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# WinLink Express for SKYWARN Activations

## Operational Guide for Southern Maine & New Hampshire

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### 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.

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## 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)

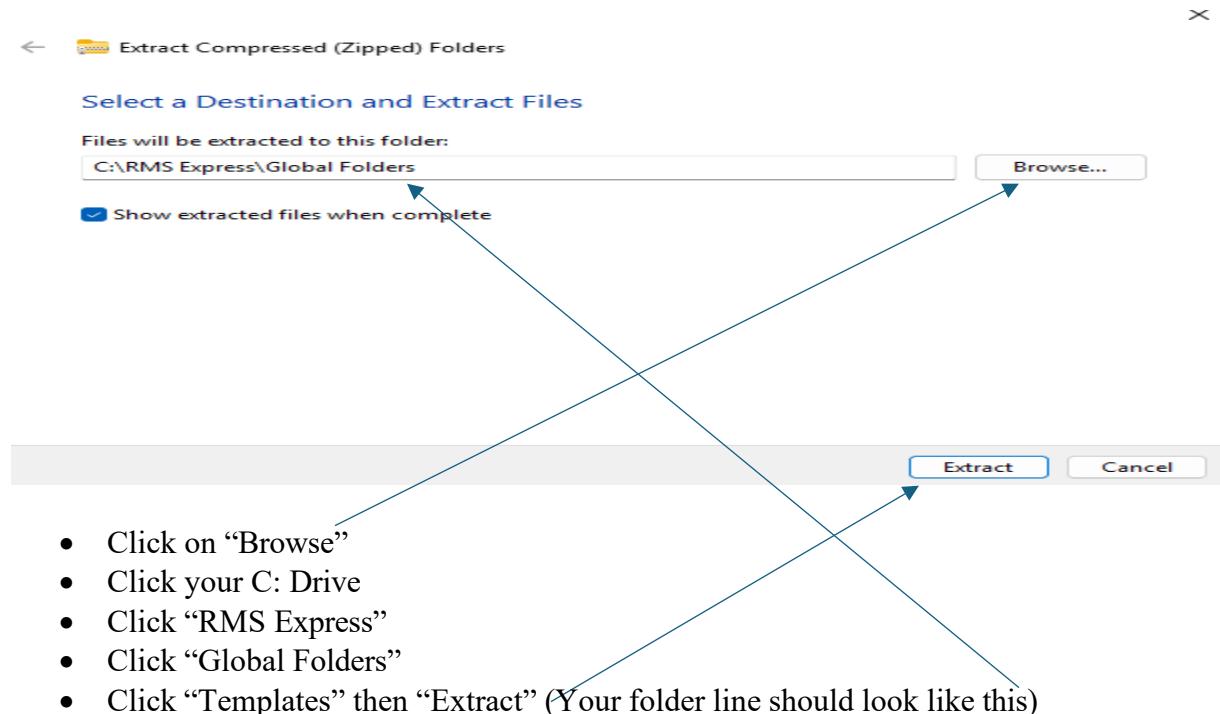


### 2.2 Station Readiness

- 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”



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

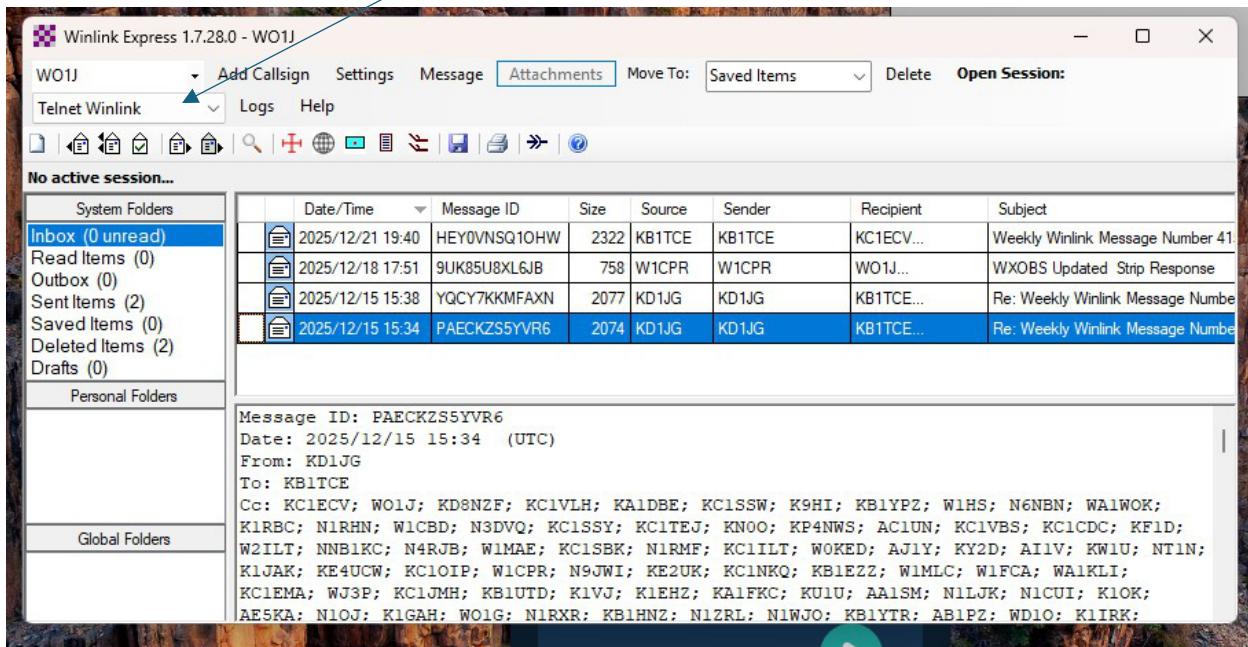
### 3.1 Internet (Telnet) Connection

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*

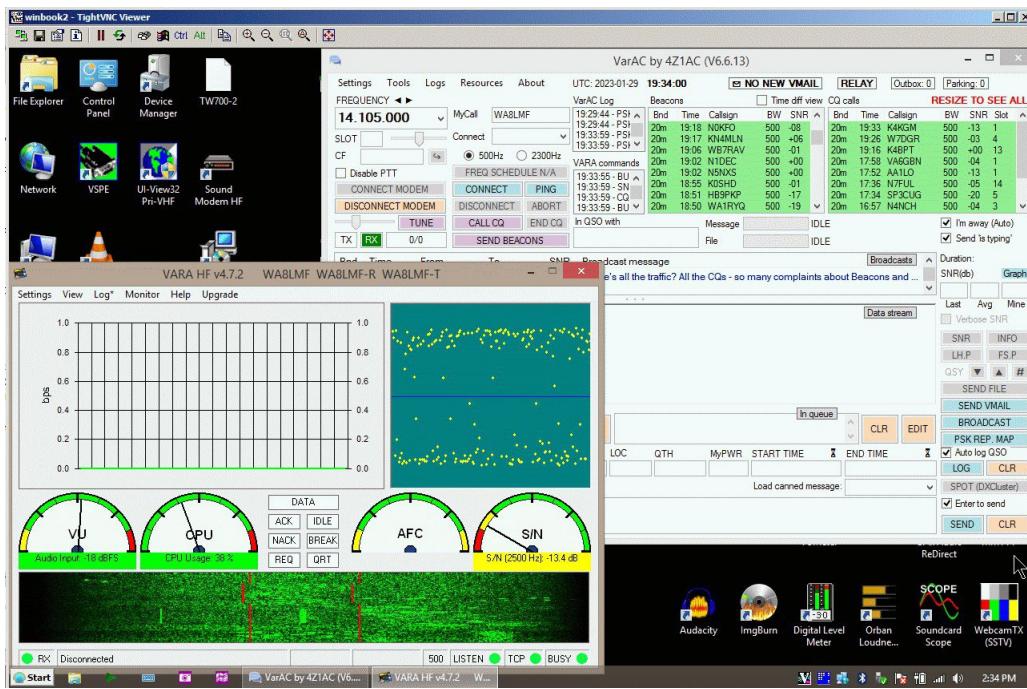
## 3.2 RF Connection (Vara FM / Packet / HF/ Pactor)

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*

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# 4. Sending SKYWARN Weather Reports

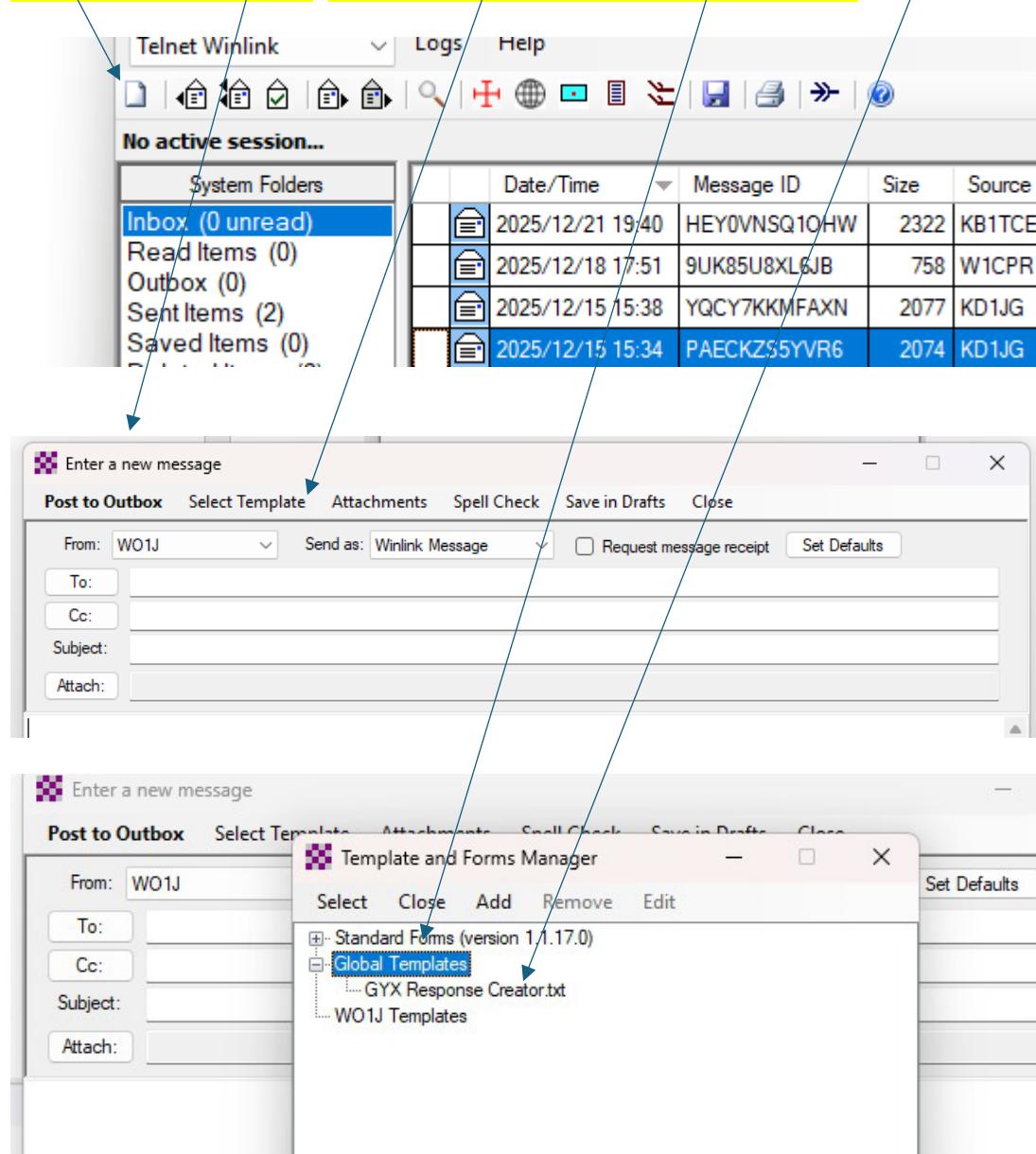
## 4.1 Selecting the Correct Form

Form:

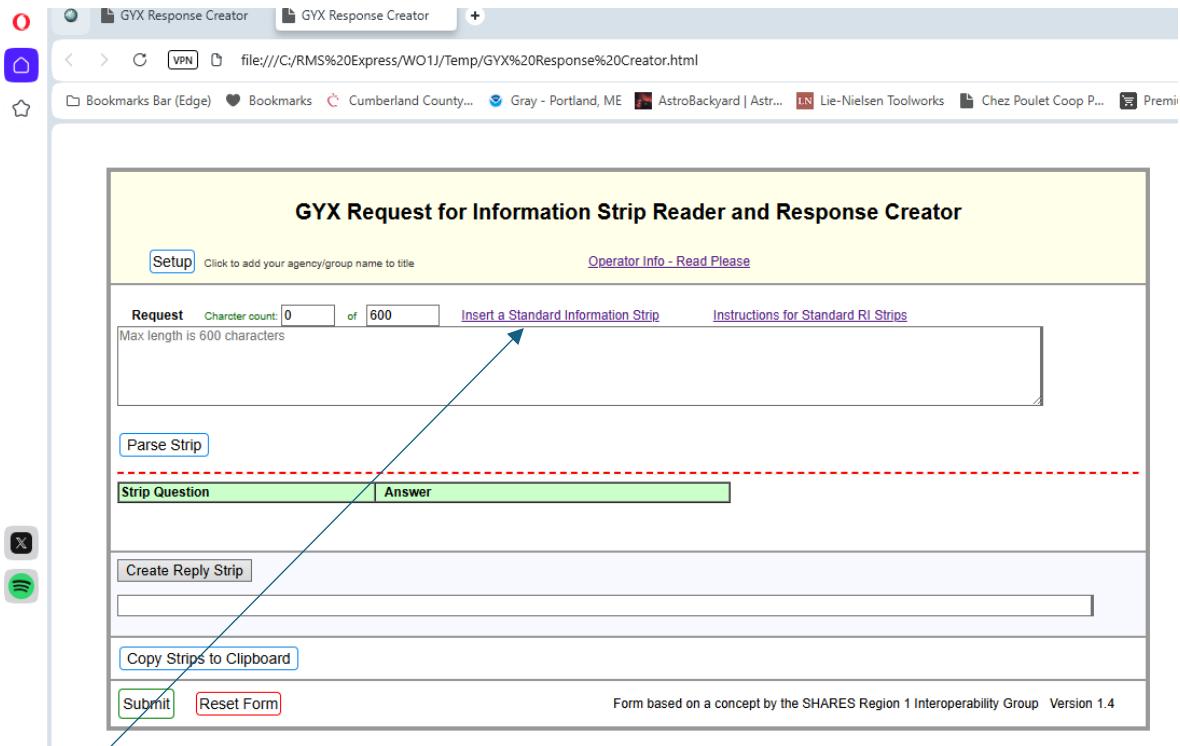
**“GYX Response Creator.txt”**

Located under:

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

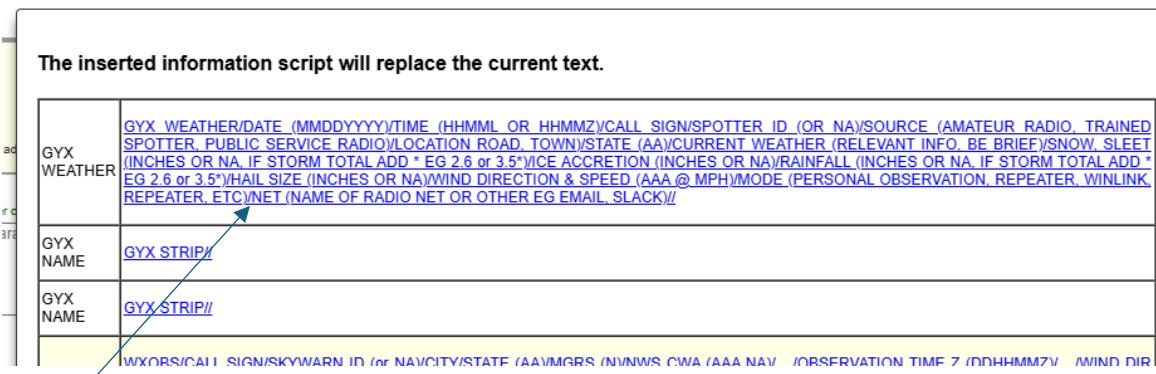


## 4.2 Completing the Report Form



The screenshot shows the 'GYX Request for Information Strip Reader and Response Creator' application. At the top, there are 'Setup' and 'Operator Info - Read Please' buttons. Below that, a 'Request' section shows 'Character count 0 of 600' and an 'Insert a Standard Information Strip' button. A blue arrow points from the text 'Click "Insert a Standard Information Strip"' to this button. To the right of the request section is a link to 'Instructions for Standard RI Strips'. Below the request section is a text area with the placeholder 'Max length is 600 characters'. Further down are 'Parse Strip', 'Strip Question' (highlighted with a green background), 'Answer' (highlighted with a green background), 'Create Reply Strip', 'Copy Strips to Clipboard', 'Submit', and 'Reset Form' buttons. A note at the bottom right states 'Form based on a concept by the SHARES Region 1 Interoperability Group Version 1.4'.

Click "Insert a Standard Information Strip"



The screenshot shows a 'Insert a Standard Information Strip' dialog box. It contains a table with two rows. The first row has 'GYX WEATHER' in the first column and a long text string in the second column. The second row has 'GYX NAME' in the first column and 'GYX STRIP//' in the second column. A blue arrow points from the text 'Click on this field' to the 'GYX NAME' field in the second row. The text above the table says 'The inserted information script will replace the current text.'

GYX WEATHER	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)//
GYX NAME	GYX STRIP//

Click on this field

**GYX Request for Information Strip Reader and Response Creator**

<a href="#">Setup</a>	Click to add your agency/group name to title	<a href="#">Operator Info - Read Please</a>		
<b>Request</b> Character count: <b>541</b> of <b>600</b> <a href="#">Insert a Standard Information Strip</a> <a href="#">Instructions for Standard RI Strips</a> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-top: 5px;">           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 &amp; SPEED (AAA @ MPH)/MODE (PERSONAL OBSERVATION, REPEATER, WINLINK, REPEATER, ETC)/NET (NAME OF RADIO NET OR OTHER EG EMAIL, SLACK)//         </div>				
<input style="width: 150px; height: 30px; border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 5px; background-color: #e0f2e0; color: black; font-weight: bold; font-size: 10pt; margin-bottom: 10px;" type="button" value="Parse Strip"/> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse; background-color: #e0f2e0;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; padding: 5px;">Strip Question</td> <td style="width: 50%; padding: 5px;">Answer</td> </tr> </table>			Strip Question	Answer
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Click on “Parse Strip”

**GYX Request for Information Strip Reader and Response Creator**

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

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"

## 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

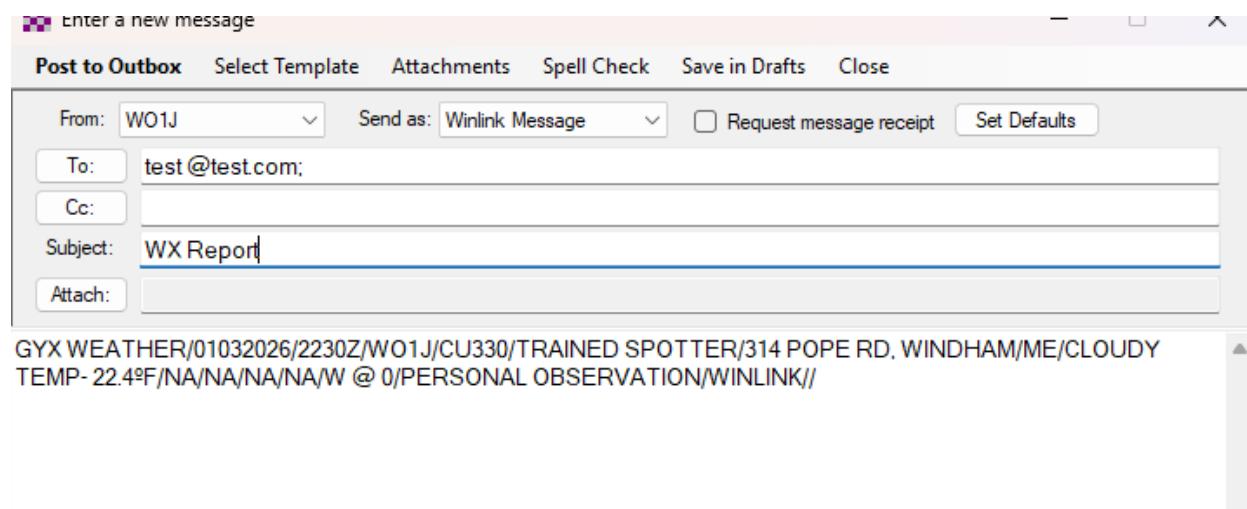
### Original Request Strip:

**GYX WEATHER/DATE (MMDDYYYY)/TIME (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)//**

### 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-**



# 5. Submitting the Report

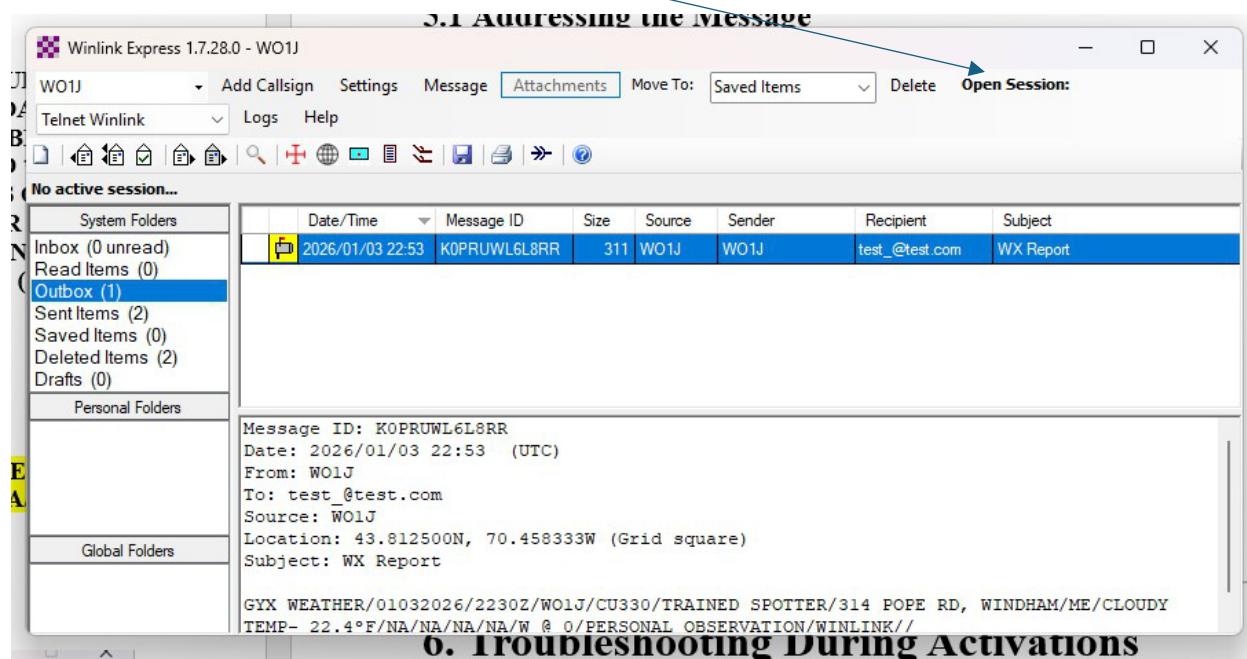
## 5.1 Addressing the Message

Send to:

- **skywarn@wx1gyx.net** Subject Field: GYX Strip (Must match)
- **NWS Gray** (official WinLink address if provided by NWS)
- **Local ECOMM 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

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## 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

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## 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

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