



Southern Peninsula Emergency Communications System

2026 Annual Newsletter

SPECS web site: www.specsnet.org

Announcing: the 2026 SPECS Annual Meeting

Date:	January 10th 2026
Time:	09:00 (room opens at 8:30 with coffee and light snacks)
Location:	El Camino Hospital Main Hospital, rooms A, B (in basement)
Speaker:	Jeff Walker
Topic:	Technology improvements at Santa Clara County Office of Emergency Management

Renew your membership!

If you have not already: please [renew your membership online](#). Link is also on [the SPECS home page](#) (look for "Join or Renew Membership").

Only paid-up members can vote at the annual meeting.

We are asking members who are attending to RSVP for the meeting so we can better estimate attendance and how many snacks to purchase. [Please RSVP here](#).

Agenda

- Welcome
- Election of Officers

- Guest Speaker - Jeff Walker
- Break
- Regular business
 - Approve prior minutes ([link to 2025 minutes](#))
 - President Update
 - Treasurer Update
 - UHF/220 net update
 - Repeater update

Election Notes

- Slate of nominees determined by nominating committee
- Additional Nominees will be solicited from the floor before any voting
- Interested in serving on the board? Get more info at board@specsnet.org.

Nominations

- Jim Weatherford
- Stiv Ostenberg
- Rick Van Mell
- Lea Roberts
- Walt Underwood

In addition, Phil Hawkins will be the SPECS Repeater Association representative on the board.

Long time board members Grant Elliot, Jerry Thalls, and Neil Katin have decided to step down from the board. We thank them for their many years of service.

Guest Speaker - Jeff Walker

We are honored to have Jeff Walker from the Santa Clara Office of Emergency Management as our guest speaker.

The topic is: Technology improvements at Santa Clara County Office of Emergency Management. The county has moved from its old emergency management system (WebEOC) to [veoci](#). The new system is more flexible and allows additional functionality with much less effort ("No Code").

President's Message (Grant Elliot)

Having made the decision to retire from the SPECS-UG Board of Directors after serving as president for six years, I've been looking back over my tenure. It has been quite a ride.

I was elected President in 2019 after serving as Secretary for two years. However, after a year of "normalcy", COVID struck and everything changed. In the following three years, there were no Electronic Flea Markets and no in-person meetings. While the EFM has returned and the Annual SPECS-UG meeting once again is held "in-person," SPECS-UG Board of Directors meetings are still held "electronically".

The year 2023 saw two major changes: (1) The move of the W6ASH repeaters (with new antennae included) to the top of El Camino Hospital's Sobrato Pavilion building. (2) The Board restated SPECS-UG Articles of Incorporation and undertook the rewriting of the Bylaws, making major revisions and restructuring the Board.

A trend that has persisted over the years is a diminishing membership in SPECS-UG. This year saw a low of 85 members, down from 127 in 2018 – a significant drop. In contrast, the yearly average number of check-ins to the Monday night SPECSNET, while down from a high of 132 in 2020, is about 116 for this year. This is significantly more than SPECS-UG membership. The W6ASH repeaters are maintained and supported by SPECS. They are integral to emergency communications in Santa Clara County, so everyone who uses them regularly should be willing to support them – through membership in SPECS-UG. Let's all pay our \$5.00 membership fee for 2026. Just go to <https://specsnet.org> and sign up or renew. "Easy Cheezy"!

Treasurer's Message (Jim Weatherford)

As of December 2, 2025, the SPECS Users Group has 85 current members; 9 are new for 2025. 63 are also members of the ARRL.

Membership dues (\$5) paid starting November 1, 2025 will apply to 2026 membership. Note that your membership must be current for 2026 in order to

vote in the Annual Meeting on January 10, 2026. Visit

<https://www.specsnet.org/membership> to join SPECS or renew your membership.

SPECS currently has about \$41k in the bank. The June Electronics Flea Market, our main source of income, netted around \$950 in 2025. Our expenses include government filing fees, ARRL club insurance, Meetup subscription, mailbox and web hosting fees, and refreshments for the Annual Meeting.

Community Outreach Message (Stiv Ostenberg)

My name is Stiv Ostenberg, the Outreach Officer for SPECS. When I volunteered for the board I decided to tackle the biggest problem I saw facing the club which was the aging demographic, and the lack of newer and younger members. To start to understand this scope of the problem, I attended meetings with other clubs and found the problem exists across the board. It is a systemic problem, and not something a single club can solve.

After several years supporting the Flea Market and hosting a booth to promote Amateur Radio, I started hearing from other hams like myself who are at a loss for how to proceed, and leave the hobby due to intimidation and frustration. After failing to drum up volunteer Elmers to support me I have finally assembled enough equipment to try to tackle the job myself, and either get others to join me, or inspire them to follow my example.

With this goal in mind, I am going to try to start a "Ham Radio University". If I can swing it, this will run once a month or so, and offer new hams a chance to show up and learn, face to face on real equipment with another ham. If they need help, they can bring their own equipment and we will try to get it working.

Because none of the clubs I visited had enough demand to run such a regular event, I am hosting the University on MeetUp.com, sponsored by SPECS and available to all area hams. I think we NEED regular events to scoop up new hams before they lose interest. I encourage members from all Bay Area clubs to join the MeetUp and sign up for events. If more people sign up, then more people may host events. If more people (who know more than me) show up, we can all learn. Ham Radio is at a crisis point where we may lose enough critical mass to remain a viable hobby.

I am going out on a limb here. I have purchased equipment to help new hams get on the air and learn to operate. I bought equipment I don't even know how to use yet but that I think will be helpful.

People might get tired of hearing this, but I need you to join the MeetUp, and to sign up for events you attend and you need to attend events! This lets people know Ham Radio is not dead, and will encourage others to show up.

In addition to running the University, if I can get other clubs or Hams to join me, I think we should start holding events who purpose is to evangelize Amateur radio. Show how much fun it can be, and what you can do with it. New hams are not coming to us, we need to go to them. Come to the University events and lets plan something!

Repeater System Status (Phil Hawkins)

This year (2025) the repeater system: 145.270, 224.140 and 440.800 has been functioning with very little interference problems in the year. Some operational changes have occurred, primarily the loss off the remote back-up repeater site at Maryknoll residence in Los Altos, due to changes occurring to the changing status of the property owners and management. Other changes to the operations of the W6ASH repeater, specifically the two-meter repeater, is the increased use by Silicon Valley Emergency Communications System (SVECS). Since the loss of the use of the AA6BT and N6NAC repeaters, SVECS is now using the 145.270 repeater to link to the Sunnyvale K6SNY UHF repeater on 443.275 (+) 107.2 Hz PL on Tuesday nights at 2000 hrs. At this time, the repeaters are manually linked prior to the SVECS net and unlinked after the net manually by either the DEC or ADEC's after the net. Therefore, on Monday nights is the SPECS net and Tuesday nights is the SVECS net.

Earlier this year, the phone system has been reconnected, thus utilization of the repeater for auto-patch has been reestablished. With the phone live being now serviceable on the repeater, the phone line connected to the repeater controller allows for the users to transmit from their radio commands to the repeater to dial various pre-programmed telephone numbers for calls to automated hourly local airport weather recordings. Other uses of the repeater system have seen an increase in usage as the resource net for local city and county drills as well as its use for community associated functions. With the increased use of the repeater

system, one of the major goals is to find a new location for the off-site, back-up 2 meter and 440 repeaters. Finding new locations for repeaters is proving to be difficult and time consuming, but I feel that this can be done within the next year.

Operationally, over the past year all repeaters have worked very well without incident, this is a testament to the engineering and designed of the repeaters. Still upgrades to the repeaters is still in planning and need to be realized. Such goals are implementation of newer phone standards such as VIOP architecture. Any operational deviations such as interference, signal degradation or unserviceability should be reported to members of the repeater association.

For more information about the operation of the W6ASH repeater system, please contact me Phil Hawkins at ka6mze@gmail.com