

Ham Radio Solutions

CW Hotline User Manual

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<https://hamradio.solutions/cwhotline/>



Overview

The Ham Radio Solutions CW Hotline is a internet WiFi connected Morse Code/CW keyer that provides a private Morse code link between friends, enables remote keying of a CW transceiver, is a stand alone Morse code iambic keyer, and a latency free interface for the HamRadio.Solutions/VBand service. It optionally includes a built-in iambic paddle or straight key, but can also accept an external paddle or key. It has a built-in speaker, line-out audio jack, and a key output to drive a connected radio. Once linked to one or more other CW Hotline devices, any CW entered into one will be sent to and played by all other linked devices. Multiple devices can be connected to each other with a user generated link key entered into each device. CW Hotline can also connect directly to any VBand channel.

CW Hotline includes the following user interfaces:

- A green Link LED to show the status of the WiFi link to other devices
- A red Key LED to show when it is sending or receiving Morse code
- A speed button to adjust the WPM speed of the iambic keyer or select straight key mode
- An optional built-in iambic paddle or straight key
- An internal speaker to generate Morse code audio
- A 3.5mm TRS jack for an external paddle or straight key input
- A 3.5mm TRS jack for line out audio to an external amplified speaker
- A 3.5mm TRS jack for an output connection to key an external transmitter
- A USB connection for power and serial connection

Settings

CW Hotline has several user settings to control operation. These settings can be adjusted via the CW Hotline website, the built in WiFi access point, or a serial terminal program. The settings are explained below.

- **SSID** - The SSID of the local WiFi access point to which the CW Hotline shall attempt to connect.
- **Password** - The password of the local WiFi access point.
- **Alt SSID** - An alternate WiFi SSID to attempt to connect to if the first fails. This is often used to connect to a phone hotspot when away from home. Set to a single space to not attempt.
- **Alt Password** - The password of the alternate WiFi access point.
- **Device Key** - A unique key provided by HamRadio Solutions to access the server. This can be found inside the cardboard CW Hotline shipping box. It can also be found inside the plastic CW Hotline case lid. Do not share this key with others.
- **Callsign / Name** - The callsign or name of the CW Hotline user.
- **Min Latency** - The number of milliseconds delay between receiving code and playing it. 200 is a good starting value.

- **Speaker Enable** - Set to 1 to enable the speaker when sending, or 0 to disable the speaker.
- **Flip Paddle** - Set to 0 for a right side dah and left side dit on the paddle, or to 1 to swap those.
- **WPM** - The keyer speed in Words per Minute. Setting to 7 will enable straight key mode. This can also be set with the button on the top of the device.
- **Local tone** - The frequency in Hz of the sidetone for locally generated code.
- **Remote tone** - The frequency in Hz for received code.
- **Channel 1 through 10** - A channel name used to connect to other users. If this is a VBand channel name, it will be connected to that channel on the VBand website. Case and spaces are important. When connecting CW Hotline to a remote CW transmitter, do not choose an obvious, guessable channel name, as anyone with this name would be able to key your radio. CW Hotline supports the storing of up to 10 different channel names, which can be selected with a long press of the speed button. You cannot edit these in WiFi access point mode. Enter a name as a single space to clear an entry.

Website Settings Config Mode

The recommended method to adjust settings is via the CW Hotline website. The CW Hotline must be connected to a computer USB port. A CH340 serial port driver will also be needed, but may be pre-installed on some computers. Go to the CW Hotline website:

<https://hamradio.solutions/cwhotline/>, select the Connect tab along the top, click the connect button and select the serial port. New firmware can be loaded, firmware version checked, and settings updated from this page.

Access Point Config Mode

Settings can also be adjusted by turning CW Hotline into a WiFi access point, and connecting with a phone or computer. Note that connecting to a phone hotspot requires a separate computing device. This mode can be enabled by resetting power, and then quickly pressing and holding the speed button AND the straight key or dit or dah paddle AFTER the 3 red and green LED flashes begin. If the dit or dah paddles are pressed at the start of powerup, it will not start. Wait for the 3 flashes to start, and while they are flashing quickly press and hold the buttons & paddles. Normal operation is cancelled in access point mode, and both LEDs will be on solid.

Once Access Point Config Mode is running, use a nearby WiFi enabled phone or computer, and connect to the WiFi Access Point **“CW Hotline AP”** with password **“morsecode”**.

You may automatically be presented with the captive portal main screen. If not, try browsing to IP address 192.168.4.1 . Select **“Configure WiFi”**. It will scan for local WiFi access points. Select the desired access point SSID and enter the password, **even if not changing from the previous setting**. Adjust any other desired settings, then click **“Save”**. The CW Hotline will reset and attempt to connect to the selected WiFi access point.

Serial Configuration Mode

Settings can also be adjusted via a USB connection to a computer as described above, and a serial terminal program, such as TeraTerm Pro on Windows, or CoolTerm on Mac. In the terminal program, select the connected port, set it for 115200 baud, and send 3 asterisks (*) followed by the Enter key to begin the serial configuration. For each setting, the current value will be shown. Just press Enter to accept, or type in the new value followed by Enter to change. Go through all settings to have them

saved, then reset power to apply the new values. It may help to enable Local Echo in the terminal program as the CW Hotline will not send back the keys you type.

Operation

Once the CW Hotline has successfully connected to the CW Hotline server (green LED is flashing quickly or on solid), any closure of a connected straight key or paddle will light the red LED, sound the speaker, key a connected radio, and send that CW timing to the server and all other devices linked with the same link key. If any other linked CW Hotline device generates CW, that will be received and the red LED will light, the speaker will sound, the connected radio will be keyed. The speaker tone for locally generated code is slightly different from the tone from remotely generated code.

Iambic Speed / Straight Key Mode

Pressing the speed button will begin speed adjustment mode. The speaker will make alternating dit and dah tones at the current iambic speed. If in straight key mode, the speaker tone will be solid. The red LED will not light with the tone. The dit/dah tones will be sent at the current iambic keyer speed. Tap the right (Dah) paddle to speed up by 1 WPM. Tap the left (Dit) paddle to slow down by 1 WPM. The minimum keyer speed is 8 WPM. If you attempt to go slower than than, the tone will switch from dit/dah to a solid tone to indicate the keyer is now in straight key mode. Increasing the speed from straight key mode will move back to dit/dah tones at 8 WPM. Press the speed button again to leave speed adjust mode. It will play the selected speed in morse code over the speaker, either **SK** (... --) for straight key mode, or the speed in words per minute, then return to normal operation.

Channel selection

CW Hotline allows the storing of up to 10 channel names. To enter channel selection mode, press and hold the speed button for 2 seconds (long press) until it begins to send the name of the current channel, then release the button. Short press (tap) the button to advance to the next channel in the rotation. It will send the name of that channel. Empty channels will be skipped. Long press the button (until it begins sending code) to accept and connect to the channel. Tap the Dit or Dah paddle to cancel channel selection mode. It will play the name of the original channel and keep you there.

A long press is at least 2 seconds. Anything less than 2 seconds is considered a short press to activate speed adjustment mode. It will start sending code to let you know when the 2 seconds has been reached.

You can interrupt the Morse being sent by tapping to advance or long pressing to accept. You are not connected to a new channel until you accept it. The last channel selected is restored upon power cycle. Only the first 10 characters of a channel name will be sent. Incoming code from others will be ignored when in channel selection mode. Only CW Hotline firmware version 1.02 and later support the multiple channel feature.

Volume Control

CW Hotlines with PCB versions 1.1 and later have a potentiometer to adjust the volume of the speaker. This is accessed by opening the underside lid of the case and is labeled R6 Volume.

Powerup Status Code

CW Hotline will send Morse code over the speaker after powerup to indicate operation status:

- **OK** (--- --) when it has successfully connected to the WiFi access point.
- **NC** (-. --.) when it was unable to connect to WiFi, and is operating off-line as a keyer.
- **VER** (...- . --.) when there is new firmware available, but the running version is still functional.
- **UP** (..- .--) when the current firmware version is incompatible and must be updated.
- **DUP** (-. .. --.) when the device key is already active on the server. It will retry in 30 seconds to allow for timeout of an old connection.
- **ID** (.. --) when the device key is invalid.
- **NET** (-. . -) when connection dropped due to poor connection. It will retry in 5 seconds.
- **AP** (-. --.) when it has booted into Access Point configuration mode.
- **VB** (.... -...) when entering VBand mode, which disables outgoing WiFi CW.
- **VX** (.... --) when exiting VBand mode, and re-enabling outgoing WiFi CW.

LED Status

The green and red LEDs will flash 3 times after powerup, then be used to show link and key status. Both LEDs will be lit solid when in access point mode. LEDs will alternate when attempting to connect to WiFi.

Once connected, the green Link LED will show the status of the WiFi link to other devices. It will blink slowly when unable to connect to the CW Hotline WiFi server. It will blink quickly when connected to the server, but when no other devices are connected with the same link key. It will be lit solid when connected and paired with at least one other device.

The red Key LED will show when it is sending or receiving Morse code. If the red led is dimly lit on powerup, that indicates a short on the dit or dah connection.

Use with VBand

CW Hotline can be used as an input device with Ham Radio Solutions' VBand internet CW tool. This method of keying eliminates the local latency sometimes experienced on VBand. To enable, connect CW Hotline to the computer with a USB cable, and install a serial driver if needed. In the VBand Settings tab, click the **Connect to CW Hotline** button and select the correct serial port. CW Hotline should respond with "VB" in Morse Code. Anything sent with CW Hotline will now be entered into the current VBand channel. One benefit of operating VBand this way is that VBand doesn't need to have focus to receive the input. When CW Hotline is put into VBand mode, it will no longer send code to other devices on the same link key.

To return CW Hotline to normal operation, click the **Disconnect from CW Hotline** button in VBand settings, or just cycle CW Hotline power. Note that after disconnecting with the button, CW Hotline can still be used as a VBand input device, but the code will also be sent to the other connected CW Hotline devices.

CW Hotline can also connect directly over WiFi to any VBand channel. To do so, enter the VBand channel name as the link key in the CW Hotline settings. Case is important. Once connected, all code from the CW Hotline will be sent to the VBand channel, and code from other VBand users will be sent to the CW Hotline.

Using your CW Hotline

Though you can specify any link key you wish, we would suggest that you use "hotline" so you may meet up with other users online. Feel free to also coordinate testing/QSOs on our Discord channel #schedules.

Two CW Hotline devices can be used to send CW with a remotely controlled CW radio. Choose a unique Link Key and enter into both units. Connect the Key Out line of one to the key in of the radio. The other device can be used anywhere WiFi is available. You will need additional software to monitor and control the radio remotely.

A cell phone hotspot can be entered into one of the SSID settings to allow for operation when other WiFi is not available.