file you can edit this to suit your needs (the default file is called Preamble.txt). The default is for my local, daily, social net. (You can select a different text editor by creating a file called Editor.txt with a one line entry with a path to the editor you would like to use, e.g. C:\Program Files (x86)\Windows NT\Accessories\wordpad.exe). Be careful not to format the file as a word processing document and then switch back to a pure text editor – you won't like the results.

Clicking on the File/Edit Regulars menu will bring up Notepad (or your alternate editor) with the regulars list in the editor. Again, you can edit the list to your needs. The format is: Call,Name,Notes. Other options on the File menu allow you to load alternate versions of the Preamble, Regulars and Roll Call files. You can also load a previous log file (in case you accidentally close the program mid-net).

Each time the active log changes it is written out into a log file. The format of the name of the log file is logYYYYMMDDHHMMSS.txt (the timestamp is when the program started). The format for each log entry is: Call;Name;Permanent Notes;Temporary Notes.

Permanent Notes are the ones from the regulars.txt file. Temporary Notes are entered in the active log for such things as "mobile" or "has message for W1AW".

Temporary Notes are entered by clicking in the Temporary Notes column for a call in the active log.

The Preferences menu has an option called Convert to Slash Zero. This option provides a way to replace the "0" character in callsigns with "Ø" (character code 216). When this option is selected the next time a new call is added, the Regulars.txt file will be written out with the Ø replacing 0 in callsigns. The Ø character will be treated as a 0 in callsigns whether the option is selected or not. Whenever the Regulars.txt file is written out (because a new call was added) it will be sorted. Other preferences are to use Names in searching the regulars list, keeping the log on top of other applications and allowing multiple checkins for the same callsign.
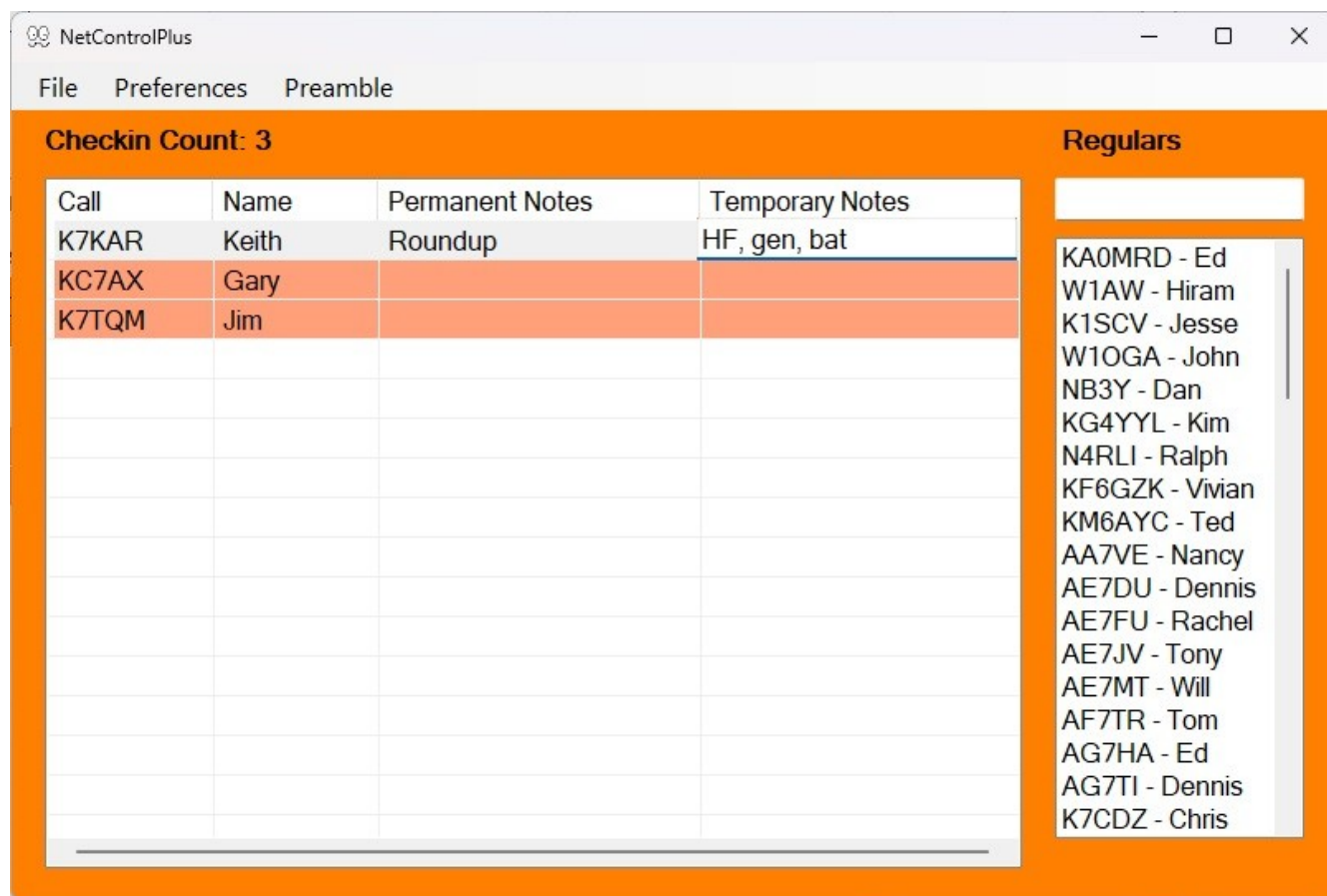
There is an additional feature that can be ignored for social nets. However, if your net requires you to collect some information about the participants into a database this feature may be helpful. It allows you to maintain a spreadsheet (Excel format) into which you can enter pretty much anything you choose. You can then work with the spreadsheet outside the context of the net log. This might be useful for a weather watch net or an ARES net where you need to know location, type of weather station, generator capabilities, etc. Below is a sample spreadsheet:

The rules are that the first row is the column headers, the first column is the callsigns and the file must be called NetControlPlus.xlsx. It won't work so well if you have more than about 10 columns. You must create the basic spreadsheet with the column headers. If you want you can populate some of the data by hand, but it is easier to let the program do that. Note: there is an auxiliary file (template.xlsx) that you must not mess with. It is required to make things work.

If the two files are present in the directory of NetControlPlus.exe, the program should allow you to update the database. If you have entries in the active log, you can double click on a callsign. The application will look for the call in the database (1st column) and display a dialog box with the existing information. If the call isn't found the dialog will appear with the callsign followed by blank fields.

In the dialog you can click on one of the entries to edit it. Clicking OK will save the updated entry back to the spreadsheet. Note: You can't have the spreadsheet open in Excel at the same time.
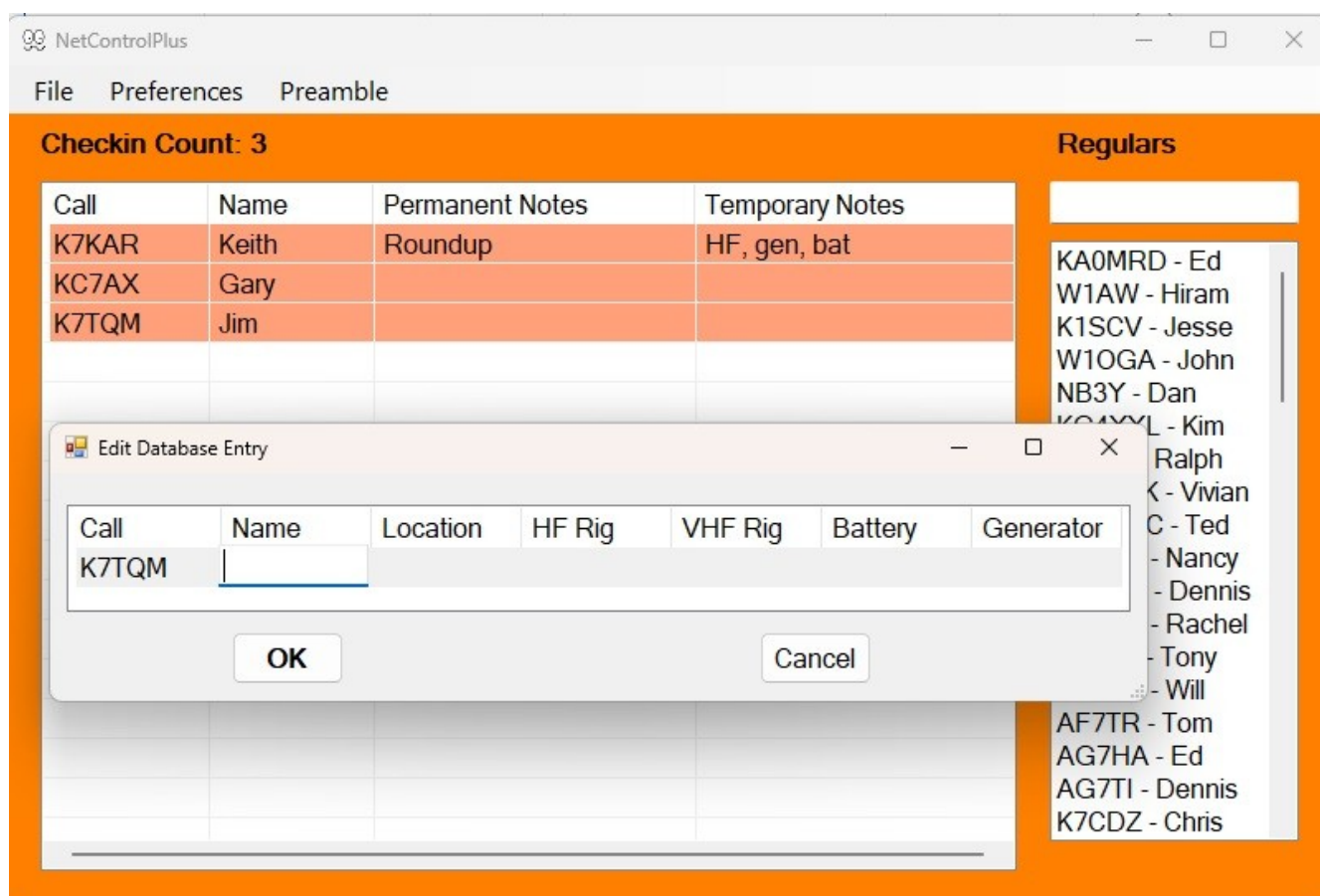
A note on call signs and GMRS nets: Call signs are sorted in the regulars list alphabetically by call area. Calls that don't start with K, W, A or N will appear at the end of the list. Calls that don't start with one or two letters followed by a single digit will appear after calls that follow the standard pattern for US Ham calls. Thus, GMRS calls will appear in alphabetical order following all the US Ham calls. Since GMRS nets may have FRS members who don't have call signs, you can use their name in both the call and name fields (in the Regulars.txt file) to identify the user.