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Subject	Rules modification on 50MHz contests		
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Introduction

It is well known that the 6 meters band provides in summer time some pretty long distance contacts. QSOs over a 7000 kilometres haul can be accomplished via multi-hop Sporadic E propagation.

However a multi-hop VHF contact is quite an achievement and it is usually held under unstable propagation conditions in the path, and in many cases with extremely weak and intermittent signals.

On the other hand, in the other regions outside the IARU R1, the use of 6-digit grid locator is an oddity, especially in North and South America, regions with an old 6 metres tradition, where the standard 4-digit locator exchange prevails among aficionados on daily basis QSOs and contests.

Background

In the "IARU VHF Managers Handbook", chapters 5.3.6 and 5.3.8, it is explained that the generic exchange for the VHF frequencies and up is call, signal report, QSO serial number and the 6-digit locator. Chapter 5.3.9 specifically states that in case that only a 4-characters locator has been received (50 MHz) the contact is invalid.

The scoring system adopted in official IARU R1 competitions is based upon the distance in kilometres between two stations making a complete QSO (1 point per kilometre), taking for distance calculations the centre of each locator square.

While the Maidenhead locator system was officially adopted by all IARU regions in 1986, the 6-digit format exchange is only used in Region 1 contests, and the 4-digit one is the most used in the other regions during contests and daily contacts in VHF. In North America the existence of more than 4 digits in the locator is unknown by most of the VHF fans, being the more precise 6-digits format used only as part of the exchange in the 10-GHz contest.

Proposal

Whereas in 144 MHz band and above contests, where the chances to achieve a transatlantic QSO are null, it is a fair scoring system to count until the last kilometre using the 6-digit locator resolution arrangement, meanwhile in the 6 meters we do not see the advantages. The total score difference between a 6-digit level (roughly corresponding to a 3×4 miles square in the central Europe) level compare to a 4-digit level is negligible. Logically on some cases the QSO distance will be stretched while on others will be decreased.

During the usually weak and short transcontinental openings, often with heavy QSB, the long exchange up to 13 characters on both sides is a task almost impossible to be carried through, invalidating such a long-distance VHF contact. In the event of crystal clear communication you will never get the other station full 6-digit string since they just ignore or forgot the last two characters of their grid square as they are not used to it.

On the usual summer intercontinental openings it is easy to yield one hop skip of 1200 to 2200 km via Sporadic E, and between 2200 and 4000 Km on a less common but not rare double hop path. Considering the centre of the 4-digit locator ("mm" sub square) as the starting point for computing distances is also negligible in practice compare to calculation based on the 6-digit locator.

Based on the above we propose amendments to rules in competitions organized by the IARU Region 1 on 50 MHz, including a specific section for this band in the "IARU VHF Managers Handbook":

- That the information exchange is changed: RS(T)(Q) + serial number beginning with 001 + the first 4 characters of the locator.
- To be considered the centre point of the 4-digit square for distance calculations (e.g. IM67mm).
- That consequently appropriate amendments referred to above are made in the "IARU VHF Managers Handbook", chapters 5.3.6, 5.3.8 and 5.3.9