

# NTOA E-box usage guide for course setters

## **Overview of E-punch usage at an NTOA orienteering event**

When planning to use the Sport-ident e-punch system for an NTOA orienteering meet, there are several topic areas that need to be addressed. They are:

- (1) Requirements for the use of the E-Punch boxes
- (2) Requirements for the use of the E-Event software
- (3) Extra activities required for multi-day events

The course setter is primarily involved with the **first** topic, and nominally with the **second** topic.

## **Requirements for the use of the E-Punch boxes**

**Question:** How many e-Punch boxes are available for use?

**Answer:**

Normally ~75

**Explanation:**

- NTOA has a limited number of Sport-Ident e-punch boxes.
- 9 are needed for administrative operations
  - 1 clear,
  - 1 check,
  - 2 start, (1 for orange/brown, 1 for green/red)
  - 1 finish
  - 1 clear backup,
  - 1 check backup,
  - 1 start backup (pre-programmed, activated and available at the start line for instant use)
  - 1 finish backup (pre-programmed, activated and available at the finish line for instant use)
- It is preferable to reserve 1 box as a spare. It can be available to be programmed and used as a replacement for any box that fails.
  - Once a box was placed incorrectly so a spare was used (The original was found after the event)
  - Once a box disappeared from its mounting shoe and had to be replaced by a spare (It was never found)
  - Several times a box failed to power up so the spare was used (The battery failed)
- After reserving boxes for the above uses from our box inventory, the remaining boxes are available for use with controls.

**Note 1:**

**When planning total number of controls that will have an e-punch box, check with the e-punch coordinator for the current count of boxes.** The count varies occasionally due to failed batteries, and other problems.

**Note 2:**

You may have received the current count of available boxes in the email to which this document was attached.

**Question:** *How do I choose Control codes for controls with e-punch boxes?*

**Answer:**

**Range is 100-255**

**Explanation:**

- The control bag and the e-punch are labeled with the same control code
- Use controls numbered between 100 and 255
  - 100 is the smallest 3 digit number (3 digit numbers are recommended by USOF and IOF)
  - 255 is the largest number that can be programmed into the e-punch box
- Multi-day events are not required to use the same control codes as the first day, but this is preferred for simplicity and speed of reprogramming the boxes between days

**Note:**

When planning which control codes to use for the e-punch courses, check with the control bag person (as listed on the NTOA website) to get the list of control codes which are currently available in the range 100-255.

NTOA had control labels for every number between 100-255 but NOT all of these are currently pinned to control bags and occasionally some of the control labels get torn or lost.

**Question:** *What do I need to know about using a Sport-Ident e-punch boxes to understand NTOA procedures for of the e-punch boxes?*

**Answer:**

**Understand the e-box modes of: OFF, STANDBY, and ACTIVE.**

**Explanation:**

- When the box is turned **OFF** it cannot be used (and there is no drain on the batteries)

- When a box is programmed with the meet details, the box will go into **STANDBY** mode (there is small drain on the batteries).
- When a box in standby reaches the power up time, the box goes into **ACTIVE** mode (there is a higher drain on the batteries).
- When a box in active mode reaches the power off time the box will turn **OFF**.

**Question:** *What are the NTOA practices for programming the times in the e-boxes?*

**Answer:**

**The greatest risk of e-box failure is battery pack failure. NTOA procedures are designed to allow the batteries to last an entire season and to minimize the chance of a box failure due to battery failure.**

**Explanation:**

- The e-punch boxes are programmed to power up to active mode 15 minutes prior to the first competition runner.
- The boxes will be in standby mode when they are delivered and still in standby mode when placed in the field.
- **Early runners that are checking the course will be able to use the box even while in standby mode.** There may be a 1-8 second delay when e-punching while the box is in standby mode.
- The e-punch boxes are programmed to power off after the maximum time limit has expired for the last available start time. ( i.e. for a 3 hour time limit event with a last start time of NOON the box would be set to power off at 3:00 PM)

**Question:** *What must I tell the E-punch box setup person for programming the boxes?*

**Answer:**

**Meet details are provided to the setup person at least 2 days prior to the event. (Please provide this information earlier, if possible, to allow the setup person time to get clarification when needed). Provide the information shown in the explanation below.**

**Explanation**

- Date of the event
- Start Time of the first competition runner. (NOT the early runners)
- Last start time allowed for a competition runner.
- The time limit for a runner on the course.
- A list of control codes used on ALL courses using e-punching.

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| <p><b>Note:</b> For multi-day event, provide the above information for all each day of the event.</p> |
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**Question:** *When can I get the e-boxes from the programmer?*

**Answer:**

**Approximately 1 day before the event.**

**Explanation**

- The e-punch boxes remain off between meets
- The e-punch boxes are programmed with the meet details at the latest possible time to minimize battery power usage,
- The e-punch boxes are programmed early enough to allow the course setter the opportunity to deploy the boxes.
- Example: For a Saturday event, programming is done on Thursday evening, and the e-boxes are delivered on Friday morning.

**Note: The course setter should contact the e-punch programming person to arrange for e-box delivery.**

**Question:** *When do I return the e-boxes to the programmer?*

**Answer:**

**Immediately at the end of the event.**

**Explanation**

- The e-boxes should be collected immediately as part of the control bag pickup.
- The e-punching coordinator will inventory the boxes as part of the return.

**Note:**

**Make sure the people picking up the control bags are very careful to collect and store the e-boxes in a closed backpack.**

Several e-boxes have been dropped and lost during control bag pick-up. E-box replacement cost is over \$100 per box.

**Requirements for the use of the E-event software**

**Question:** *What must I tell the e-event software setup person for setup of the event day software?*

**Answer:**

**Meet details are provided to the setup person at least 2 days prior to**

**the event. (Please provide this information earlier, if possible, to allow the setup person time to get clarification when needed). Provide the information shown in the explanation below.**

### **Explanation**

- Date of the event
- Start time of the first competition runner. (NOT the early runners)
- A file of course information exported from OCAD.

**Question:** *How do I export the courses data from OCAD?*

### **Answer:**

**See the detailed explanation that follows.**

### **Explanation**

In OCAD.

1. Click File -> Export courses.

In the "Export Courses" pop-up window.

1. select the course radio button (if not already selected).
2. click the "OK" button.

In the file dialogue pop-up window.

1. type in c:\courses.txt as the filename
2. click the "ok" button

Close OCAD.

E-mail the file c:\courses.txt to the e-box programmer.

## **Extra Activities for Multi-day events**

**Question:** *What extra activities are required for multi-day events?*

### **Answer:**

***If there are not enough boxes for all of the days, then the course setter must arrange for pickup of the boxes from the control used on one day's courses and for re-deployment of the boxes to the controls used on another day's courses.***

### **Explanation**

- The e-boxes must be programmed for each day's event.
- Re-use of the boxes will require several steps.
  3. Pick-up of the boxes used in the current day's from the control locations.

4. Reprogramming of the meet details for each box with the new day's data. (allow for 1 minute per box for re-programming)
5. Re-labeling the box with the new control number
6. Deploy the boxes to the new day's control locations