

TAPED REPORTS TO FOREIGN STATIONS

by Larry Godwin

This is desired to be a supplement to the comment by Bob Coomler on taped reports, especially pertaining to sending tapes to foreign countries.

First, why send a taped report to a foreign station? I can think of five principal reasons:

1. The language used by the station may be a barrier to preparing a good written log. The station may be audible for only a matter of minutes, as at sign-on or sign-off or during a brief, unexpected silent period of an AN local station.
2. You may want to provide definite proof of reception of a network station. In some cases (eg., NHK in Japan and ABC in Australia,) programming on a number of stations is continuously in parallel. By taping the call ID on the hour or at sign-off, you can prove that the network station you heard was such-and-such.
3. During unusual openings, your DXing time may be at a premium. For example, if you are hearing several Peruvians or late for a fiesta, instead of taking accurate program logs on each you may prefer to tape good IDs for your reports. I would choose to maximize the number of reports during the unusual opening, subject to good reporting material, of course.

4. If you are sending a tentative report particularly, the station may be able to recognize the announcer's voice on your tape. It is rather difficult to describe voice characteristics in words, so a tape may be your best bet. What is the general reaction of foreign stations to taped reports? I have received many favorable reactions, particularly from New Zealand and Australian stations and from several Latin American Stations. I cannot recall any unfavorable comments.

What, then, should be the procedure for sending a taped report to a foreign station? Obviously, first you should tape a readable ID, or for purposes of a tentative report, at least several readable announcements. The volume level should be properly adjusted, low enough to prevent distortion yet high enough to permit listening without having to turn the recorder volume above normal. If you plan to send the station your original tape, record it at 7 1/2 ips on one track only. If you send the station a copy of your taped original, make sure the transcription is free from hum and, of course, at 7 1/2 ips. Sending a copy of the tape has two advantages: (1) You retain the original for following up in case no veris results, and (2) You don't lose a valuable addition to your tape library.

The tape you send should be of good quality, i.e.; it should be new stock and splice-free (except for any editing splices you make.) Some "discount-priced" tape I have seen would not qualify for sending taped reports. To save postage expense, send tapes to foreign stations on thin (1 mil) Mylar stock, if possible. If you have leader tape, put a short segment at the beginning and end of your reel. Actually, you have the choice of sending your tape on a reel or on some type of card stock. Reels are rather expensive (about 15¢ each) but the tape arrives at the station ready to play. A veris I received from QAMA, against its standard practice, resulted only because the manager was interested in the reel I sent and wanted to order some for his own use. If you send a report on a reel, be sure to enclose it in a small box (usually included when you buy the reel) to protect it in transit. It is a good idea to print your name and address on the box, as well as the station call or slogan (and time and date of reception.) The latter may be particularly important to avoid confusion if you are sending more than one taped report the same day.

Once you have your tape ready to send, I recommend you enclose it with your reception report, return postage, etc., in a clasp envelope (4 5/8 x 6 3/4 inches.) The envelope is a strong one yet light-weight. If the report is going air mail, wrap the reel box with one layer of aluminum foil to prevent accidental erasure from strong electric fields in the jetliners. You may have to detach the clasp prongs in a few special cases (such as sending air packets to South Korea.) Check with your local post office.

How should you send your taped report, by air mail or surface mail? In either event, it must go first class and hence need not be left unsealed. If the report goes to Australia, it could be delayed by more than a month by going surface mail, but the rates are considerably cheaper. Be sure and take advantage of domestic postal rates when they are available (eg. Hawaii, Puerto Rico, Mexico, and certain stations with APO boxes.) Have the post office weigh your report (it should be about 1 1/2 to 2 oz., depending on the length of the tape and the enclosures) to determine the exact postage required. I would recommend the use of meter tapes rather than stamps on the envelope. Your report may otherwise be snagged by a postman because of the pretty stamps on the outside. If you want to include some cancelled stamps inside the letter to the station, it may help get you a veris.

If you are sending tapes to Latin America, I'd recommend you register them. The registration could well make the difference between the report's arriving or not. If you have already invested an appreciable amount of money for the tape and reel, postage, etc. the extra 60¢ for registration would be warranted. However, I don't think it is advisable to register packets to New Zealand, Australia or Europe. It is required for South Korea. Two taped reports I sent to Chile in 1964 were returned unclaimed, perhaps because as import duty was attached, so keep this in mind when reporting to this country. If you register a report, the envelope must be completely sealed (note that Scotch-tape cannot be used.)

Whether or not you request the station to return your tape is up to you, but if you do, it may decrease your chances for a veris. You should include additional return postage if you want the reel back. If you make no request for the tape's return, you are showing good will to the station and may receive special consideration. Some stations will return your tape gladly (eg. BBC, New Zealand,) but they are exceptions. I have never received a tape returned from a Latin American station, except the two Chilean tapes already mentioned.

Cost of a taped report:

Reel and box	\$.15
Recording tape (cut from larger reel)	.05 to .25 (depending on length)
Leader tape (optional)	.02
Clasp Envelope (eg. Columbian clasp #25H)	.10
Registry	.60
Postage (varies according to the area of the world concerned)	

RETURN POSTAGE FOR FOREIGN COUNTRIES

There are several ways of sending return postage to foreign stations. First, there is the International Reply Coupon which can be bought at your local main post office branch (not usually obtainable at sub-post offices.) For 30¢, this coupon will pay return postage at surface rate for any 3 ounce letter or card. For an airmail reply, try 2 or 3 IRCs. These are very useful for reports to Europe, New Zealand, Australia, and some other larger broadcasters. For hard-to-verify countries, it may be best to send a mint (unused) stamp from that country. You can naturally purchase stamps from a philatelic store, or better still from DX Stamp Service, 466 Weaver Rd., Webster, NY 14561 (prices available from them on request.)