





The lonosphere

Regions

- Ionosphere.
 - The ionosphere is a portion of the atmosphere that extends from about 30 miles to about 300 miles above the surface of the Earth.
 - The ionosphere reaches its highest altitude when the sun is directly overhead.
 - Solar radiation causes atoms in the ionosphere to become ionized.









The lonosphere Regions DAY NIGHT • F-Layer. 300-500km F, F2 • 100-300 miles altitude. F1 🖉 200-300km • One-hop up to 2500 miles. During periods of high 100-120km sunspot activity, the F-layer 75 - 90km can remain ionized all night. Earth (13,000km diameter)







The lonosphere

Reflection

- Critical angle.
 - The maximum angle at which radio waves are bent enough to return to the surface of the Earth.
 - The critical angle decreases with increasing frequency.
 - The critical angle is one reason why a low angle of radiation is important for working DX.





Absorption and Noise

• Aside from low levels of ionization in the ionosphere, the two main enemies of good propagation are absorption and noise.







- More refraction than D-region.
- Less absorption than D-region.























G2D06 -- How is a directional antenna pointed when making a "long-path" contact with another station?

- A. Toward the rising Sun
- B. Along the gray line
- C. 180 degrees from the station's short-path heading
- D. Toward the north



G3B09 -- What is the approximate maximum distance along the Earth's surface normally covered in one hop using the F2 region?

- A. 180 miles
- B. 1,200 miles
- C. 2,500 miles
- D. 12,000 miles

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G3B10 -- What is the approximate maximum distance along the Earth's surface normally covered in one hop using the E region?

- A. 180 miles
- B. 1,200 miles
- C. 2,500 miles
- D. 12,000 miles



- B. The E region
- C. The F1 region
- D. The F2 region





G3C03 -- Why is skip propagation via the F2 region longer than that via the other ionospheric regions?

- A. Because it is the densest
- B. Because of the Doppler effect
- C. Because it is the highest
- D. Because of temperature inversions

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- A. The F region absorbs signals at these frequencies during daylight hours
- B. The F region is unstable during daylight hours
- C. The D region absorbs signals at these frequencies during daylight hours
 - D. The E region is unstable during daylight hours

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Sunspots and Cycles

- Sunspots.
 - Sunspots are cooler in temperature (4,900°F to 7,600°F) than the surrounding surface (10,000°F) so they appear darker than the surrounding surface.







Sunspots and Cycles

- Sunspots.
 - Sunspots emit UV radiation which ionizes the Earth's atmosphere.
 - More sunspots \rightarrow higher levels of ionization.
 - Stronger sunspots \rightarrow higher levels of ionization.
 - Higher levels of ionization cause greater refraction of radio waves in the ionosphere.
 - Better HF propagation.









Sunspots and Cycles

- Solar Cycles.
 - At the peak of a solar cycle, the ionization level can be high enough that 10m stays open all night.
 - At the minimum of a solar cycle, bands above 20m may not be open at all.









Measuring Solar Activity

- The most familiar measurement of solar activity is the Smoothed Sunspot Number (SSN).
 - SSN = 10 x Nr of groups + Nr of sunspots.
 - The SSN is the result of observations from many different locations around the world.





Measuring Solar Activity

- K-index (K_P) .
 - A measure of the shortterm stability of the Earth's magnetic field.
 - Updated every 3 hours.
 - Higher values → Poorer HF propagation.

K-Index	Meaning
0	Inactive
1	Very quiet
2	Quiet
3	Unsettled
4	Active
5	Minor storm
6	Major storm
7	Severe storm
8	Very severe storm
9	Extremely severe storm





G3A04 -- Which of the following are the least reliable bands for long-distance communications during periods of low solar activity?

- A. 80 meters and 160 meters
- B. 60 meters and 40 meters
- C. 30 meters and 20 meters
- D. 15 meters, 12 meters, and 10 meters





G3A10 -- What causes HF propagation conditions to vary periodically in a 26- to 28day cycle?

- A. Long term oscillations in the upper atmosphere
- B. Cyclic variation in Earth's radiation belts
- C. Rotation of the Sun's surface layers around its axis
- D. The position of the Moon in its orbit









Assessing Propagation

 If you know the SSN, SFI, A-index, & K-index values, it is possible to do a fairly good job of predicting propagation between any 2 points on the Earth.





Assessing Propagation

- Lowest useable frequency (LUF).
 - The lowest frequency that will allow communications between 2 points.
 - Radio waves on frequencies below the LUF will be absorbed by the D-region.
 - If the MUF drops below the LUF, then sky-wave communication is not possible between those 2 points.





Assessing Propagation

- International beacons.
 - Each beacon sends its callsign in Morse code at 22 wpm followed by four 1-second long dashes.
 - Callsign & 1st dash = 100 Watts.
 - 2nd dash = 10 Watts.
 - 3rd dash = 1 Watt.
 - 4th dash = 0.1 Watt.





Assessing Propagation

- Reverse Beacon Network (RBN).
 - The Reverse Beacon Network consists of a series of receiving stations located around the world which gather the call signs of stations heard at their location. You can access the RBN via the internet & look up your own call sign to see where you are being heard.

https://www.reversebeacon.net









Solar Disturbances

- Solar flare.
 - A large eruption of energy & particles from the surface of the sun.
 - Solar flares are caused by disruptions of the sun's magnetic field.
 - It takes about 8 minutes for the energy from a solar flare to reach the Earth.





Solar Disturbances

- Coronal hole.
 - A coronal hole is a weak (thin) area in the sun's corona through which plasma can escape the sun's magnetic field & stream through space at high velocity.







Solar Disturbances

- Coronal mass ejection (CME).
 - Normally, it takes about 20-40 hours for the particles to reach the Earth. However, it can be up to several days.





Solar Disturbances

- Sudden ionospheric disturbance (SID).
 - A sudden ionospheric disturbance (SID) occurs when the UV-rays & X-rays from a solar flare impact the ionosphere.
 - The rays will reach the Earth in about 8 minutes.
 - There is a sudden increase in the ionization level which is especially noticeable in the D-region.
 - The lower frequency bands will be more greatly affected.





Solar Disturbances

- Geomagnetic disturbances.
 - CME's result in a continuous stream of charged particles.
 - These particles greatly increase the strength of the solar wind.
 - The particles reach the Earth in about 20-40 hours.







Solar Disturbances

- Geomagnetic disturbances.
 - High-latitude HF propagation is greatly decreased.
 - The effects can last several hours to a few days.





Solar Disturbances





G3A03 -- Approximately how long does it take the increased ultraviolet and X-ray radiation from a solar flare to affect radio propagation on Earth?

- A. 28 days
- B. 1 to 2 hours
- C. 8 minutes
 - D. 20 to 40 hours

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- A. 28 days
- B. 14 days
- C. 4 to 8 minutes
- D. 15 hours to several day

G3A14 -- How is long distance radio communication usually affected by the charged particles that reach Earth from solar coronal holes?

- A. HF communication is improved
- B. HF communication is disturbed
- C. VHF/UHF ducting is improved
- D. VHF/UHF ducting is disturbed





G3B04 -- Which of the following is a way to determine current propagation on a desired band from your station?

- A. Use a network of automated receiving stations on the internet to see where your transmissions are being received
 - B. Check the A-index
 - C. Send a series of dots and listen for echoes
 - D. All these choices are correct

























Scatter Modes

Near Vertical Incidence Sky-wave (NVIS)

- Select a frequency below the critical frequency but high enough that absorption in the D-region is not excessive.
- Use a horizontally-polarized antenna mounted $1/8\lambda$ to $1/4\lambda$ above the ground.
 - 10' to 12' above the ground is best.
 - A grounded wire on the ground directly beneath the antenna improves signal strength by up to 6 dB.







G3C09 -- What type of propagation allows signals to be heard in the transmitting station's skip zone?

A. Faraday rotation

B. Scatter

- C. Chordal hop
- D. Short-path





