HAM SIDEKICK STATION · VARA

FRONT · SIDE 1 OF 2

Set Up Your VARA Modems

New here? Get the station

Keyboard chat and file transfer over **VARA HF** or **VARA FM**. Each **data radio** has **one VARA modem** (a copy of VARA with its own sound card and ports), and each modem is used for one job. Several can be on the air at once. Everything is **sent in the clear**; nothing transmits unless you are at this PC (sending, joining the channel, or its keep-alives).

WHAT EACH MODEM IS FOR (Modem setup → Used for)

Chat & files	This station only. Winlink Express uses a different modem
Shared with Winlink Express	**They take turns**: while Express is open and you are not in a chat, Express has it; the station takes it back when Express closes
Winlink Express only	The station never connects to it (listed so you see the whole station)

TWO WAYS TO SET IT UP

One radio, taking turns	One VARA (ports **8300/8301**, Express's default) → **Shared**
Separate radios	Radio A: VARA FM **8300/8301** → **Winlink Express only**. Radio B: a second VARA **8310/8311** → **Chat & files**. A third: 8320/8321

SET UP EACH MODEM

1. The radio's card: **Used for** → **Data (Winlink / VARA)**
   Its nets are not recorded, and the station never records from the VARA sound card.
2. **A second copy of VARA?** Install or copy it into **its own folder** (e.g. `C:\VARA FM 2`); in it: VARA Setup → **TCP port** 8310 · Sound card = **this radio's** · PTT = **this radio's**
   VARA HF and VARA FM are licensed separately: check VARA's terms for a second copy.
3. Under the radio: **Set up the VARA modem...** → VARA HF or FM · **Ports** (the next free pair is filled in) · **Used for** → **Add this modem** · then **Call** with an SSID to tell your stations apart (W9XYZ-7, W9XYZ-8; apart from Winlink's)
   VARA FM: **Width** Narrow or Wide, the same as in VARA FM (wide = the 9600 data port, ~25 kHz; the band plan offers it only where there is room).
4. **Before it can transmit:** Radios... → the radio → **Transmit** on · your **license class** (Settings → Einstein & AI) · the radio's **frequency** on its card

> **Ham practice.** A COM port opens in one program only: if the station tunes this radio by CAT, give VARA another PTT (RTS on a separate port, the Digirig's second port, or VOX). Two 2 m radios side by side desense each other: use different bands (Winlink on 2 m, chat on 70 cm or HF) or well-spaced antennas. Each transmission IDs as usual.

Turn over → side 2: Contacts, Chat, Files, Einstein

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The Channel: Who Is On, Chat and Files

Share this card

JOIN THE CHANNEL (under the data radio: VARA chat and files)

1. **Pick a frequency:** Band plan → **Ad hoc VARA** → Use (or a ★ reserved channel). Listen first
2. Join the channel: announces your call (a VARA CQ frame), answers calls, and says you are still here every **10 min** (VARA HF 15; 5–60), only while you are here

● **here** · ○ **quiet**	Heard within the keep-alive time (+3 min) · grey: may have left (**Earlier** after 3 intervals)
🔗 **linked** · ⏳ · ⚠ · 🤖	Linked now · waiting to go · not sent (Retry) · an AI station, under its operator

CHAT AND FILES (VARA links one station at a time)

3. **Click a station** → type → Enter · 📎 a file (5 MB) · **quick messages** · tick several: one link each · ⤢ Focus = the whole window
4. It goes by itself: ⏳ **waiting** → a short link when the frequency is clear → ✓ **sent** → ✓✓ **delivered**; the link closes after 20 s of quiet
   Keep the link open for a back-and-forth · Abort drops any link at once.
5. **Files received** (📎 in the chat): View shows a form or CHIRP file in the browser (no script); on the station PC Open (asks first) · Show in folder
   Program files get a `.blocked` ending and are never opened. A `.hsadhoc` file: ★ Install. Modem setup... → **Direct link**: Connect / CQ / Answer calls by hand.

SPEED, REACH AND STATUS (Link tools under the message box; the status line)

Test link speed	30/60/120 s, only when pressed (frequency clear first): speed reached, S/N, time for 1 KB–1 MB; shown before a file goes
🛰 **Path to … (VARA FM)**	≤ 2 digipeaters, nearest first → Save path (learnt from its announcement) · **announce via** in the channel bar's Settings · each hop ≈ half speed
Winlink Express's turn	Shared modem: Express open → it lets go; closed → takes VARA back (Modem setup... by hand)
"VARA is not answering"	Is the copy it names open on that port? Reopen VARA after a port change

🤖 EINSTEIN ON THE AIR (the AI assistant at a call of its own; needs the internet)

Switch on	The panel's 🤖 bar: its call is yours with another SSID (W9XYZ-15). Others see it under your call
Ask an AI station	Click its 🤖 row: ready questions (HELP, weather as ICS-213, a CHIRP file, band plan, ICS-205/309)
You away	Only its call answers, where 97.221 allows (6 m+, HF auto segments, else HF 500 Hz answering only)
From your other station	Same owner key: STATUS · MESSAGES · PAUSE · RESUME. **My stations** → Control from here (97.213)

Files need HAM Sidekick Station at both ends (other VARA programs: plain chat). Never encrypted, no relay; automatic replies only at Einstein's call (docs/EINSTEIN.md). Format: docs/VARA.md; VARA is a separate product.