

# **Morale and Recreation, Palmer Station**

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## **Purpose**

This document provides guidelines to help the Station Manager develop a positive atmosphere and encourage community activities at Palmer Station.

## **Scope/Applicability**

This procedure applies to the Palmer Station Manager and others who are involved in planning community morale and recreation activities at Palmer Station.

## **Terms and Definitions**

**CONUS**

Continental United States

**HAM**

Amateur radio

**NSF**

National Science Foundation

**RPSC**

Raytheon Polar Services Company

**Silver Trunk**

Method by which postal mail and other items are shipped between Palmer Station and the continental U.S.

**Station Manager**

On-site manager, typically the senior on-site RPSC representative

**USAP**

United States Antarctic Program: umbrella agency responsible for all NSF research and support in Antarctica

**VoIP**

Voice over Internet Protocol – a system that transmits telephone communications over the World-Wide-Web computer network

## **Responsibilities**

### **Station Manager**

Lead by example, encourage participation, and ensure resources are available for morale-building and recreational activities.

## **Discussion**

While the Station Manager is not responsible for the morale of persons on site, s/he can certainly have an impact on the attitudes of station personnel. As a supervisor, the Station Manager may affect employee morale. As a community leader, the Station Manager may affect the morale of the entire station. The following is a discussion of a few areas to consider towards maintaining a positive environment on station.

### **Community Participation**

Because Palmer Station is a small, crowded site, community cooperation is necessary to avoid conflicts. The Station Manager should practice and encourage respect toward all station occupants. While the list can easily change, a few areas that can lead to conflict include the following:

- An individual failing to participate in shared duties such as station clean up.
- A lack of respect for quiet hours.
- Inconsiderate use of recreational equipment, e.g., a person using equipment for excessive time, thus not allowing others to use it.
- Failing to share boats during the time they are available for recreation.
- A lack of individual accountability to clean up after oneself when using community areas such as the lounge, bathrooms, and dining area.
- Playing loud music in the work or living areas rather than using headphones.

The Station Manager should ensure that everyone is aware of the expectations of the community. All station members should be encouraged to participate in the creation of a positive community atmosphere. Effective conflict resolution is critical.

## Communications with CONUS

One of the biggest morale issues for some people is the lack of interaction with family and friends back home. All members of the community should be made aware of the many communications options available to them. Palmer Station has recently turned the corner in communications technology. The Voice Over Internet Protocol phone system offers one of the clearest phone connections in the Program. Calling rates are the equivalent of a long distance call from Denver. E-mail and Internet connections are both reliable and quick. The use of the HAM radio is also an option for recreational users who are qualified to operate the equipment, or when supervised by a qualified person. The Station Manager should also be aware of the occasional need for private conversations during family emergencies and make provisions as appropriate.

## Mail

Receiving postal mail from home is often a considerable morale booster. All participants should be informed of the mail policy prior to arriving on station. This is typically accomplished via the Participant Guide, although an occasional reminder of what can and cannot go into the silver trunk in Denver can help prevent delays in mail delivery.

E-mail has become one of the quickest and easiest ways to communicate with friends and family, and a number of community computer stations are now available on site.

## Recreational Equipment

The Station Manager should attempt to maintain an appropriate supply of recreational equipment on station and in good condition. The following are items to consider:

- **Gym Equipment:** workout videos, yoga mats/bolsters, free weights, aerobic machines, VCR/TV/stereo
- **Indoor Recreation Items:** DVDs, cards, board games, arts & crafts materials, sewing machine, computer games, magazines, books, station video camera
- **Station Store:** the store should be well stocked with the usual items - fresh film is always in demand
- **Outdoor Recreation Items:** snow shoes, cross-country ski equipment, shoe chains

## Social Events

While the Station Manager need not take on the role of social coordinator, s/he should be aware of the holiday traditions and other potential social occasions. Often these events are good stress relievers for the entire station, so they should be encouraged by the Station Manager if need be.

### Holidays

The austral summer holidays typically celebrated at Palmer Station are Halloween, Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's Eve. Valentine's Day and Saint Patrick's Day are sometimes made into occasions as well. The holidays offer a chance for the community to have a nice meal, dress up, and decorate the dining area. The Christmas holiday tradition is to have a rather comical gift exchange during which each person has the opportunity to steal a present or open a new one from the pile.

During the austral winter, Midwinter's Day is the biggest holiday. Memorial Day and Independence Day are also marked with celebratory events.

**Note** Many of these holidays are regular workdays for USAP personnel. Each year, NSF distributes a holiday schedule of official USAP "days off."

### Special Events

A number of special events have been enjoyed over the years at Palmer Station. Some of the events in more recent history include:

- Neanderthal Café – An event run entirely by volunteers which involves converting the dining area into a bar and restaurant. The volunteer bartender, waiters, and cooks serve drinks and meals. Verbal tradition will pass this event on more adequately. Suffice it to say that everyone is encouraged to dress up and take on another personality – making for quite a colorful event.
- Halloween Party – Gives everybody a chance to be creative.
- Saint Patrick's Day Parade – Dress up, make noise along the only street at Palmer.
- Olimpets – This event is the Palmer Station version of the Olympics. It involves competition in several athletic feats such as boat rowing, sled pulling, running, etc...
- Carnival – This event has not been done in several years, but is still recalled by long-time station members. The event was a creation of a small carnival midway area with games.

- Radio Darts – The occasional game of darts over the HAM radio with Rothera Station brings a lot of laughs. This event typically occurs in the winter months, but may be planned for the summer as well if time allows for both stations.

### **Parties**

Parties in the lounge give people a chance to dance, play pool, and visit. Parties should be limited to evenings when no work is scheduled the following day, or the occasional special evening when a USAP vessel arrives. Quiet hours should be adhered to, being mindful of noise in the living areas. All personnel should be encouraged to participate in the enforcement of quiet hours and to call the Station Manager to assist if necessary.

### **Work-Related Morale Problems**

While individual morale problems are addressed in Human Resource procedures and policies, some station-wide morale problems can be due to work-related issues. News regarding potential staff or funding cuts, major changes to ongoing or planned projects, ship schedule changes, or new policies can cause a general malaise around station. While the situation is often beyond the control of the Station Manager, s/he should assist station personnel in understanding the issues and discussing any objections. The Station Manager should seek off-site assistance for resolution or guidance when appropriate. Often the inclination to refrain from, or delay, announcing disappointing news arises. The Station Manager should be aware of the extensive communications network, and know that any announcement made off-site will reach individuals on site quickly via other modes if not from the Station Manager.

## **References**

*USAP Participant Guide (RPSC)*

## **Records**

This procedure generates no records.

## **Attachments, Appendices**

None.