
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

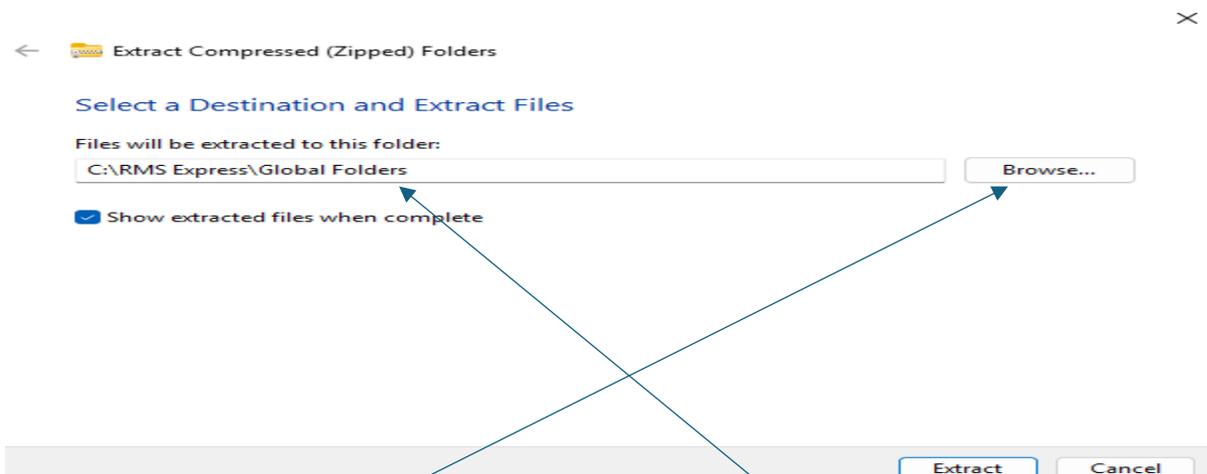
- WinLink Express installed and updated
- Valid WinLink account (callsign@winlink.org)
- RMS gateway list updated
- Vara FM / Vara HF or Packet TNC configured (if using RF)

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.



 Response_Creator.html		2/22/2026 3:07 PM
 Response_Creator.txt		2/22/2026 3:07 PM

You're Done!

3. Connecting WinLink During SKYWARN

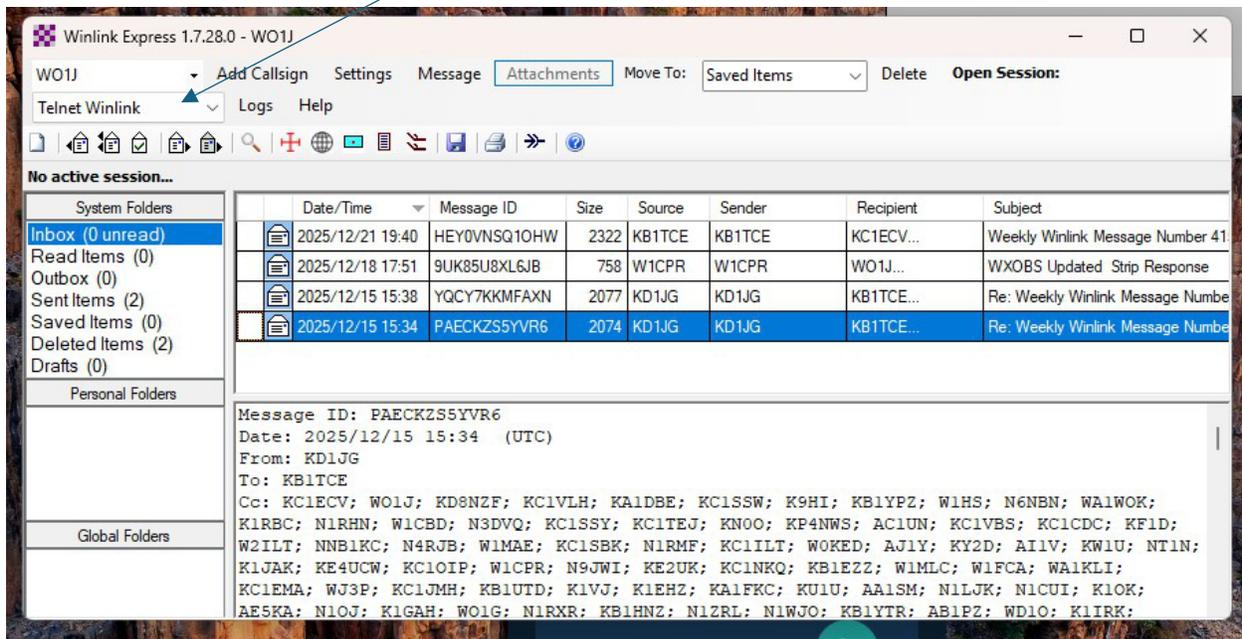
3.1 Internet (Telnet) Connection

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*

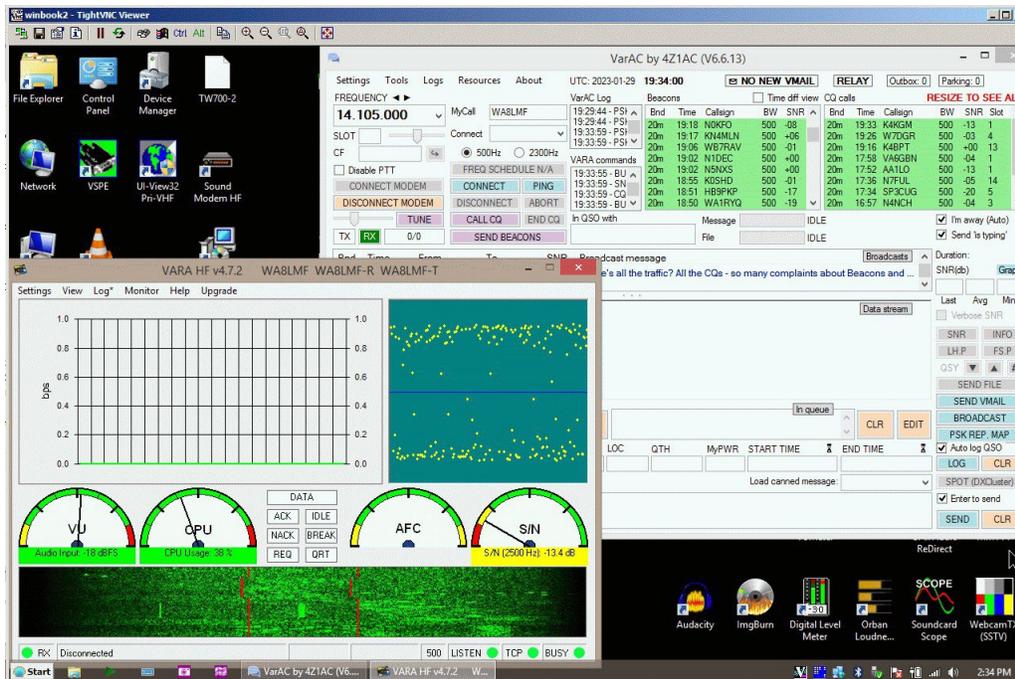
3.2 RF Connection (Vara FM / Packet / HF/ Pactor)

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

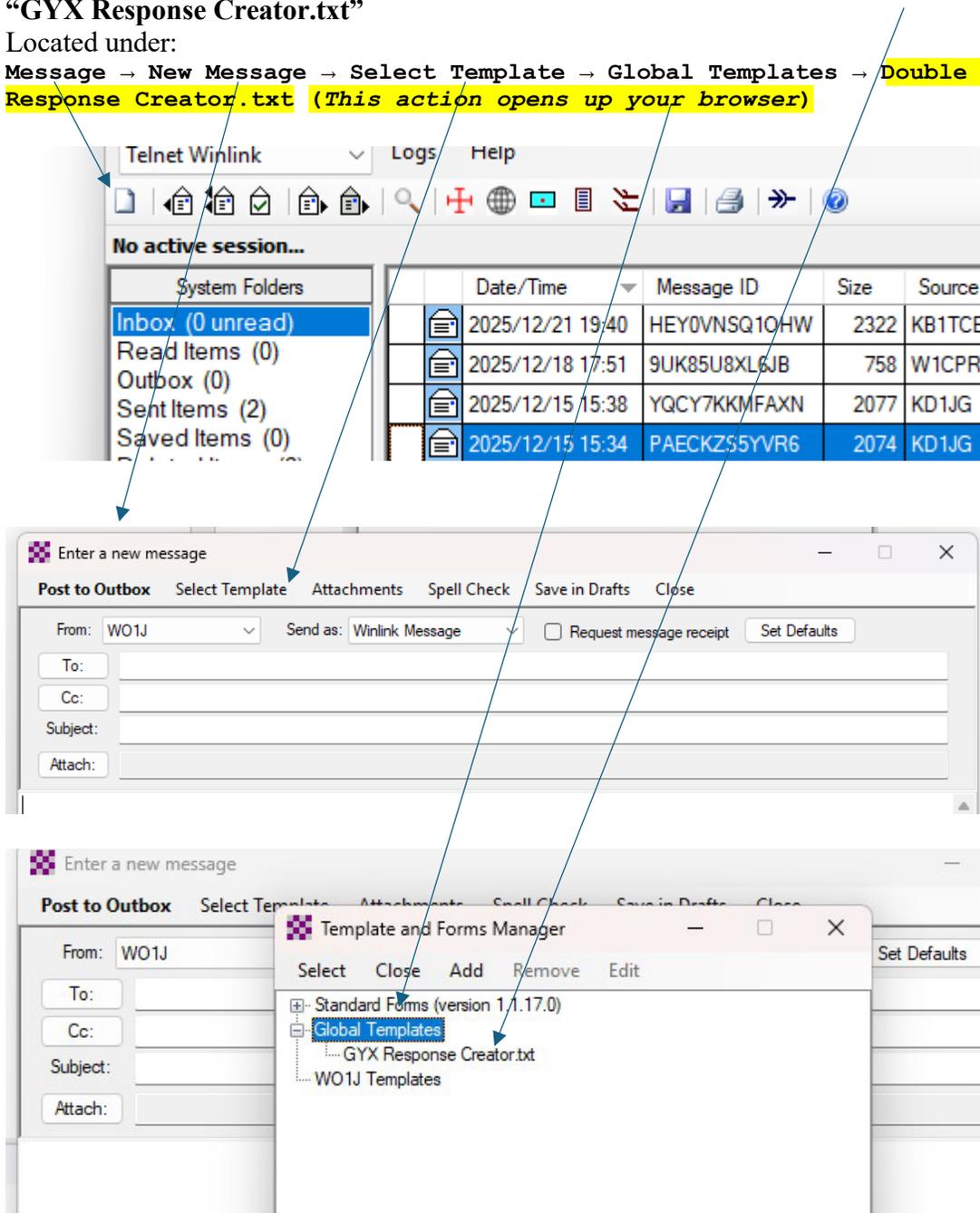
4.1 Selecting the Correct Form

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"

Select a new RI Strip from the list. This will replace the current Request text.

GYX-CAR SKYWARN	GYX-CAR SKYWARN / DATE (MM-DD-YYYY) / TIME (HHMM) / CALL SIGN / SPOTTER ID (or NA) / SOURCE (Amateur Radic
Placeholder	<i>(Pending)</i>
WXOBS	WXOBS / CALL SIGN / SKYWARN ID (or NA) / CITY / STATE (AA) / MGRS (N) / ... //
SITREP	<i>(Pending)</i>
OPRED	<i>(Pending)</i>

Click here

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

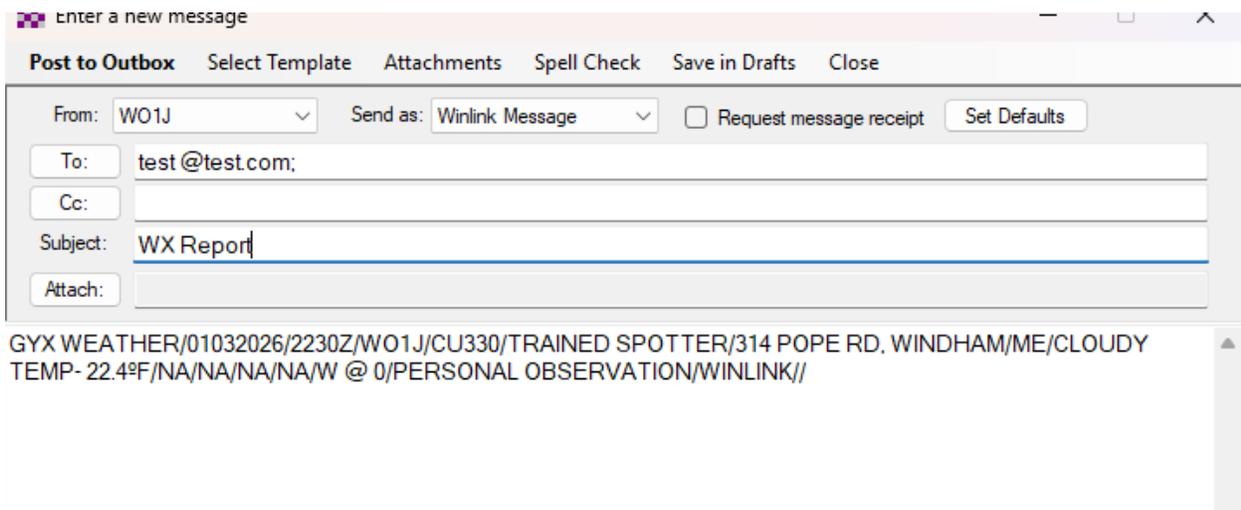
Original Request Strip:

GYX-CAR SKYWARN/DATE (MM-DD-YYYY)/TIME (HHMM)/CALL SIGN/SPOTTER ID (or NA)/SOURCE (Amateur Radio, Trained Spotter, Media, Public Service Radio, Other 3rd Party, Direct Messaging)/LOCATION (Road, Town; MGRS or USNG optional)/STATE & CWA (e.g. NH GYX, ME CAR, MA OA)/CURRENT WEATHER (Relevant info such as Temp, Barometer, Cloud Cover or Type. Be brief.)/SNOW, SLEET (inches or NA; if storm total add ST e.g. 2.6 or 3.5ST)/ICE ACCRETION (inches or NA)/RAINFALL (inches or NA, if storm total add ST e.g. 2.6 or 3.5ST)/HAIL SIZE (Inches or NA)/WIND DIRECTION & SPEED (AAA MPH - if applicable add the gust value e.g. NNE 7 21G)/STORM DAMAGE (Wind, flooding, ice jams, other details)/MODE(Personal Observation, FM Repeater, Winlink, DMR, Direct Messaging. For others leave blank)/NET (Name of radio net or other e.g. email, Slack)//

Response Strip:

GYX-CAR SKYWARN/02-22-2026/2027Z/WO1J/CU330/Trained Spotter/314 Pope Rd, Windham/ME GYX/Overcast 34.7F/NA/NA/NA/NA/SSE@3/None/Personal Observation/Winlink//

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



5. Submitting the Report

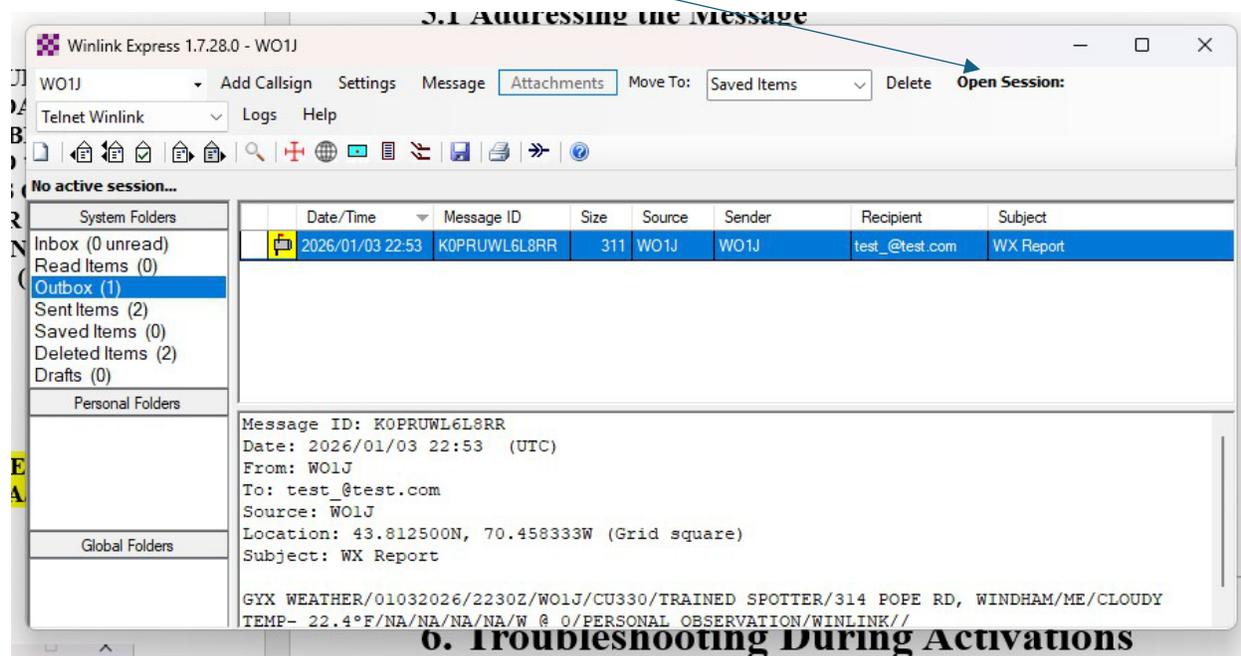
5.1 Addressing the Message

Send to:

- skywarn@wx1gyx.net Subject Field: GYX Strip (Must match)
- NWS Gray (official WinLink address if provided by NWS)
- Local 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
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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-CAR SKYWARN/02-22-2026/2027Z/WO1J/CU330/Trained Spotter/314 Pope Rd,
Windham/ME GYX/Overcast 34.7F/NA/NA/NA/NA/SSE@ 3/None/Personal
Observation/Winlink//

C. Quick Reference Checklist

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

- Confirmation received
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