

Infrastructure Agreements and Permissions

Getting your repeater or backbone node onto high-elevation infrastructure dramatically improves coverage - but it requires agreements with property owners.

Types of Infrastructure Sites

The best sites for backbone nodes (roughly in order of typical access difficulty):

1. **Your own property** - No permission needed. Start here: your house, a friend's house with a tall tree or roof peak.
2. **Amateur radio repeater sites** - Existing ham radio clubs often have hilltop sites with tower space, power, and sometimes internet. Approach club leadership and offer to coordinate frequencies.
3. **Commercial buildings** - Restaurants, shops with flat roofs. Pitch: "We're a community communications nonprofit. We'd like to install a small weatherproof box the size of a paperback book on your rooftop. No wiring to your building, runs on its own battery/solar."
4. **Municipal property** - Parks department, public works, and fire departments sometimes allow installations for emergency preparedness benefit. Requires formal request and sometimes a simple MOU.
5. **Water towers** - Managed by municipal water utilities. Most require insurance documentation and a formal site agreement.
6. **Cell towers** - Possible but expensive. Tower lease rates start at \$500-2000/month.

What to Include in a Site Agreement

Even for informal arrangements, a simple one-page written agreement protects both parties:

- Description of the hardware (size, weight, power source)
- Exact mounting location
- Duration (1 year renewable, or at-will with 30-day notice)
- Your responsibility for maintenance and removal
- Liability limitation (you carry renter's/general liability insurance)
- Contact information for both parties

Insurance Considerations

Most institutional partners will ask whether you carry liability insurance. Options:

- **ARRL membership** - Provides \$1M liability insurance for ham radio operations. Relevant if your network has ham involvement.
- **Nonprofit umbrella policy** - If you've formed a 501(c)(3), a nonprofit general liability policy is typically \$400-800/year for small organizations.
- **Personal homeowner/renter's policy** - Sometimes covers volunteer activities; check with your insurer.

Maintaining Relationships with Site Hosts

- Annual "thank you" message or card
- Invite them to community events
- Update them when you add features or upgrade hardware
- Be responsive if they ever have concerns - a 24-hour response time builds trust
- Proactively reach out before any work at the site; never surprise a host

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