
WinLink Express for SKYWARN Activations

Operational Guide for Southern Maine & New Hampshire

Document Purpose

This guide provides clear, step-by-step instructions for using **WinLink Express** during SKYWARN activations. It is designed for operators supporting the National Weather Service Gray, ME (GYX) office and regional emergency communications groups.

1. Introduction to WinLink in SKYWARN Operations

Purpose of WinLink During Activations

- Provide structured, reliable reporting when voice nets are congested or unavailable
- Transmit detailed weather observations using standardized forms
- Maintain communication when internet or repeaters are compromised
- Support NWS meteorologists with actionable, time-stamped data



2. Recommended Setup Before an Activation

2.1 Software & Account

- WinLink Express installed and updated
- Valid WinLink account (callsign@winlink.org)
- RMS gateway list updated
- Vara FM / Vara HF or Packet TNC configured (if using RF)

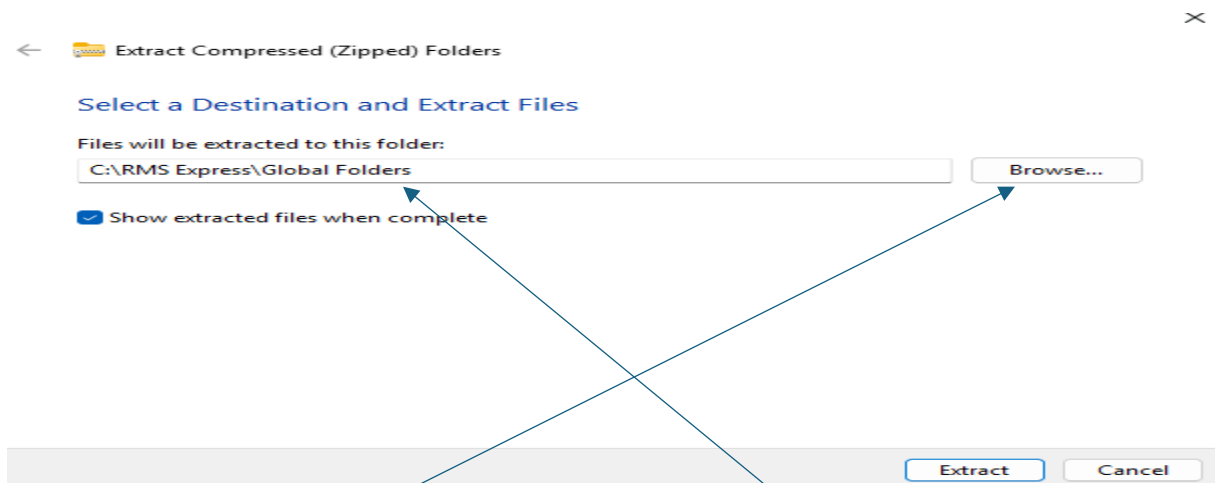


2.2 Station Readiness

- Radio programmed with local RMS gateways
- Antenna checked and tuned
- Power backup verified
- GPS time sync (optional but recommended)

2.3 Request and Download 2 Files

- You will receive a zip file “Re_Latest Version.zip”. Save it to a folder you can easily find.
- Click on the zip file, then “Extract all”



- Click on “Browse”
- Click your C: Drive
- Click “RMS Express”
- Click “Global Folders”
- Click “Templates” then “Extract” (Your folder line should look like this)

Once loaded, inside your template folder should look like this.



 GYX Response Creator.html		1/3/2026 9:20 AM	Opera Web Docu...	54 KB
 GYX Response Creator.txt		1/3/2026 9:20 AM	Text Document	1 KB

You're Done!

3. Connecting WinLink During SKYWARN

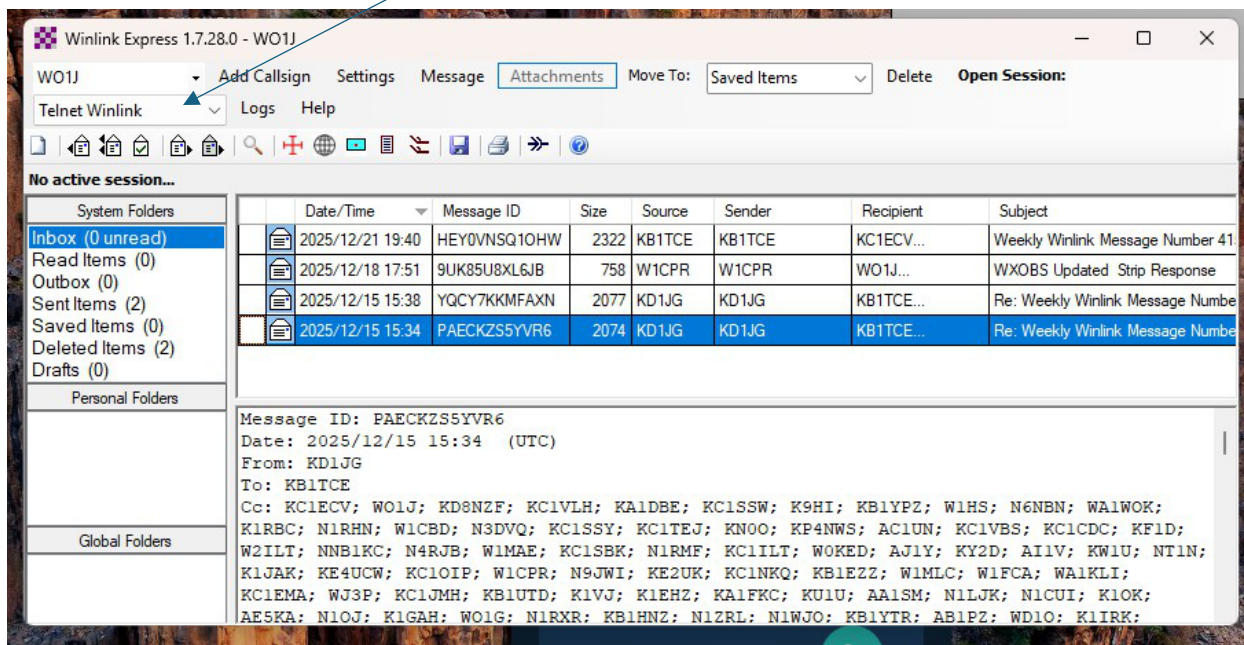
3.1 Internet (Telnet) Connection

Use when:

- Internet is available
- You need rapid submission
- Voice nets are busy

Steps:

1. Open WinLink Express
2. Select **Telnet Winlink** from the session type dropdown (*Arrow Below*)
3. Click **Open Sessions** to connect
4. Send/receive messages



Telnet WinLink session window

Caption: *Telnet Session for Fast Internet Submissions*

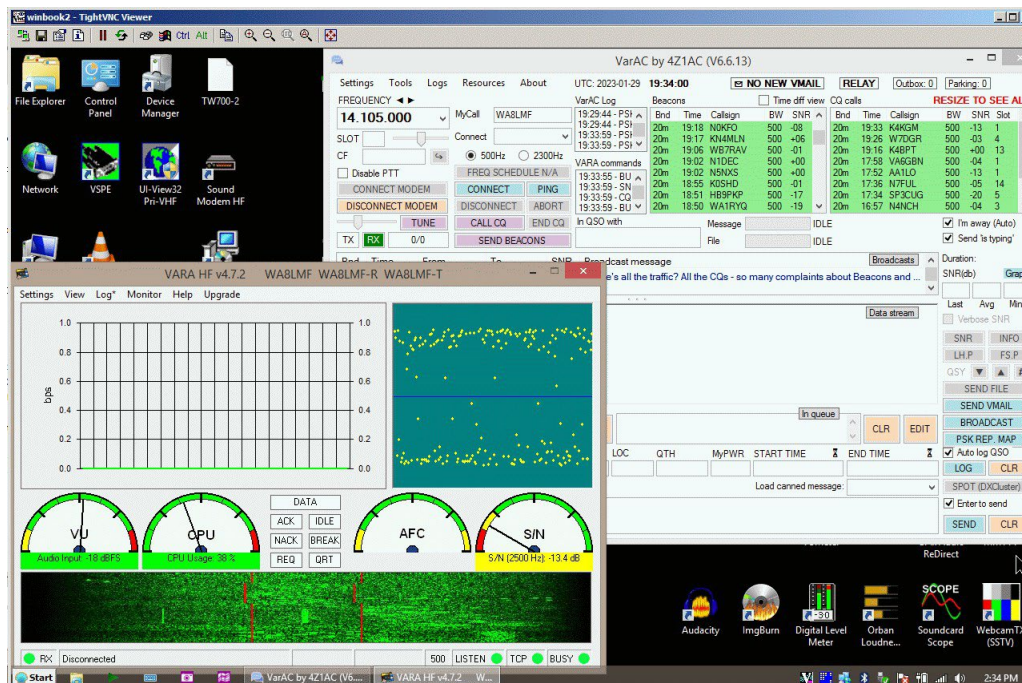
3.2 RF Connection (Vara FM / Packet / HF/ Pactor)

Use when:

- Internet is down
- Field deployment
- Redundant communication is required

Steps:

1. Choose **Vara FM, Packet, Vara HF, or Pactor**
2. Select the appropriate RMS gateway
3. Confirm audio levels (Vara) or TNC connection (Packet)
4. Click **Start** to connect
5. Wait for handshake and message transfer



Vara FM connection waterfall

Caption: *Vara FM Connection to RMS Gateway*

4. Sending SKYWARN Weather Reports

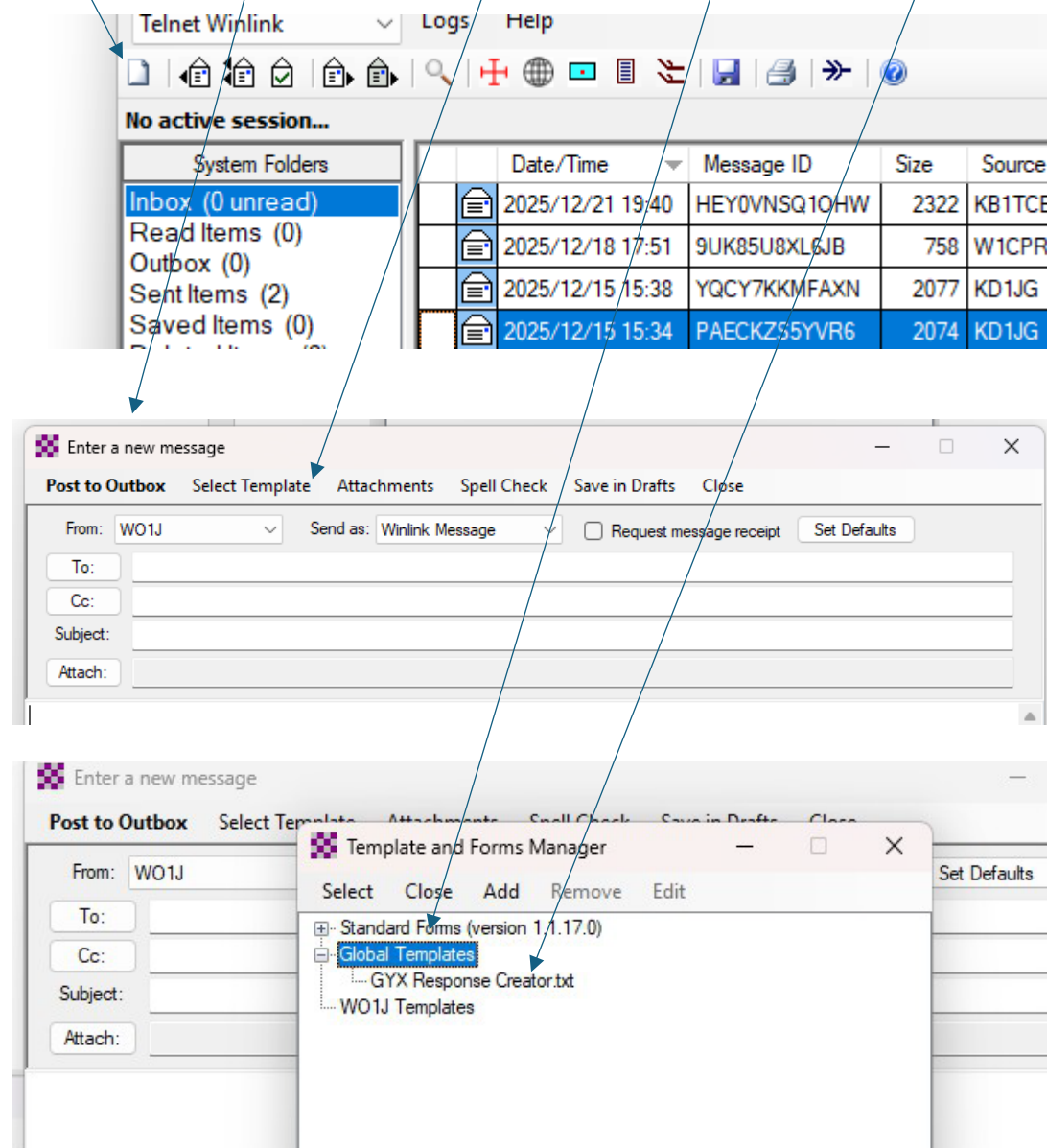
4.1 Selecting the Correct Form

Form:

“GYX Response Creator.txt”

Located under:

Message → New Message → Select Template → Global Templates → Double Click GYX Response Creator.txt (This action opens up your browser)



4.2 Completing the Report Form

GYX Request for Information Strip Reader and Response Creator

[Setup](#) Click to add your agency/group name to title [Operator Info - Read Please](#)

Request Character count: 0 of 600 [Insert a Standard Information Strip](#) [Instructions for Standard RI Strips](#)

Max length is 600 characters

[Parse Strip](#)

Strip Question	Answer

[Create Reply Strip](#)

[Copy Strips to Clipboard](#)

[Submit](#) [Reset Form](#)

Form based on a concept by the SHARES Region 1 Interoperability Group Version 1.4

Click "Insert a Standard Information Strip"

The inserted information script will replace the current text.

GYX WEATHER	GYX WEATHER/DATE (MMDDYYYY)/TIME (HHMM1L OR HHMMZ)/CALL SIGN/SPOTTER ID (OR NA)/SOURCE (AMATEUR RADIO, TRAINED SPOTTER, PUBLIC SERVICE RADIO)/LOCATION ROAD, TOWN/STATE (AA)/CURRENT WEATHER (RELEVANT INFO, BE BRIEF)/SNOW, SLEET (INCHES OR NA, IF STORM TOTAL ADD * EG 2.6 or 3.5")/ICE ACCRETION (INCHES OR NA)/RAINFALL (INCHES OR NA, IF STORM TOTAL ADD * EG 2.6 or 3.5")/HAIL SIZE (INCHES OR NA)/WIND DIRECTION & SPEED (AAA @ MPH)/MODE (PERSONAL OBSERVATION, REPEATER, WINLINK, REPEATER, ETC)/NET (NAME OF RADIO NET OR OTHER EG EMAIL, SLACK)/
GYX NAME	GYX STRIP/
GYX NAME	GYX STRIP//
	WXORS/CALL SIGN/SKYWARN ID (or NA)/CITY/STATE (AA)/MGRS (N/VNWS CWA (AAA NAV) /OBSERVATION TIME Z (DDHHMMZ)/ WIND DIR

Click on this field

GYX Request for Information Strip Reader and Response Creator

[Setup](#)

Click to add your agency/group name to title

[Operator Info - Read Please](#)

Request

Character count:

541

of

600

[Insert a Standard Information Strip](#)

[Instructions for Standard RI Strips](#)

GYX WEATHER/DATE (MMDDYYYY)/TIME (HHMM or HHMMZ)/CALL SIGN/SPOTTER ID (OR NA)/SOURCE (AMATEUR RADIO, TRAINED SPOTTER, PUBLIC SERVICE RADIO)/LOCATION ROAD, TOWN/STATE (AA)/CURRENT WEATHER (RELEVANT INFO, BE BRIEF)/SNOW, SLEET (INCHES OR NA, IF STORM TOTAL ADD * EG 2.6 or 3.5")/ICE ACCRETION (INCHES OR NA)/RAINFALL (INCHES OR NA, IF STORM TOTAL ADD * EG 2.6 or 3.5")/HAIL SIZE (INCHES OR NA)/WIND DIRECTION & SPEED (AAA @ MPH)/MODE (PERSONAL OBSERVATION, REPEATER, WINLINK, REPEATER, ETC)/NET (NAME OF RADIO NET OR OTHER EG EMAIL, SLACK)//

[Parse Strip](#)

Strip Question

Answer

Click on "Parse Strip"

GYX Request for Information Strip Reader and Response Creator

[Setup](#)

Click to add your agency/group name to title

[Operator Info - Read Please](#)

Request

Character count:

541

of

600

[Insert a Standard Information Strip](#)

[Instructions for Standard RI Strips](#)

GYX WEATHER/DATE (MMDDYYYY)/TIME (HHMM or HHMMZ)/CALL SIGN/SPOTTER ID (OR NA)/SOURCE (AMATEUR RADIO, TRAINED SPOTTER, PUBLIC SERVICE RADIO)/LOCATION ROAD, TOWN/STATE (AA)/CURRENT WEATHER (RELEVANT INFO, BE BRIEF)/SNOW, SLEET (INCHES OR NA, IF STORM TOTAL ADD * EG 2.6 or 3.5")/ICE ACCRETION (INCHES OR NA)/RAINFALL (INCHES OR NA, IF STORM TOTAL ADD * EG 2.6 or 3.5")/HAIL SIZE (INCHES OR NA)/WIND DIRECTION & SPEED (AAA @ MPH)/MODE (PERSONAL OBSERVATION, REPEATER, WINLINK, REPEATER, ETC)/NET (NAME OF RADIO NET OR OTHER EG EMAIL, SLACK)//

[Parse Strip](#)

Strip Question	Answer
GYX WEATHER	GYX WEATHER
DATE (MMDDYYYY)	01032026
TIME (HHMM or HHMMZ)	2230Z
CALL SIGN	WO1J
SPOTTER ID (OR NA)	CU330
SOURCE (AMATEUR RADIO, TRAINED SPOTTER, PUBLIC SERVICE RADIO)	TRAINED SPOTTER
LOCATION ROAD, TOWN)	314 POPE RD, WINDHAM
STATE (AA)	ME
CURRENT WEATHER (RELEVANT INFO, BE BRIEF)	CLOUDY TEMP- 22.4°F
SNOW, SLEET (INCHES OR NA, IF STORM TOTAL ADD * EG 2.6 or 3.5")	NA
ICE ACCRETION (INCHES OR NA)	NA
RAINFALL (INCHES OR NA, IF STORM TOTAL ADD * EG 2.6 or 3.5")	NA
HAIL SIZE (INCHES OR NA)	NA
WIND DIRECTION & SPEED (AAA @ MPH)	W @ 0
MODE (PERSONAL OBSERVATION, REPEATER, WINLINK, REPEATER, ETC)	PERSONAL OBSERVATIO
NET (NAME OF RADIO NET OR OTHER EG EMAIL, SLACK)	WINLINK

[Create Reply Strip](#)

GYX WEATHER/01032026/2230Z/WO1J/CU330/TRAINED SPOTTER/314 POPE RD, WINDHAM/ME/CLOUDY TEMP- 22.4°F/NA/NA/NA/NA/W @ 0/PERSONAL OBS

[Conv Strins to Clinboard](#)

Click on "Create Reply Strip"

Create Reply Strip

GYX WEATHER/01032026/2230Z/WO1J/CU330/TRAINED SPOTTER/314 POPE RD, WINDHAM/ME/CLOUDY TEMP- 22.4°F/NA/NA/NA/NA/W @ 0/PERSONAL OBS

Copy Strips to Clipboard

Click “Copy Strips to Clipboard”²

Required Fields

- Location (lat/long or nearest town)
- Time of observation
- Hazard type (wind, hail, flooding, snowfall, etc.)
- Measured values (wind speed, hail size, snow depth)
- Damage description
- Your callsign and contact info

Best Practices

- Use **measured** values whenever possible
- Keep descriptions concise

Sample

Original Request Strip:

GYX WEATHER/DATE (MMDDYYYY)/TIME (HHMML OR HHMMZ)/CALL SIGN/SPOTTER ID (OR NA)/SOURCE (AMATEUR RADIO, TRAINED SPOTTER, PUBLIC SERVICE RADIO)/LOCATION ROAD, TOWN)/STATE (AA)/CURRENT WEATHER (RELEVANT INFO, BE BRIEF)/SNOW, SLEET (INCHES OR NA, IF STORM TOTAL ADD * EG 2.6 or 3.5*)/ICE ACCRETION (INCHES OR NA)/RAINFALL (INCHES OR NA, IF STORM TOTAL ADD * EG 2.6 or 3.5*)/HAIL SIZE (INCHES OR NA)/WIND DIRECTION & SPEED (AAA @ MPH)/MODE (PERSONAL OBSERVATION, REPEATER, WINLINK, REPEATER, ETC)/NET (NAME OF RADIO NET OR OTHER EG EMAIL, SLACK)//

Response Strip:

GYX WEATHER/01032026/2230Z/WO1J/CU330/TRAINED SPOTTER/314 POPE RD, WINDHAM/ME/CLOUDY TEMP- 22.4°F/NA/NA/NA/NA/W @ 0/PERSONAL OBSERVATION/WINLINK//

Cut & Paste the response strip into the WinLink New Message-

Enter a new message

Post to Outbox Select Template Attachments Spell Check Save in Drafts Close

From: WO1J Send as: Winlink Message ☐ Request message receipt Set Defaults

To: test@test.com;

Cc:

Subject: WX Report

Attach:

GYX WEATHER/01032026/2230Z/WO1J/CU330/TRAINED SPOTTER/314 POPE RD, WINDHAM/ME/CLOUDY TEMP- 22.4°F/NA/NA/NA/NA/W @ 0/PERSONAL OBSERVATION/WINLINK//

5. Submitting the Report

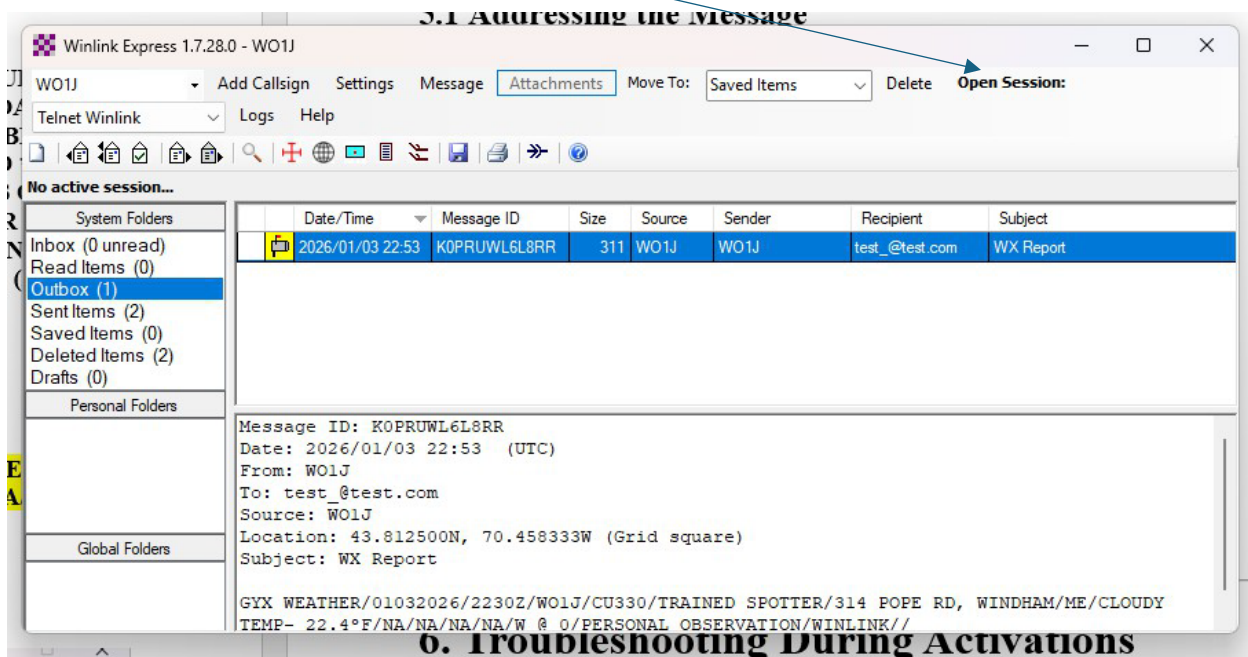
5.1 Addressing the Message

Send to:

- skywarn@wx1gyx.net Subject Field: GYX Strip (Must match)
- **NWS Gray** (official WinLink address if provided by NWS)
- **Local EMCOMM groups** (optional depending on activation)

5.2 Sending

1. Click **Post to Outbox**
2. Open your session type (Telnet, Vara FM, Packet, etc.)
3. Click **“Open Session” then “Start”** Message in Outbox will be automatically sent.
4. Confirm message transfer in the session log



Outbox and session log screenshot

Caption: *Successful Transmission Confirmation*

6. Troubleshooting During Activations

Common Issues & Fixes

Issue	Cause	Fix
Cannot connect to RMS	Weak signal	Increase power, adjust antenna
Vara FM audio levels red	Overdriven audio	Lower TX/RX audio
Form won't load	Template outdated	Update WinLink templates
Message stuck in Outbox	No connection	Switch to Telnet or alternate RMS

7. Best Practices for SKYWARN Operators

- Keep WinLink open during the entire activation
 - Pre-fill your location and station details
 - Use Telnet when available to reduce RF congestion
 - Use RF when internet is compromised
 - Log all submissions for after-action review
 - Maintain professionalism and clarity in all reports
-

8. Appendix

A. Recommended RMS Gateways for Southern Maine & NH

[Merrimack Valley Amateur Radio Association, Inc](#)

B. Sample Completed Reports

GYX WEATHER/01022026/1322Z/WO1J/CU330/AMATEUR RADIO/314 POPE RD, NEW
GLOUCESTER/ME/CLEAR TEMP-9.2/1.4"/NA/0.01"/DIME SIZE/CALM/PERSONAL
OBSERVATION/NEDCN//

C. Quick Reference Checklist

- WinLink open
- Correct form selected
- Accurate measurements
- Clear descriptions
- Message posted
- Session connected

- Confirmation received

