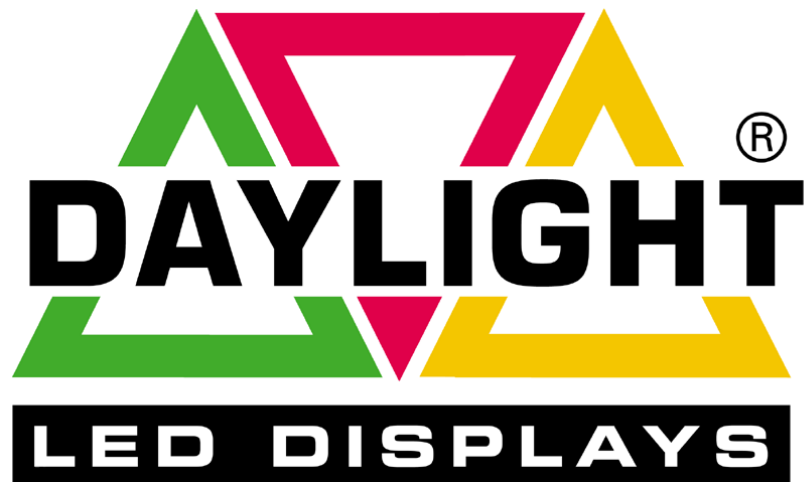


# AlphaNET™

version 3.0 (2021)



## User Manual

## Manual Map

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1

Connecting your PC to a sign



This chapter explains the basics of connecting your personal computer to a sign.

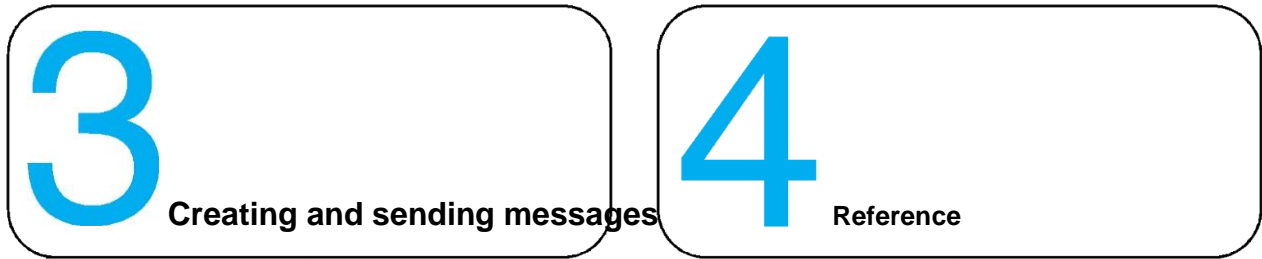
2

Installing AlphaNET™ 3.0  
and setting up sites



This chapter shows you how to install the AlphaNET™ 3.0 software on your personal computer.

Also, a step-by-step tutorial explains the basics of creating sites using *Site Manager*.



This chapter explains how to create and send messages with *Message Editor*, as well as how to include graphics and animation in your messages.

This chapter contains quick reference summaries of *Message Editor*, *Site Manager*, *Communications Manager*, and *Diagnostics* in the AlphaNET™ 3.0 software.

# What's new in AlphaNET™ version 3.0 software

---

## Password protection

Site Manager and Message Editor can now be password-protected. Select *Set Password* from the *Edit* drop-down menu:

Type a new password in the *New Password* line, then press *Tab*.  
Type the same password in the *Verify* box and click *OK*.

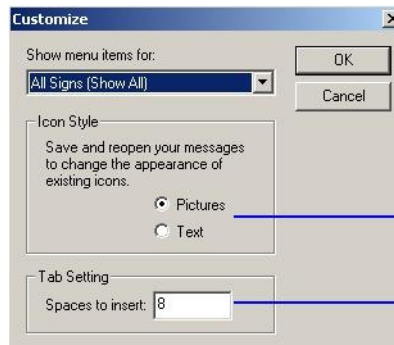


When changing the password, you must first type the password to be changed in the *Old Password* line.

## Menu customization

You can customize the options appearing in the drop-down menus in Message Editor by selecting *Edit>Customize*:

The type of sign selected determines the options  
→ available in your drop-down menus.



Select how you want the icons in your messages to appear, as pictures or as text.

Type the number of spaces to insert for a tab setting.

## Color selection

A new color selection box is available for the AlphaEclipse™ Purecolor™ 3600 series sign (full color, not monochrome). In Message Editor, see *Characters>Color>RGB*.

This color selection box also appears when you select *Characters>Shadow* in Message Editor to allow you to pick the shadow color of the characters.

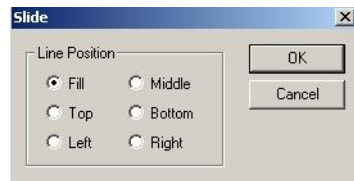


## New modes

Two new modes are available with this version of AlphaNET™, Clock mode and Explode mode. Clock mode is a wipe mode that updates information as if a second hand were sweeping around the sign. Explode mode is a roll mode that moves information from the center of the sign and outward in all four directions at once. Both modes are available in Message Editor under the *Modes* drop-down menu.

## New line positions

Two new line positions are available in *Message Editor*, Left and Right, which left- or right-justify your message.

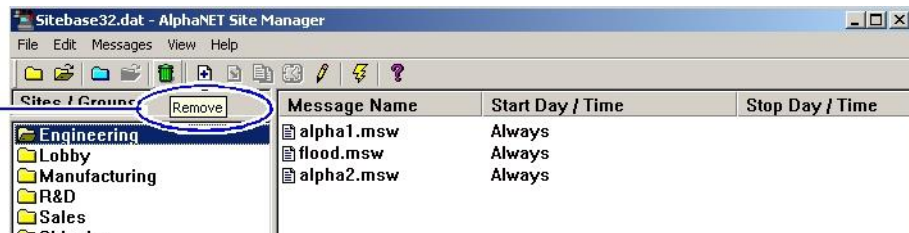


These line positions are only available with the AlphaEclipse™ PureColor™ 3600 series sign.

## Tooltips

Tooltips are now available in all components of AlphaNET 3.0.

A Tooltip appears when you place the mouse over an icon in any component of AlphaNET.



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# 3

## Creating and sending messages

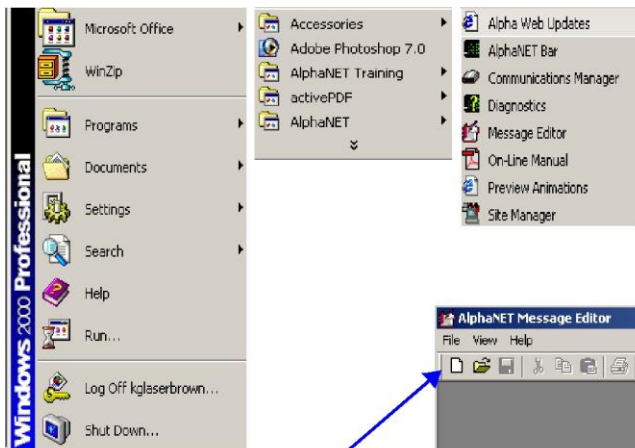
## Basic message editing

Because AlphaNET™ 3.0 software allows you an infinite number of ways to create a message for a sign, it is not possible to show every one. In the following pages, however, examples of basic and advanced message editing are presented.

First, the basics.

### Using Message Editor to create your message

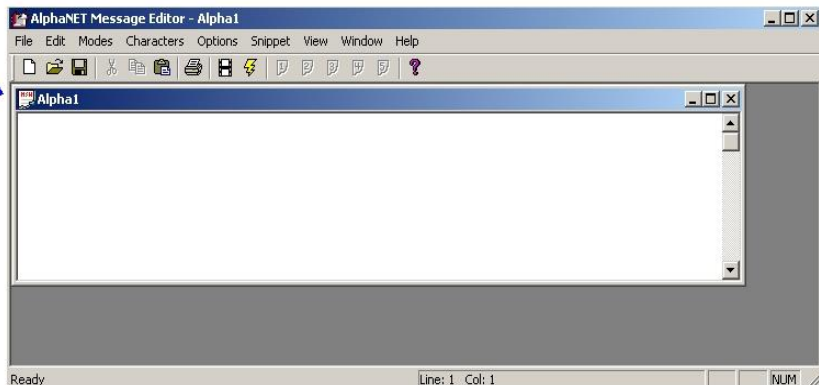
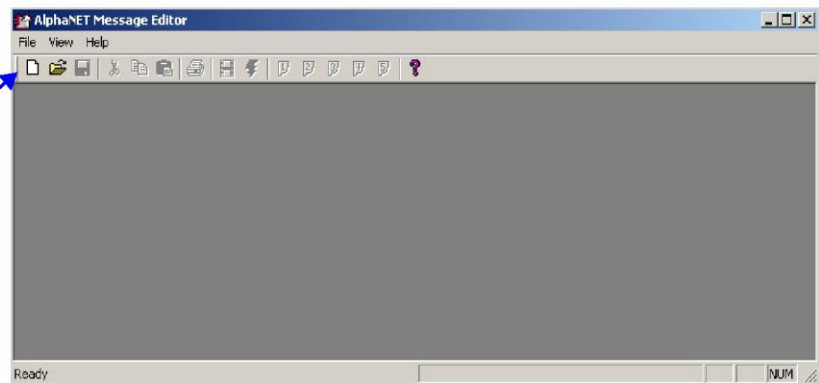
1. After installing the AlphaNET™ 3.0 software on your PC, open *Message Editor*. Then open a window for a new message:



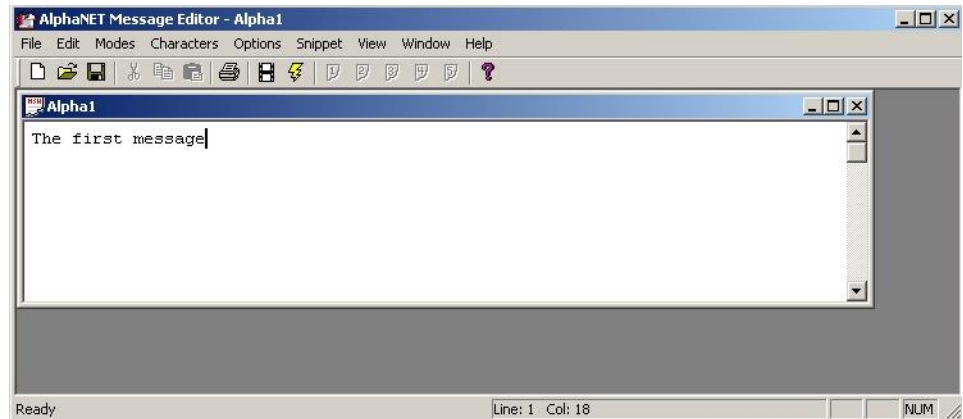
Select *Start>Programs>AlphaNET >Message Editor* or click the *Message Editor* button on the AlphaNET™ bar.



Then click  to create a new message window.

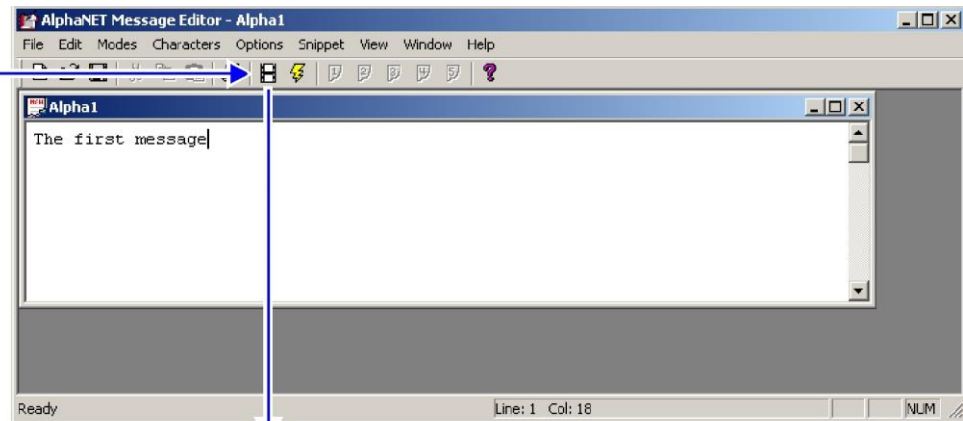


## 2. Type *The first message* in the window:



## 3. Use *File>Simulate* to view what the message will look like on a sign, or click the *Simulate* button on the toolbar:

Click here to view what your message will look like on a sign.



### HINT

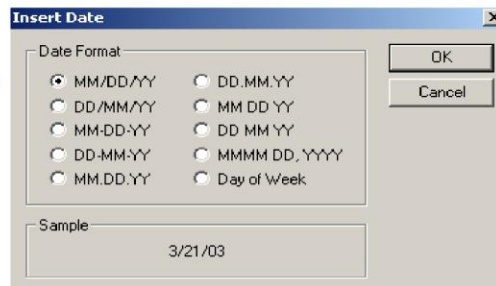
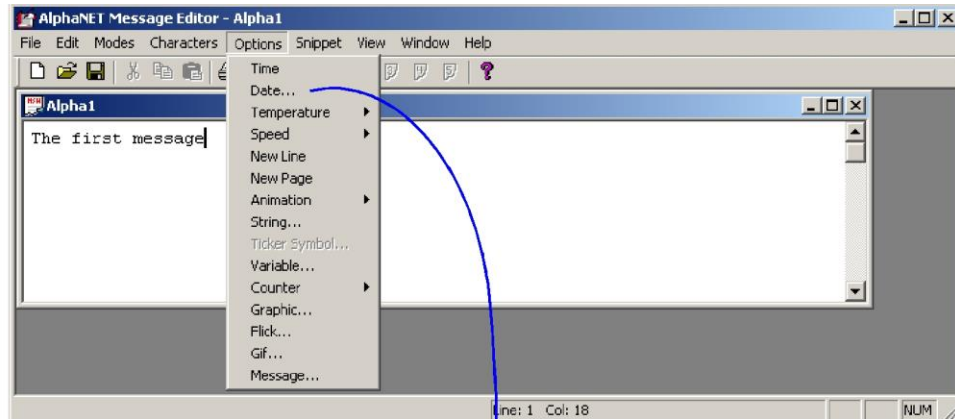
Right-click on the simulator and click *Change Display* to choose a different sign to emulate.

The type of display you select appears on the title bar.



**Note:**The type of sign on which your message is being simulated appears on the title bar of the window (in this case, an Alpha® 7120C). To change it, right-click anywhere on the simulated message and select *Change Display*.

4. Add the current date to your message. First, close the window in which your message is being simulated. Then select *Options>Date* in *Message Editor*:



In the *Insert Date* window, select *OK* and a date icon will appear at the end of the message.



5. Then view your message again using the *Simulate* button:



## Using modes to change the look of a message

Modes are special effects that change the way a message appears on a sign. For example, the *Rotate* mode moves a message from right to left across a sign. In this example, you will create a message that displays employee birthdays.


**NOTE:** Some modes are not available on some signs. For a list of what modes are available, see “Appendix B — Modes available on signs” on page 137.

**Example 1: How to display employee birthdays.**

In this example, the *Hold* and *Rotate* modes are used to display employee birthdays. This setup has a variety of uses, such as announcements and anniversaries.

In the *Hold* mode, the top line remains fixed while the names go by.

In the *Rotate* mode, the names move from right to left on the bottom line.




See “Appendix E — Understanding message line positions (Top, Middle, Bottom, Fill)” on page 141.


**6.** To create Example 1, close the previous message but don’t save it. Next, open a new message. Then select *Modes>Hold*:

**HINT**

Place the cursor over an icon and click the right mouse button to see a short description of the icon at the bottom of the *Message Editor* window. For example:

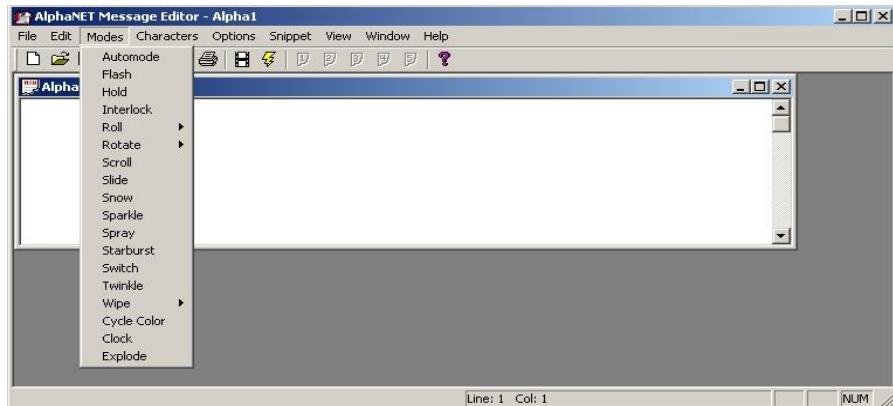


Click the right mouse button



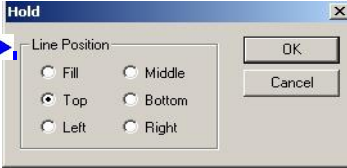
Top Hold

You can also switch between using pictures and using text descriptions for the icons by selecting *Edit >Customize* and changing the icon style



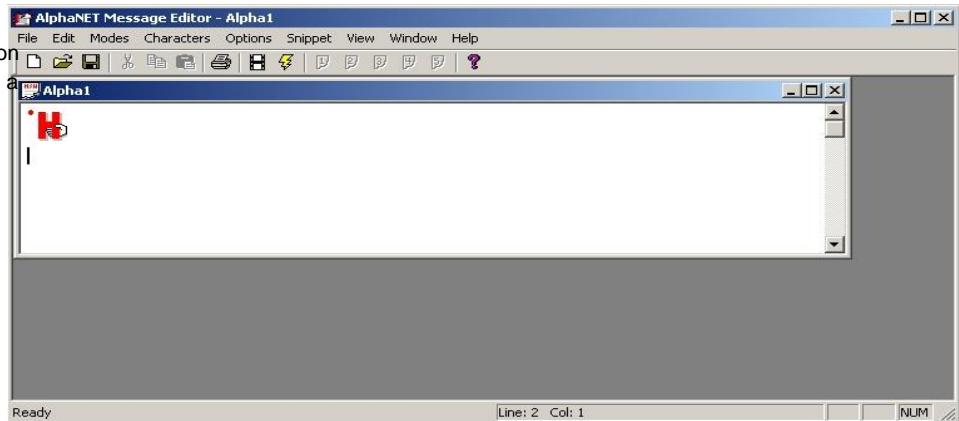
**7.** When the following window appears, select *Top* and then *OK*:

*Line Position* is where a message appears on a sign. See “Appendix E — Understanding message line positions (Top, Middle, Bottom, Fill)” on page 141 for more details.



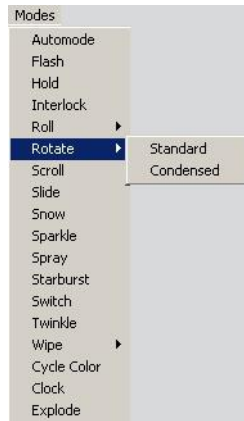
### 8. The icon for *Hold* will appear in the message window:

This little marker indicates that the text following this icon will appear on the top line of a display. →

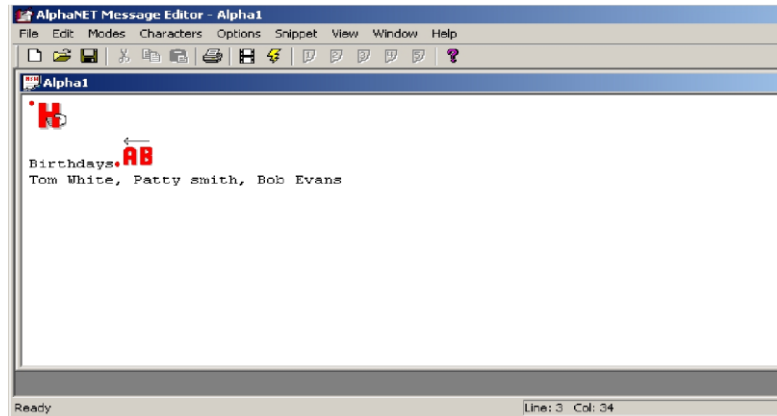
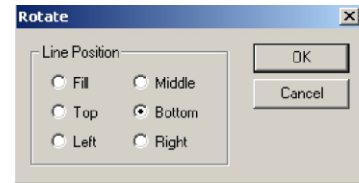


### 9. Type *Birthdays*. Then select *Modes>Rotate>Standard>Bottom*. Click *OK* and then type: *Tom White, Patty Smith, Bob Evan*.

Select *Rotate>Standard*



...and the *Bottom* line position.




10. Next, click  to view your message:

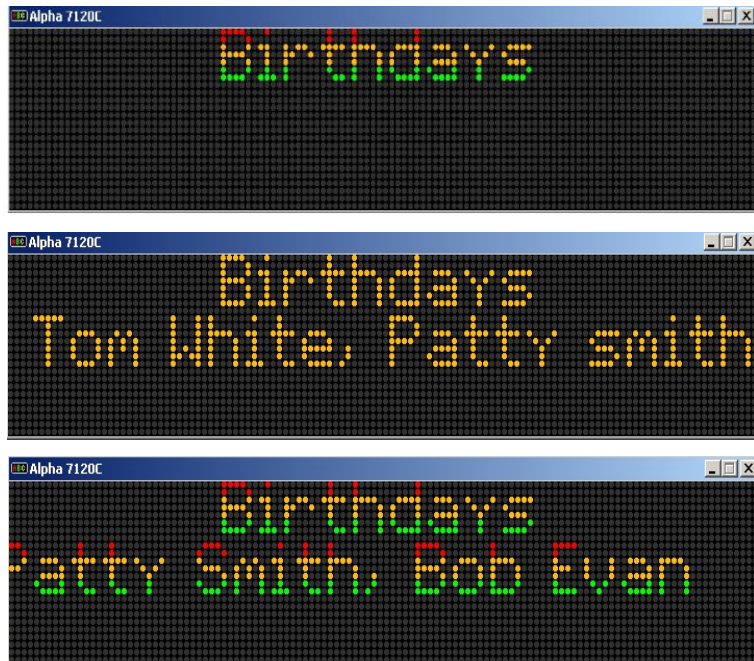
**HINT**

View (simulate) your message to see exactly how it will appear on a sign.

You can see how fonts, colors, and graphics will appear on a sign and also how much text will appear on a line. (If text appears in white, this means it is too long to fit on the display. If possible, break the text into smaller segments.)

For example, these pictures show how the message you just created would appear on a one-line Alpha® 215C sign.

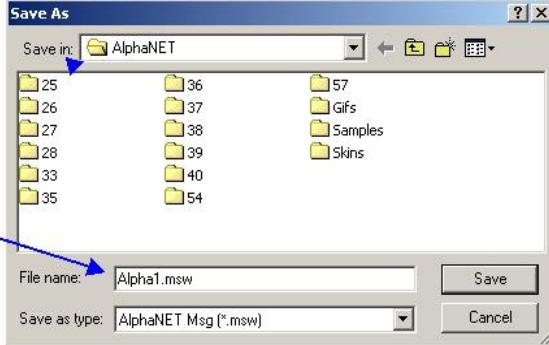




11. Save this message by selecting *File>Save* and then clicking *OK*:

Make sure the file is saved to this folder.

Name the Example 1 message *Alpha1.msw*.



## Using characters to change the look of a message

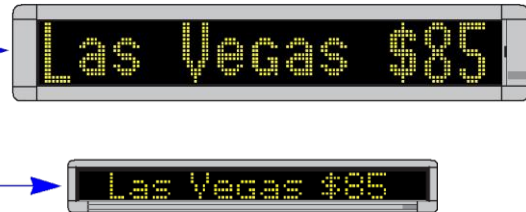
Characters are options that change the appearance of text in a message. For example, normal-sized text (called *Seven Row Normal*) is seven rows of LEDs high, but some signs allow you to create text 15 or 16 rows high with the *15/16 Row Normal* option. In this example, we will create a message that displays airline fares.

**NOTE:** Some characters are not available on some signs. For a list of what is available, see “Appendix C — Character fonts and colors available on signs” on page 139.

### Example 2: How to display airline fares.

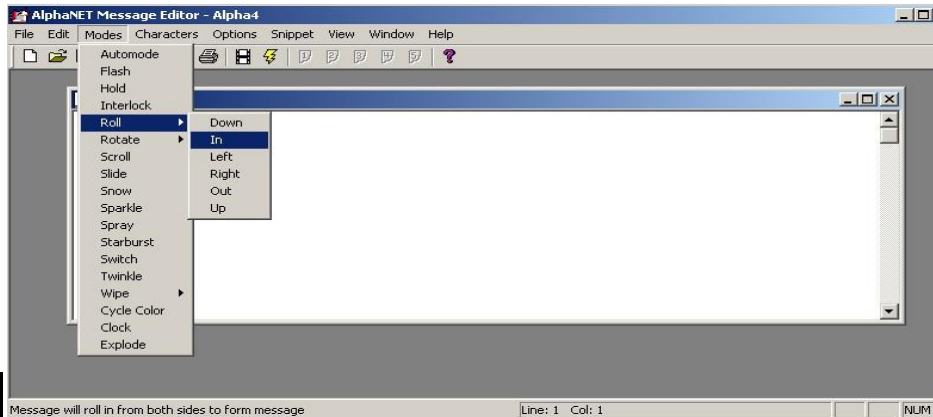
In this example, the *Roll* mode, *15/16 Row Normal* text, and the *New Line* option are used to display airline prices for several cities. Just like Example 1, this setup has a variety of uses, such as announcements and anniversaries.

A single message will be used to create large text on two-line signs and normal text on one-line signs.



**12.** Select *File>New* to open a new message.

**13.** Then select *Modes>Roll>In*:



### OOPS!

By selecting *Top*, we have made an error that will show up later.

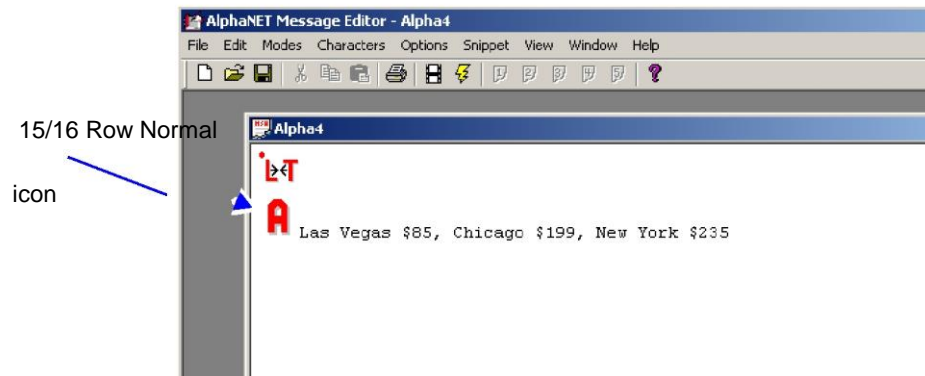
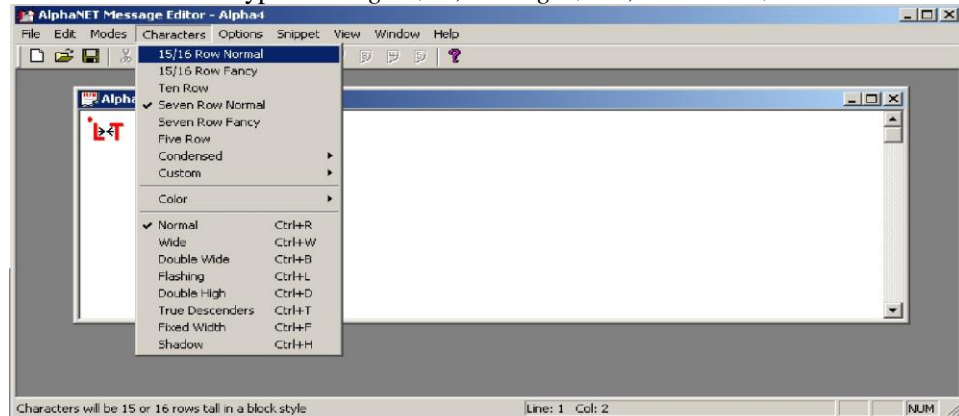
The purpose of this is to demonstrate a common mistake and how to correct it.

**14.** When the following window appears, select *Top* and then *OK*:



**15. B** Because we want large text, select *Characters>15/16 Row Normal*.

Then type *Las Vegas \$85, Chicago \$199, New York \$235*:



**16. L**et's see how the message looks so far. First, let's try a one-line sign. Simulate your message and change the sign to a 215C. (If you do not remember how to do this, see step 3.) The message should look like this:

Since a one-line sign like the 215C cannot display the *15/16 Row Normal* characters, the sign displays *Seven Row Normal* instead. But this is what we wanted.



**17. C**hange the sign to a 4120C, a two-line sign. (If you do not remember how to do this, see step 3.) This is how it should look:



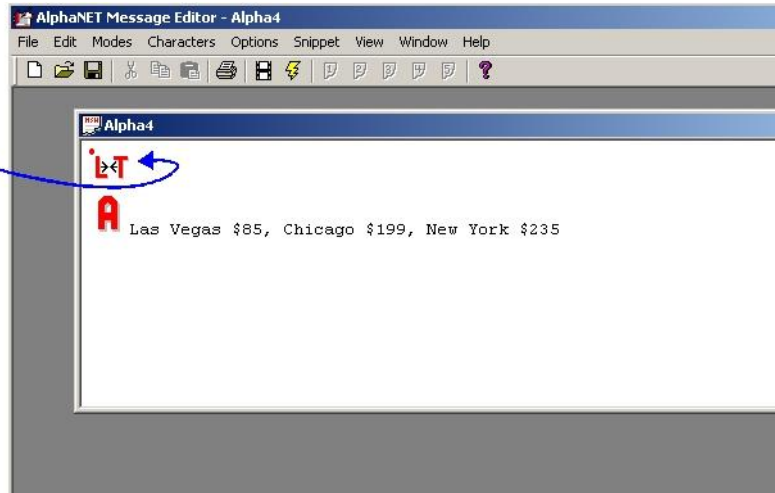
Why doesn't the large text appear on the two-line 4120C sign like we wanted? Because in a previous step we selected the *Top* instead of the *Middle* or *Fill* line position:

To make the large *15/16 Row Normal* text appear correctly, the line position must be changed to *Middle*.



- 18.** To make the large *15/16 Row* characters appear correctly on a two-line sign, start by deleting the *Roll>In* icon from the message:

To delete the *Roll In* icon, place the cursor to the *right* of the icon and press the *BackSpace* key on your keyboard.



- 19.** Next, without moving the cursor in the message, select *Modes>Roll>In* as you did before. When the following window appears, select the *Middle* line position:

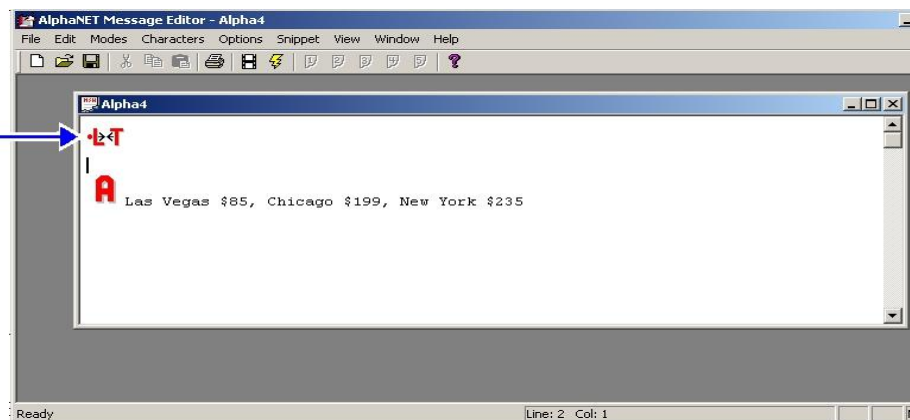


- 20.** Simulate the message using a two-line sign like the 4120C. (If you do not remember how to do this, see step 3.) The *15/16 Row Normal* text should now appear correctly:



Your message text should look like this:

Notice that this marker on the *Roll>In* icon has changed to the middle, indicating the new line position.



**21.** Save your message and name it *Alpha2.msw*. However, keep using the message for the following steps.

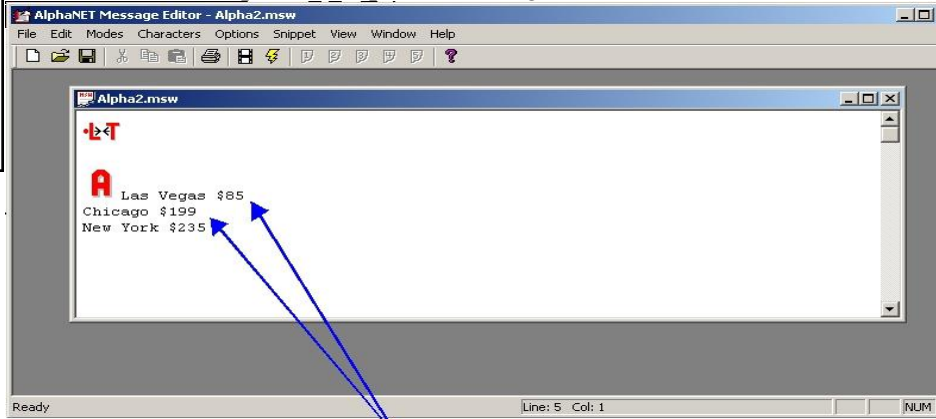
**22.** Now we will try displaying a city name and dollar amount on a sign at the same time.

**O O P S !**

Using a carriage return might seem like the logical way to format lines of text in a message, but it does not work.

We will correct this later with the *New Line* option.

Try deleting the comma and space between each city and amount pair. Then place a carriage return after each, like this:



A carriage return has been placed after each line of text.

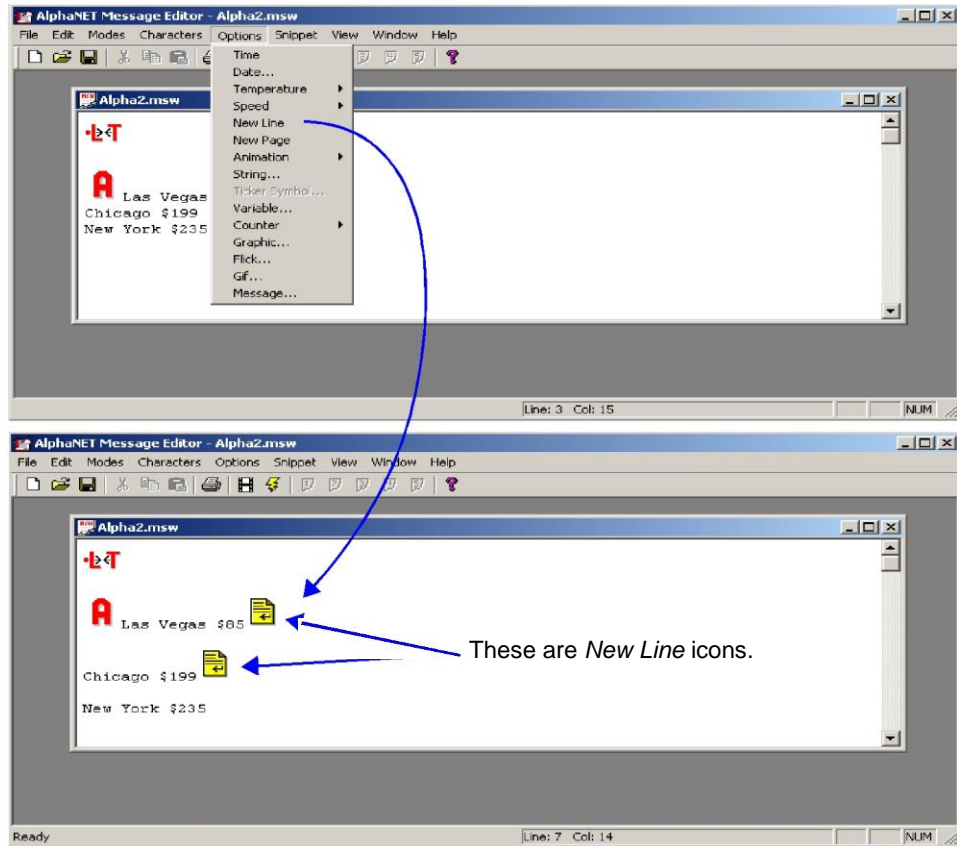
**23.** Next, simulate the message to see how carriage returns affect the message format. This is what you should see:

Carriage returns do not break text into separate lines.

The *New Line* option must be used instead.



**24.** To format the text so that *Las Vegas \$85* and *Chicago \$199* and *New York \$235* all appear on separate lines, add the *New Line* option after each city and amount pair. To do this, use the *Options* menu:



**25.** Simulate the message to see how *New Lines* affect the message format. This is what you should see:

The *New Line* option formats the text correctly.



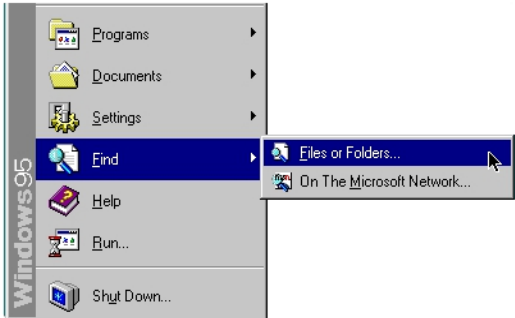
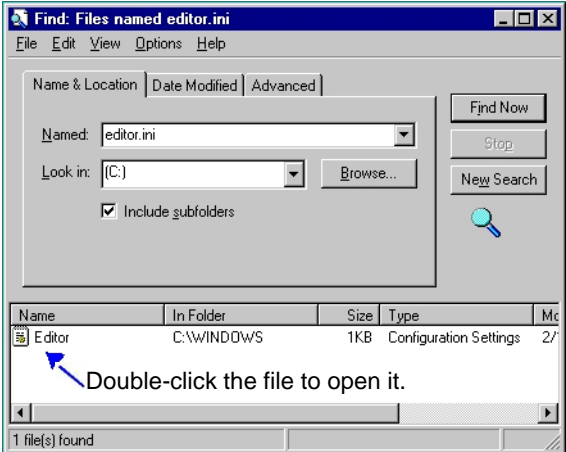
## Using international characters

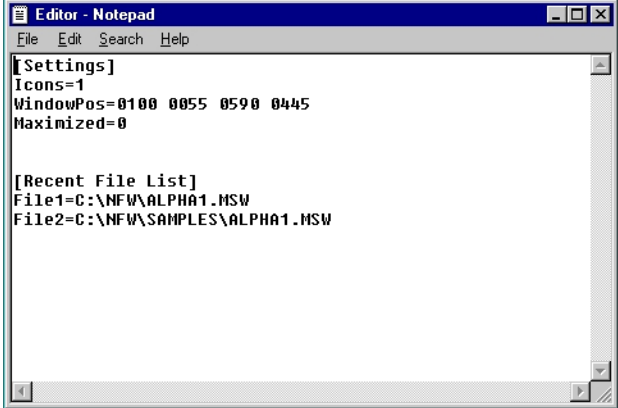
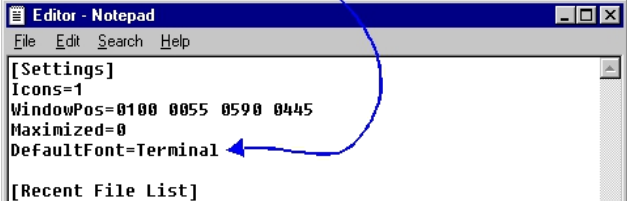
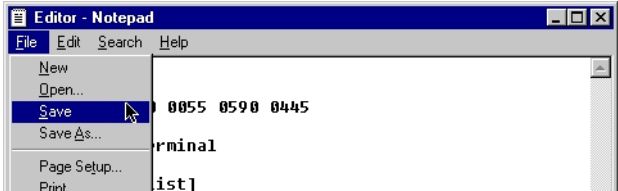
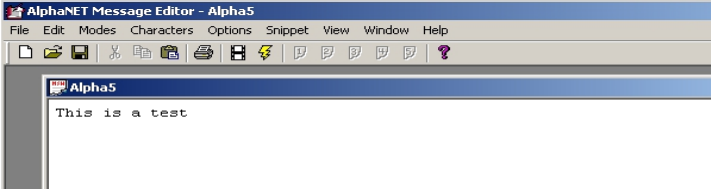
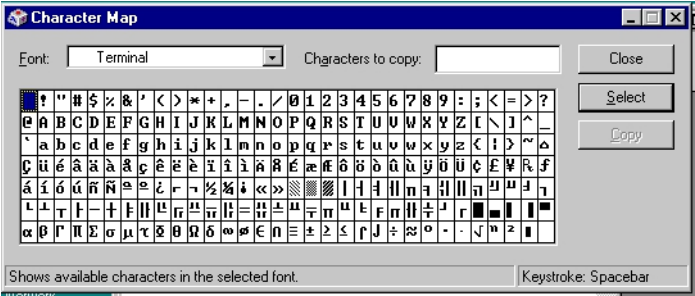
International characters—such as the *é* in *résumé*—are available in French, German, Italian, Spanish, and Croatian.

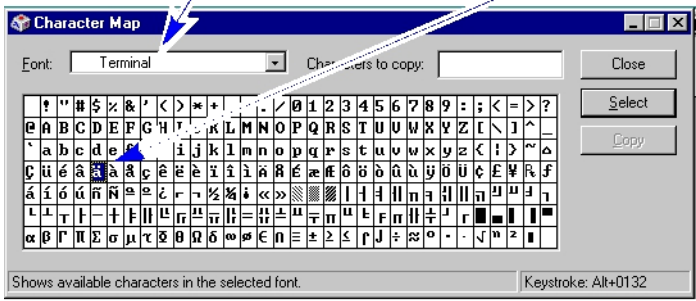
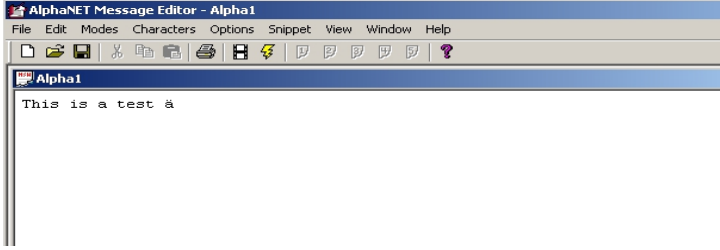

Additional characters are also available. Check the *Character Map* accessory to see if contains the character you want.

**NOTE:** These instructions are for a Windows® 95 operating system; menu selections and screens may be different in other versions of Windows®.

Follow this procedure to use international characters:

Step	Procedure
1	<p>From the Windows® <i>Start</i> menu, select <i>Find</i> and then <i>Files or Folders</i>:</p> 
2	<p>Use <i>Find</i> to locate the <i>editor.ini</i> file and then double-click it to open:</p>  <p>Double-click the file to open it.</p>

Step	Procedure
3	<p>The <i>editor.ini</i> file will look something like this:</p> 
4	<p>Type the following line exactly as shown: <b>DefaultFont=Terminal</b></p> 
5	<p>Then save the change and exit this window:</p> 
6	<p>Next, open <i>Message Editor</i>. Select <i>File&gt;New</i>. Type <i>This is a test</i>.</p> 
7	<p>From the Windows® <i>Start</i> menu, select <i>Programs&gt;Accessories&gt;Character Map</i> (or <i>Program&gt;Accessories&gt;System Tools&gt;Character Map</i>):</p> 

Step	Procedure
8	<p>Imagine you want to add the letter <i>ã</i> to your message:</p> <p>First, set <i>Font</i> to <i>Terminal</i>. Second, click the letter <i>ã</i>.</p>  <p>Third, note the keystroke. You must hold <i>Alt</i> and type _____ 0132 to create the international character <i>ã</i>.</p>
9	<p>Return to <i>Message Editor</i>. Add the <i>ã</i> character to the message by typing 0132 while holding down the <i>Alt</i> key on your keyboard:</p> 
10	<p>Finally, to make sure you have actually created the character you want, simulate the message:</p>  <p>NOTE: You cannot use characters created by holding down the <i>Ctrl</i> key and typing the combination. For example, you will not be able to use the Ç character because it is created by using <i>Ctrl</i> and 2.</p> <p>Also, you can only use <i>Alt</i> with numbers less than 0169 to create characters.</p> <p>For example, you can use <i>Alt</i> and 0168 to create the letter ç, but <i>Alt</i> and 0169, <i>Alt</i> and 0170, and so on, will not create the correct characters and should, therefore, not be used.</p>

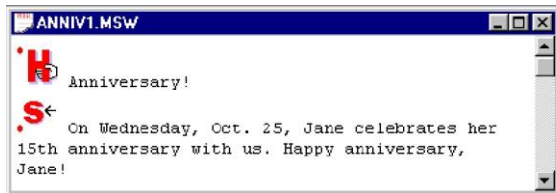
## How to send a message to a sign

### What happens when messages are sent to a sign?

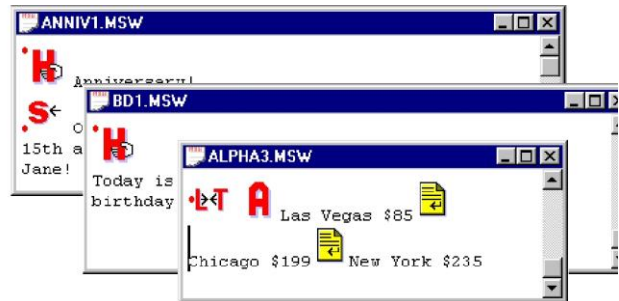
Messages are sent to signs using either *Message Editor* or *Site Manager*. One message at a time is sent from *Message Editor*, and it erases all other messages in the sign's memory. This one message, then, plays over and over.

More than one message at a time can be sent from *Site Manager*, and they erase all other messages in the sign's memory. These new messages are then displayed one after the other.


When a single message is sent with *Message Editor*:



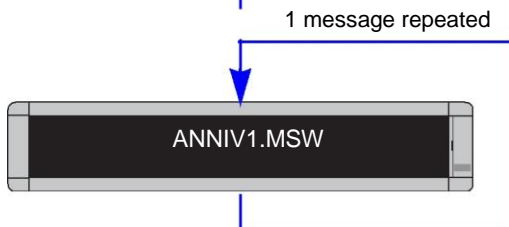
When more than one message is sent with *Site Manager*:



After creating a message in *Message Editor*,

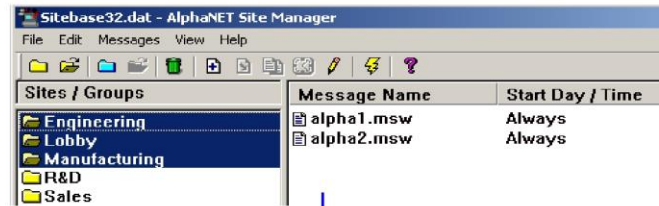
select  to send the message to one or more sites.


Each message packet sent includes the date and time from the sending PC. The clock inside the sign will be updated, even if the message doesn't include the date or time.

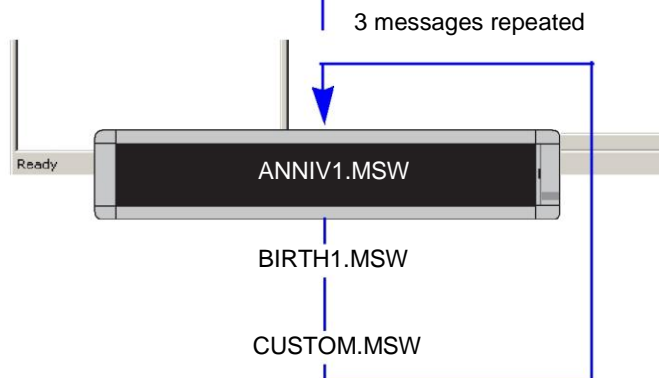


After creating messages in *Message Editor* and then saving them, open *Site Manager*. Select the sites to

which you want to add messages, then click .



Then select  to send the messages.



## Sending messages from Message Editor


### HINT

Generally, only send messages from *Message Editor* when:

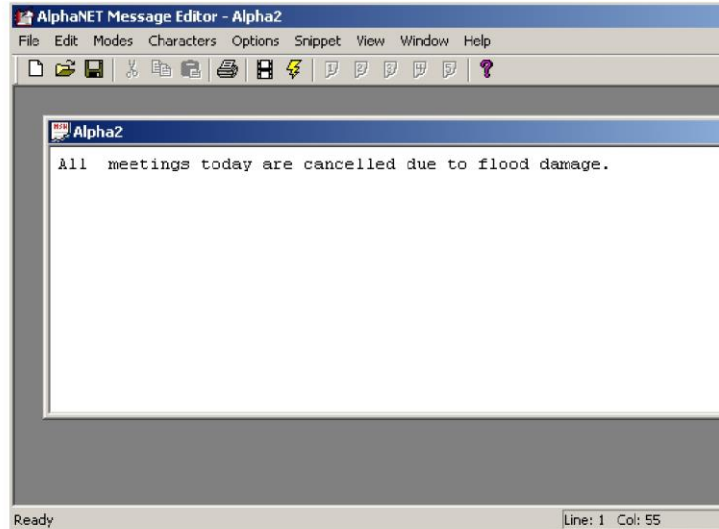
- testing to see how a message looks, or
- there is only one sign.

**1. B**efore sending a message, you must create at least one site using *Site Manager*. (See Step-by-step tutorial in setting up connection devices, sites, and groups in Chapter 2.)

**2. N**ext, create your message in *Message Editor*. When you are finished, send it to one or more sites:

Click  to transmit the message:

- *To All Sites* — every site you have created in *Site Manager* or
- *To Selected Sites* — only those *Site Manager* sites that have been specially selected as *Use as an Editor transmit site*. (See “R & D setup (1 of 4): Site Editor (Site Info) window” on page 30 in Chapter 2.)



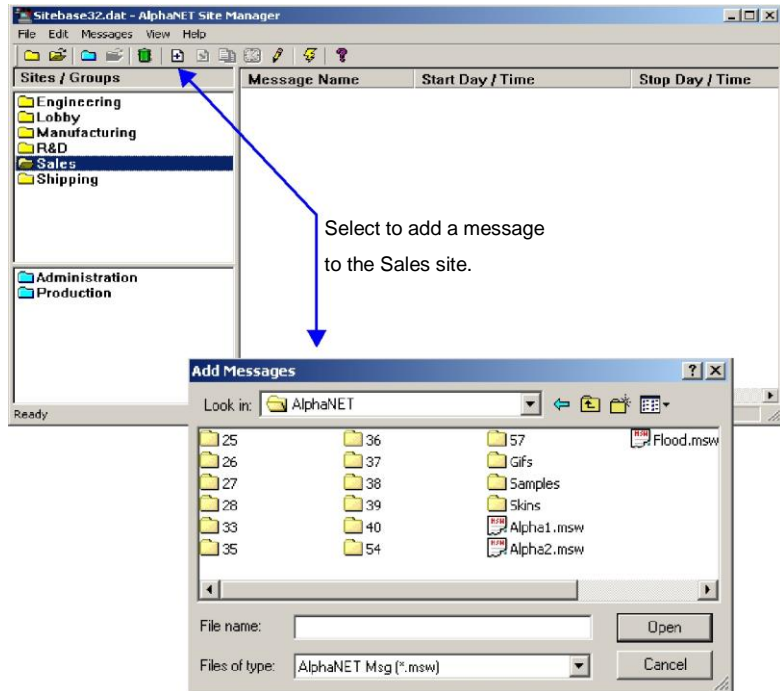
## Sending messages from Site Manager

### HINT

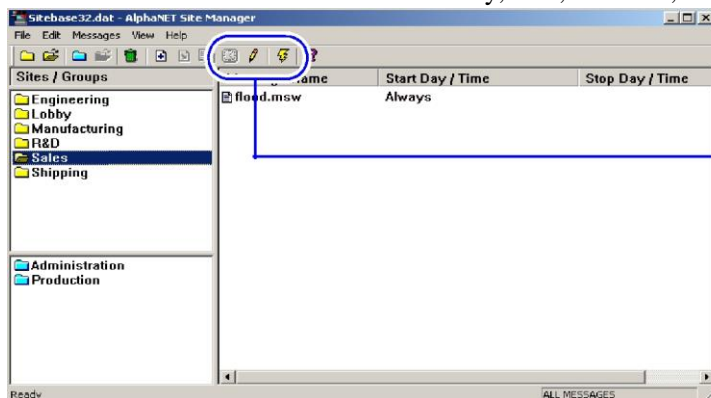
To select more than one site, first hold down the *Ctrl* key on your keyboard, then click the sites:


1. Before sending a message, you must create at least one site using *Site Manager*. (See Step-by-step tutorial in setting up connection devices, sites, and groups in Chapter 2.)


2. If you have not already done so, add your message to the site (or sites) to which you want the message sent:




3. Next, select the message. The message can be edited, scheduled by day, date, and time, or transmitted immediately:



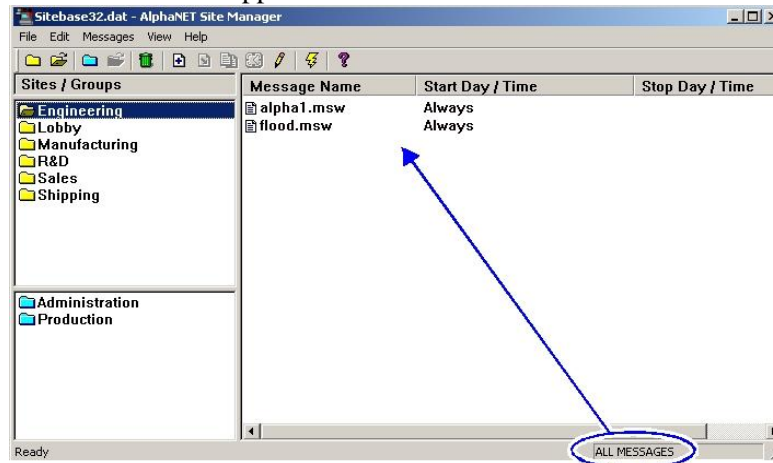
Select  to set the day, date, and time when the message will start and stop on the Sales signs, or

select  to edit the message in *Message Editor* before sending it, or

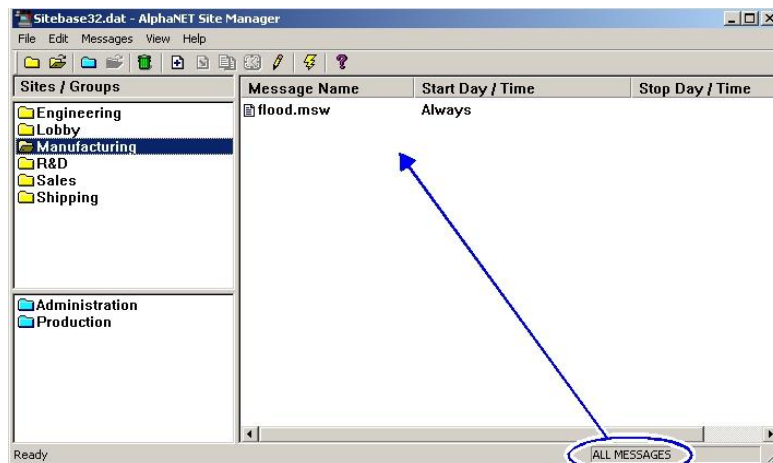
select  to transmit the message immediately to all the signs in the Sales site.

## The difference between all messages and common messages

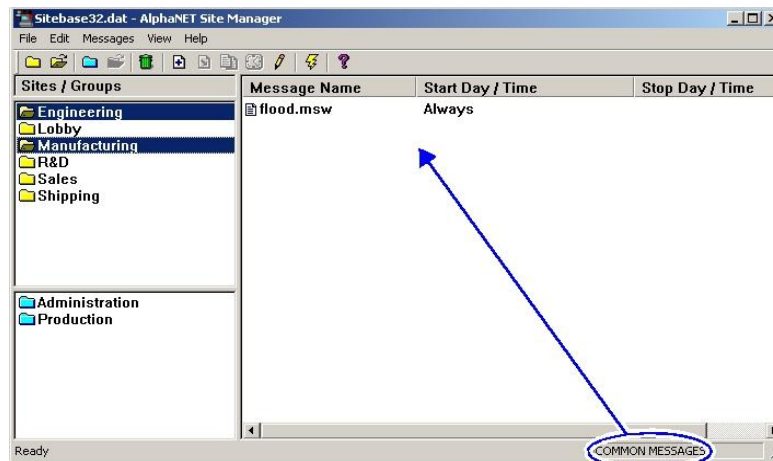
When you select a single site, all the messages attached (added) to the site will appear in the *Site Manager* window. However, when you select more than one site, only the messages that are common to both will appear.



When the Engineering site is selected, all the messages attached to the site appear.



Also, when the Manufacturing site is selected, all the messages attached to the site appear.



However, when both sites are selected, then only the messages that are common to both sites will appear.

## How to use graphics in messages

### HINT

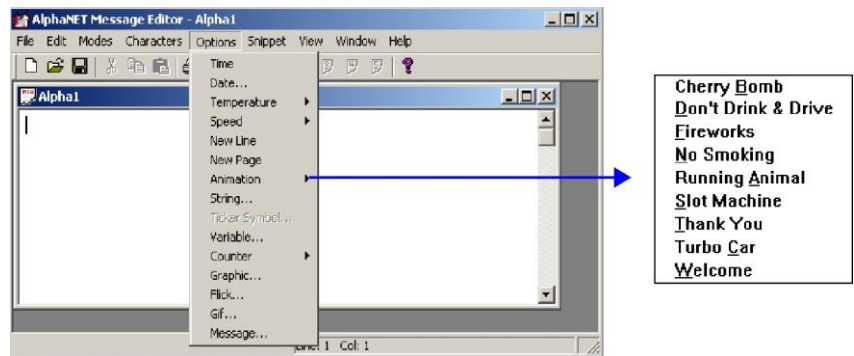
Example graphic files are included with AlphaNET™ 3.0 software.

Look in the Samples folder installed on your computer.

The *Animation*, *Graphic*, *Flick*, and *Gif* options allow you to include small pictures in messages. Use the *Graphic* option to display single bitmapped images, and the *Animation*, *Flick*, or *Gif* option to display multiple images—like a movie. Note that not all signs display animations.

For the *Graphic*, *Flick*, and *Gif* options, you can create the images yourself, use the animations provided (such as Running Animal, which shows a horse running across the sign), use the gif files provided, or pull an image from another source, such as the Internet.

*Animation*, *Graphic*, *Flick*, and *Gif* are in the *Options* menu:



## Creating a graphic

Before you actually start drawing, make sure you understand how a bitmapped image is displayed on a sign. See “Graphics must be bitmapped to a sign’s columns and rows” on page 149.

You will need a program to create and edit bitmapped images. Image editing software examples in this manual illustrate version 5.03 of Paint Shop Pro (the steps are similar for newer versions of Paint Shop Pro).

Any image editing program can be used (See “Paint Shop Pro — an image editor” on page 150.)

### Example 3: How to use a graphic in a message

In this example, arrow bitmap images are created to demonstrate the *Graphic* option.

The two arrow bitmaps we will make are 7 rows (or pixels) high. This means the arrows can be used on one-line as well as two-line signs.

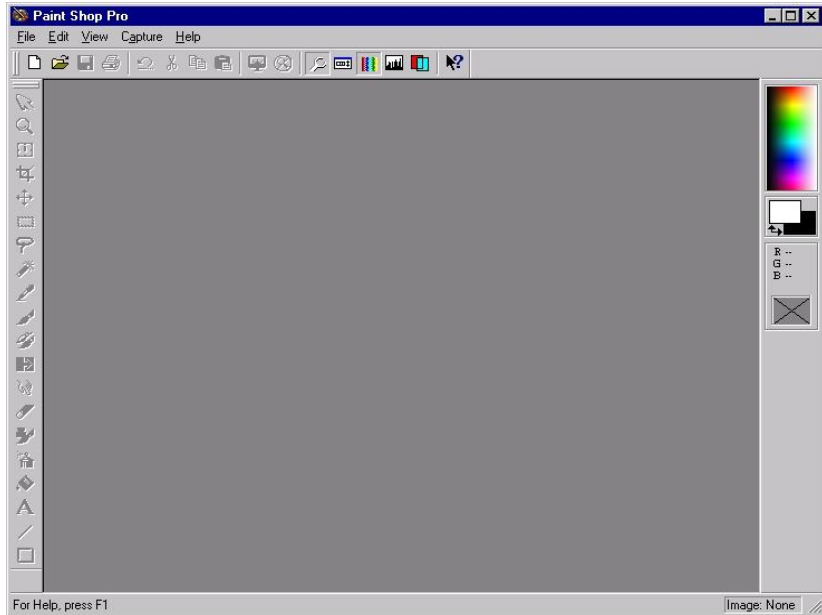


1. Select *Start>Programs>Paint Shop Pro* to open Paint Shop Pro:

**HINT**

Most image editing programs create images similar to Paint Shop Pro.

However, if you are not using Paint Shop Pro, consider using software that has a zoom feature so you can increase the size of the bitmap for ease of editing.

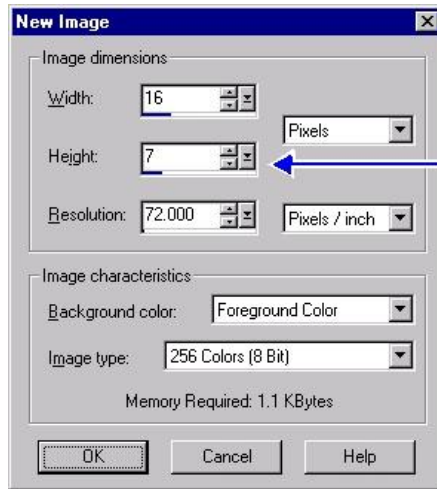


2. Next, select *File>New*. When the *New Image* window appears, make the width and height of the new bitmap 16 x 7:

NOTE: *Width* and *Height* define the size of the bitmap in pixels—16 pixels wide x 7 pixels tall. These numbers also correspond to a sign’s columns and rows—16 columns wide x 7 rows tall.

**HINT**

Because a maximum of 8 colors can be used on signs, select 16 colors instead of 256 in your image editing program.



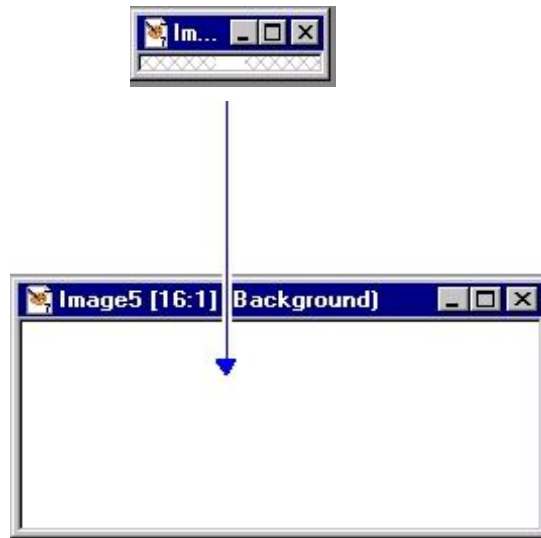
We are using 7 because this is the height of a single line of normal text on a sign.

3. A very small window will appear. Use the zoom tool to click in the window to increase its size to 16:1:

**HINT**

Use the zoom feature to increase the size of the small window until the window says 16:1.

At 16:1, editing the graphic is much easier.



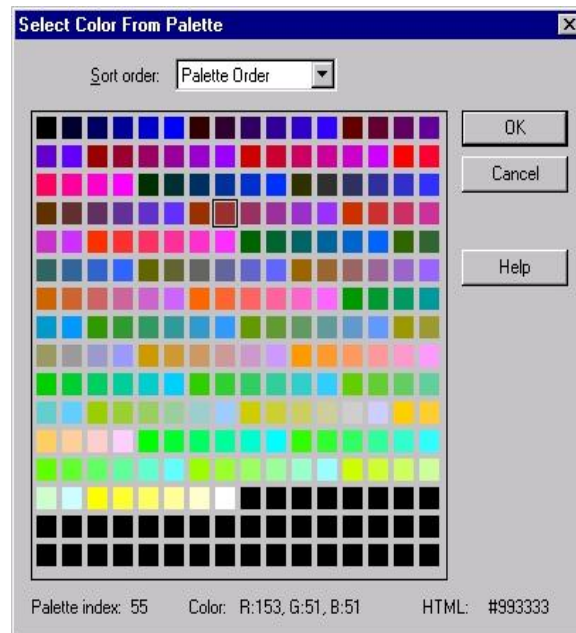
4. Select a color for your graphic from the blended palette on the right-hand side of your screen. You can also double-click the foreground or background rectangle underneath the blended palette to choose a color from a sectioned palette.

**HINT**

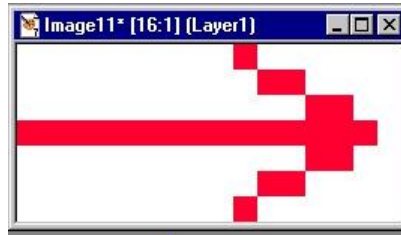
Depending on the model of the sign some colors do not effectively appear on the sign display.

For more information see "A graphic may be the wrong color for some signs" on page 149.

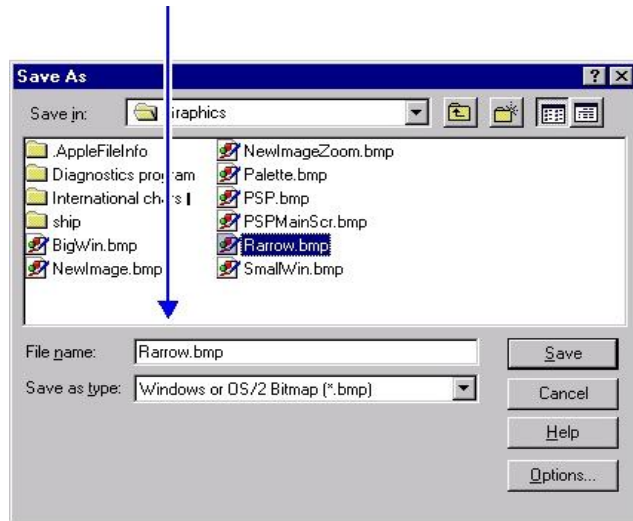
The sectioned palette →



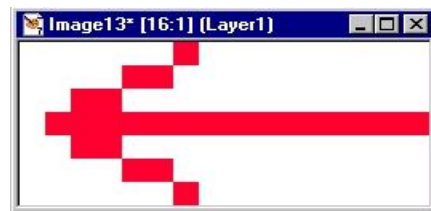
5. Then draw the right arrow and save it as a BMP bitmap named *rarrow.bmp*:



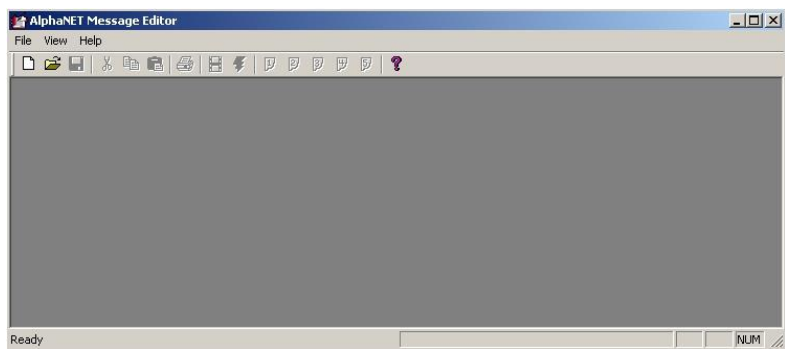
Name the graphic *rarrow.bmp*.



6. Create the other arrow (shown below) using steps 2 through 4 and save it as *larrow.bmp*:



7. Next, open *Message Editor*. Then select *File>New*:

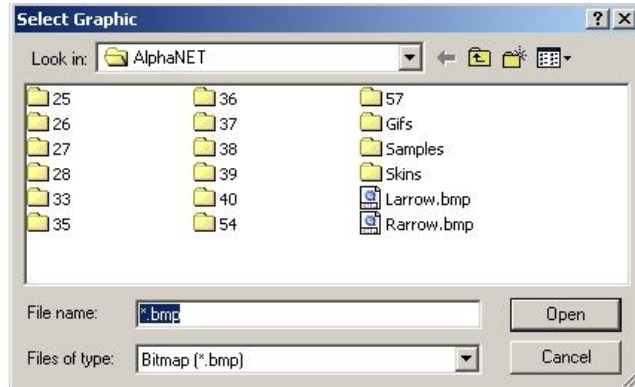


8. Select *Modes>Hold*, using the *Middle* line position. Then select *Options>Graphic*. When the *Select Graphic* window appears, choose the *rarrow.bmp* (right arrow) file you just created:

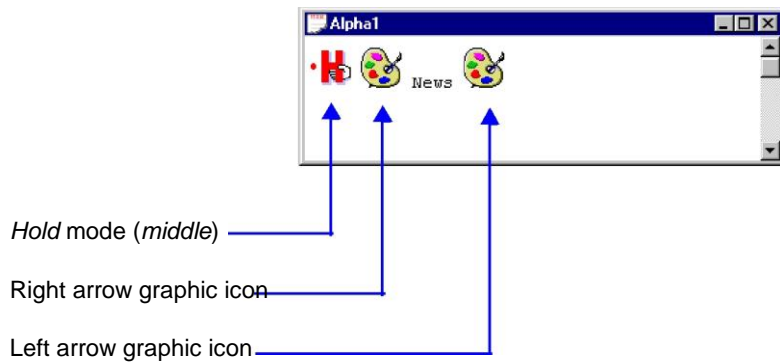
**NOTE**

For graphics, any mode can be used. For flicks, the *Hold* mode must be used.

For either graphics or flicks, the mode selected must use the *Middle* line position.



9. An icon representing the graphic will appear. Type *News* after it. Put a space before and after *News*. Finally, put the left arrow bitmap (*larrow.bmp*) after *News*. This is what you should now see:



10. Simulate your message to see what it looks like:

This is how the message looks on the two-line Alpha® 4120C sign. →



This is how the message looks on the one-line Alpha® 215C sign. →



**Note:** Graphics that are 24 rows high should be displayed and simulated on 3-line signs (or greater) and not on one- or two-line signs where the graphics will appear garbled.

## Creating a flick

**NOTE:** The *Flick* option only works with AlphaVision™ and Series 7000 signs. However, see “Another way to create a flick” on page 76 to create an animation on another type of sign.

A flick is a series of bitmap images that are shown one after the other, which gives the illusion of movement on a sign. The *Flick* option is used to put a movie in a message, and is made up of individual bitmapped images that you must create.

You will need a program to create and edit bitmapped images. Image editing software examples in this manual illustrate version 5.03 of Paint Shop Pro (the steps are similar for newer versions of Paint Shop Pro).

Any image editing program can be used (See “Paint Shop Pro — an image editor” on page 150.)

### Example 4: How to use a flick in a message

In this example, we will create a ship that sails across an Alpha® 7120C sign.



A flick is made up of many bitmap files that are played one after the other.

Each bitmap file in a flick must fill the total display area of the sign it is displayed on. This means that a flick is usually designed for one sign.

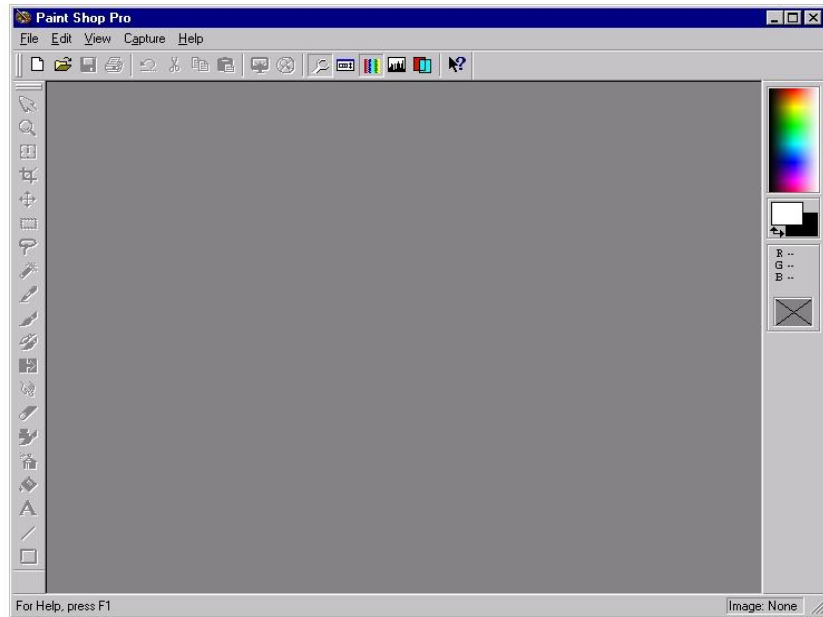
In this example, each bitmap is 120 x 24 pixels because we are playing the flick on a 7120C sign whose total display area is 120 columns x 24 rows.

1. Select *Start>Programs>Paint Shop Pro* to open Paint Shop Pro:

**HINT**

Most image editing programs create images similar to Paint Shop Pro.

However, if you are not using Paint Shop Pro, consider using software that has a zoom feature so you can increase the size of the bitmap for ease of editing.

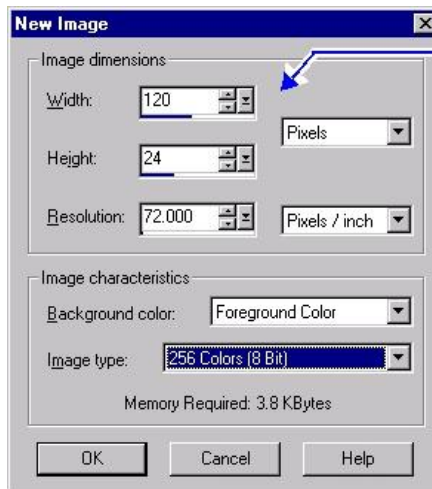


2. Next, select *File>New*. When the *New Image* window appears, make the width and height of the bitmap 120 x24 pixels.

Each graphic in the flick for the Alpha® 7120C sign must be this size.

NOTE: *Width* and *Height* define the size of the bitmap in pixels—120 pixels wide x 24 pixels high. These numbers correspond to the 7120C’s columns and rows—120 columns wide x 24 rows tall.

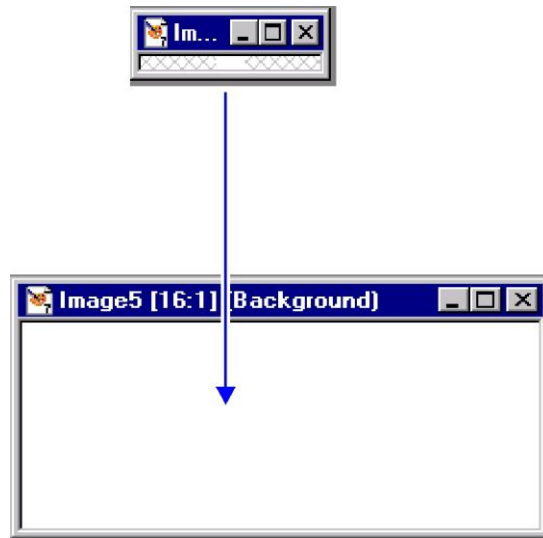
Because a maximum of 8 colors can be used on signs, select 16 colors instead of 256 in your image editing program.



We're using 120 x 24 for width and height because this is the total display area of an Alpha® 7120C sign.

3. A very small window will appear. Use the zoom tool to click in the window to increase its size:

Use the zoom feature to increase the size of the small window to make editing the graphic much easier.



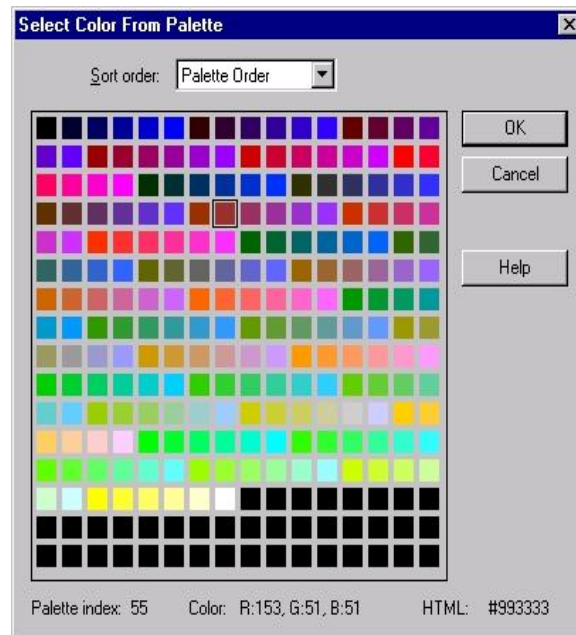
4. Select a color for your graphic from the blended palette on the right-hand side of your screen. You can also double-click the foreground or background rectangle underneath the blended palette to choose a color from a sectioned palette.

**HINT**

Depending on the model of the sign some colors do not effectively appear on the sign display.

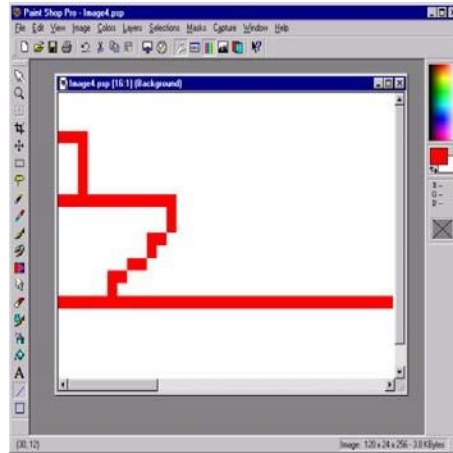
For more information see "A graphic may be the wrong color for some signs" on page 149.

The sectioned palette →



5. Then draw the first bitmap image:

The first bitmap in this flick will show a ship entering from the left side of the sign.



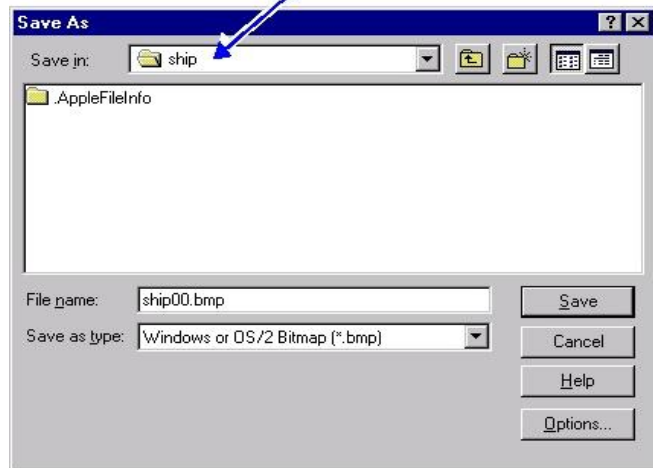
6. After you are finished drawing the first bitmap, save it—and all the other flick bitmaps—in a folder named *ship*.

Name this first bitmap *ship00.bmp* and save it as a BMP file:

NOTE: The name of each bitmap in a flick is important. The first bitmap's name must end with *00*, such as *ship00.bmp*. The second bitmaps's name must end with *01*, such as *ship01.bmp*. The third bitmap's name must end with *02*, such as *ship02.bmp*, and so on. Up to 100 bitmaps can be in a flick and must be numbered 00 to 99, such as *ship00.bmp* through *ship99.bmp*.

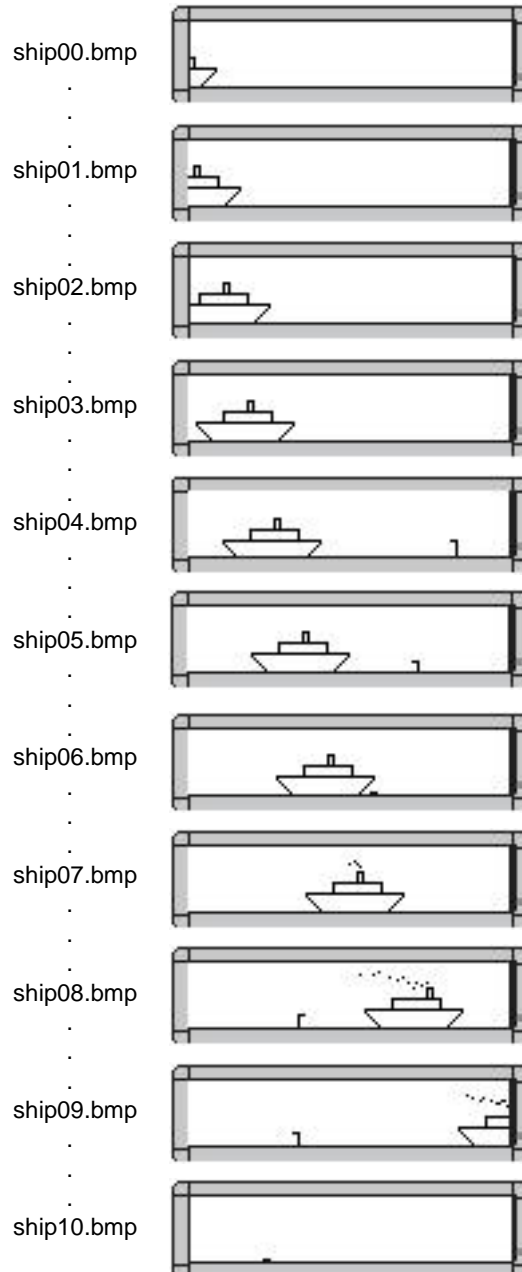
**HINT**  
Even though up to 100 bitmaps can be in a flick, keep in mind that a sign's memory capacity is limited.  
So experiment first with small flicks on a sign.

Save all the flick bitmaps in the special folder you created.



7. Create the other bitmaps in the flick. Each bitmap file must end with a consecutive number—00, 01, 02, and so on—and each bitmap must be saved as a BMP file in a special folder for the flick (*ship*, in this case).

The completed flick of 11 bitmaps shows a ship crossing the screen. When the ship is about mid-screen, a submarine periscope appears in front of the ship. The periscope disappears as the ship passes above it, but pops up again behind the ship, looks around, then goes under water.



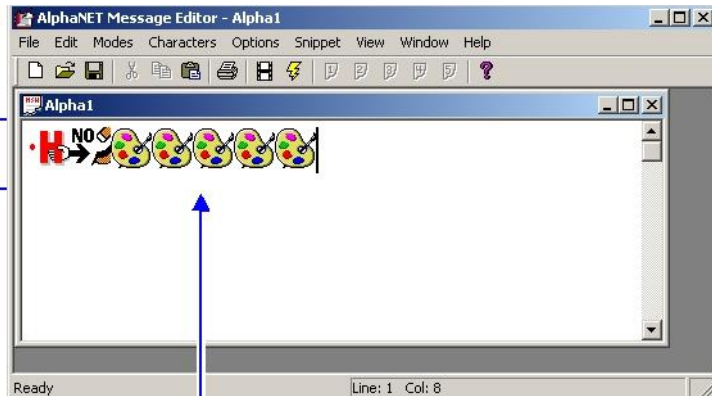
## Another way to create a flick

Though the *Flick* option will only work with AlphaVision™ and Series 7000 signs, there is another way to create the illusion of motion on a sign.

The *Graphic* option can be used to place one graphic after another in a message:

Use the *Hold* mode (with the *Middle* line position) and *Speed (No Hold)* option in front of the graphics.

This is necessary in order to turn off the *Automode* feature so that the graphics will display correctly.



ship00.bmp through ship05.bmp

## Creating a GIF

### HINT

Most image editing programs can create GIF images similar to Paint Shop Pro Animation.

However, if you are not using Paint Shop Pro Animation, consider using software that has a zoom feature so you can increase the size of the bitmap for ease of editing.

**NOTE:** The GIF option will only work with the 7000 series, 9000 series, AlphaVision™ (full matrix), and AlphaEclipse™ signs. If a different sign is used, *Extended Memory* must be checked on the *Sign Info* tab of *Site Editor* in order for this feature to work.

A GIF contains multiple images in one file that simulate animation, such as a hummingbird hovering above a flower. The GIF option is used to put moving animation in messages, and you can use the GIF files provided or create your own (see the example below). Note that GIF files are available on Adaptive's Web site at <http://www.ams-i.com/Pages/gif.htm>, free and formatted.

You will need a program to create and edit your GIF images. Image editing software examples in this manual illustrate version 5.03 of Paint Shop Pro (the steps are similar for newer versions of Paint Shop Pro).

Any image editing program can be used (See "Paint Shop Pro — an image editor" on page 150.)

The following instructions explain how to create a GIF using Paint Shop Pro Animation.

1. Using your Internet browser, log onto the Adaptive Micro Systems Web site at <http://www.adaptivedisplays.com/sample.htm>.
2. In the upper right-hand corner of Adaptive's main page, right-click on the *Tell a Friend* graphic and select *Save Picture As*.



Right-click on this graphic and select *Save Picture As*.

3. Save the file as a GIF file to your C:\Program Files\Adaptive Micro Systems\AlphaNET directory.
4. Select *Start>Programs>Paint Shop Pro>Animation Shop*, or open the image editing program you are using.
5. Select *File>Open* and select your GIF file. Then click *Open*.
6. Change any colors in the GIF file if they are incompatible with your sign.

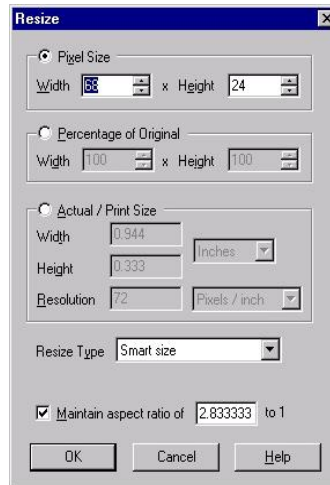
**Note:** If black or white is used in a GIF or BMP file, the sign thinks you want it to turn off those particular LEDs. Try using a different color.

### HINT

Depending on the model of the sign some colors do not effectively appear on the sign display.

For more information see "A graphic may be the wrong color for some signs" on page 149.

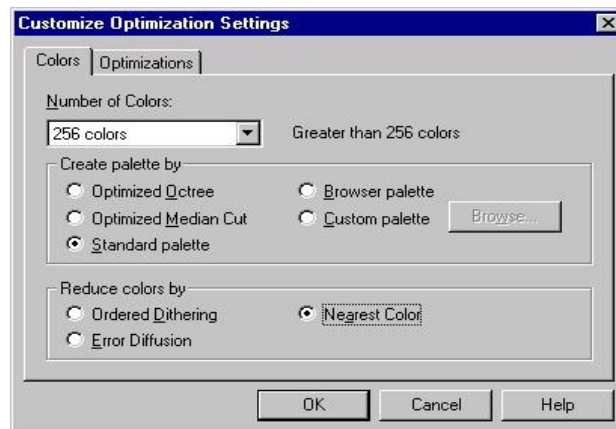
7. Select *Edit>Resize Animation* and resize the file to your sign's specifications. Make sure the *Maintain aspect ratio* box is checked, and then click *OK*:



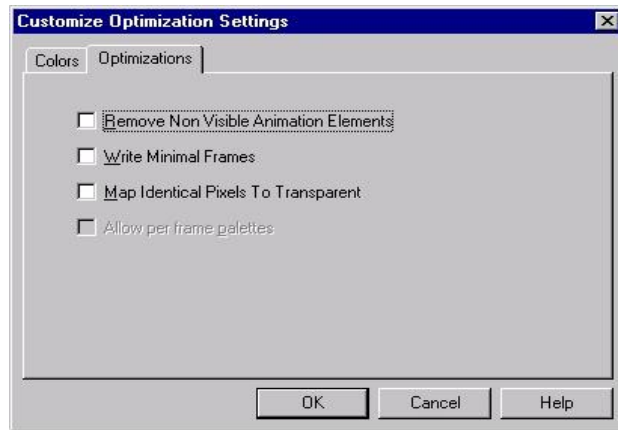
8. Select *File>Save*. Then click the *Customize* button on the *Animation Quality Versus Output Size* window that appears.

NOTE: This window appears when you save a file for the first time and then when changes are made to it. However, the settings you enter will become the default settings until you close Paint Shop Pro Animation.

9. On the Colors tab, make sure the settings are as follows:



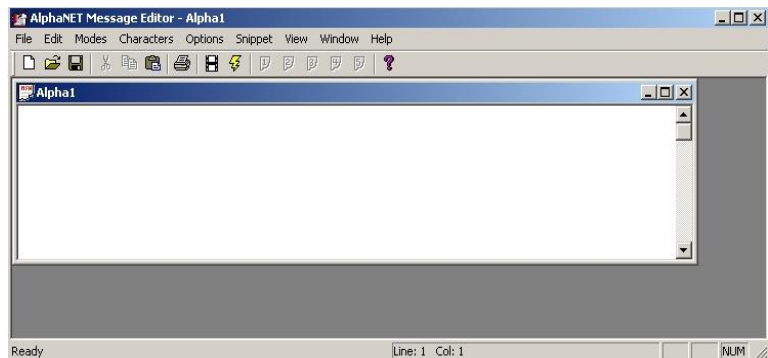
**10.** On the *Optimizations* tab, uncheck all the boxes and click *OK*.



**11.** Click the *Next* button to cycle through the remaining windows.

**12.** Select *File>Close* to close your GIF file.

**13.** Next, open *Message Editor* and create a new message.



**14.** Select *Modes>Hold*, using the *Fill* line position.

15. Select *Option>Gif*. Then select your GIF file and click *OK*. An icon representing the *Hold* mode and one representing the GIF will appear in your message.



16. Simulate your message to see what it looks like:

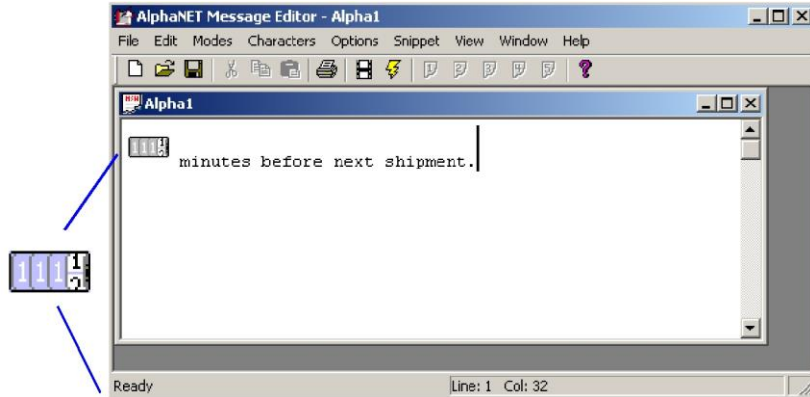


# How to edit a counter file

## What is a counter file?

A counter file sets up from 1 to 5 numerical counters (counter 1 through counter 5), which can be used for either or both of the following:

- ▶ **Display information in minutes, hours, or days on a sign.**



A counter can be placed inside a message.  
(This one is counting down from 60 minutes.)



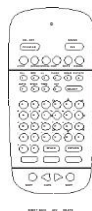
- ▶ **Display special messages (target files) on a sign after a set amount of time has passed.**



After 50 days, the counter included in the top message (which counts up from 0 to 50) is set up to display the target message below:

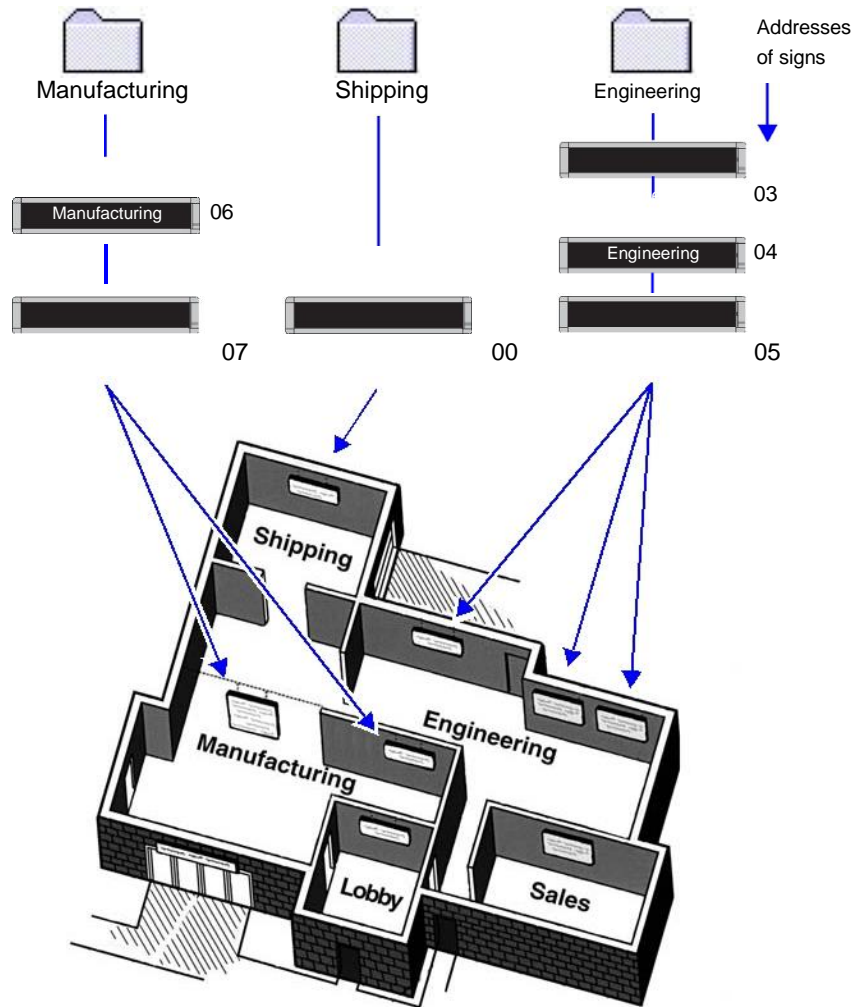


NOTE: The software necessary to use a counter file is included in the standard Alpha® firmware for signs and allows you to program a counter file from your computer. However, the standard Alpha® firmware does not allow you to program a counter file using an infrared remote control (left).



## Three examples of how to use counter files

In these examples, we discuss three basic ways of using counters on signs:



- **Example 1** — Using a counter in a message on the Shipping sign. Counter 1 will be used to show a message that counts down hours.
- **Example 2** — Using a counter in a message and displaying a target file message on the Manufacturing signs. Counter 2 will be used to show a message that counts up days and display a target message when it reaches 50.
- **Example 3** — Using a counter to display a target message on the Engineering signs. Counter 2 will be used from Example 2.

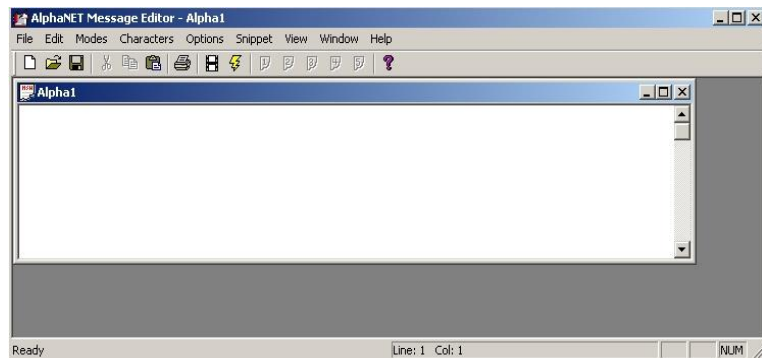
## Example 1 — Using a counter in a message

In this example, we will end up with a message on the Shipping sign that counts down from 60 minutes over and over again:

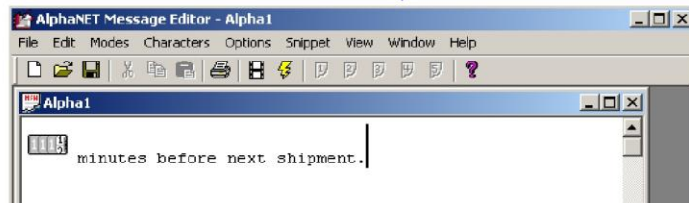
NOTE: The Shipping sign can still display other messages.



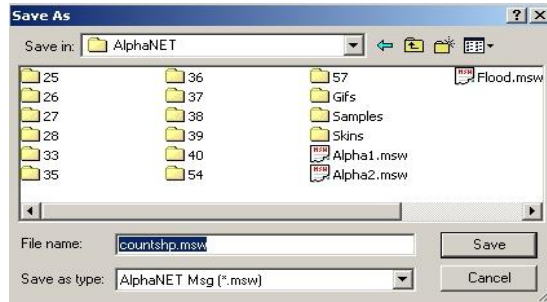
1. Open *Message Editor* and create a new message:



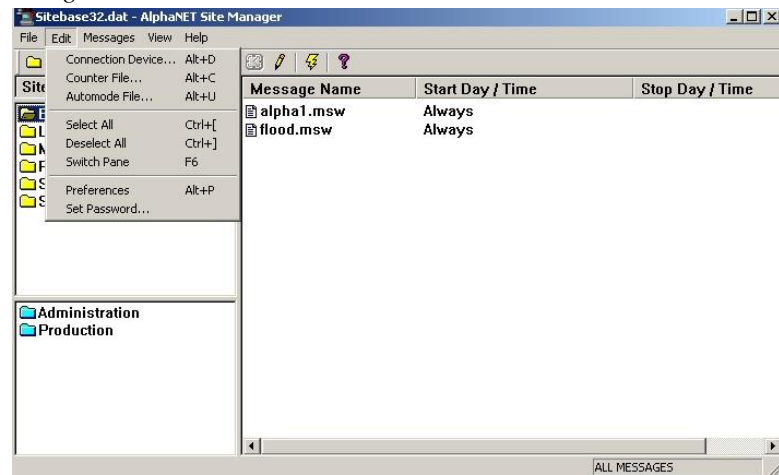
2. Add a counter to the message by selecting *Options >Counter* and then *Counter 1*. Then, after the counter icon, type a space followed by *minutes before next shipment*:



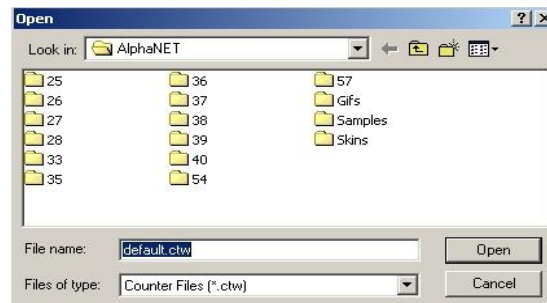
3. Save this counter message as *countshp.msw*:



4. After saving the message, close *Message Editor*. Open *Site Manager* and select *Edit>Counter File*:

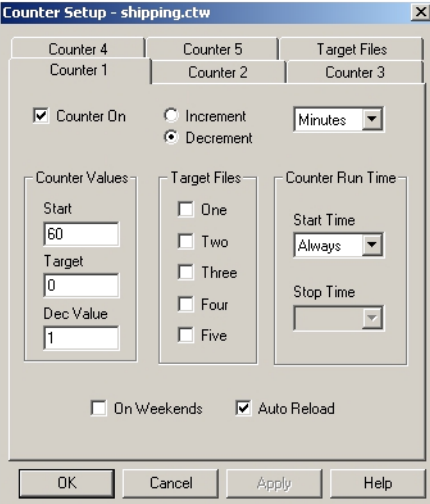
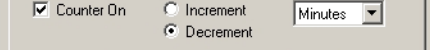
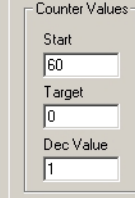
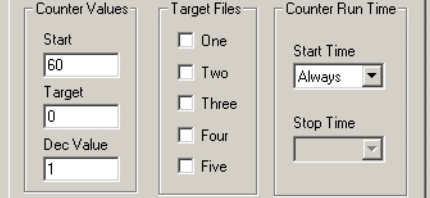
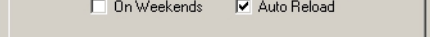


5. Next, either open an existing counter file (like the default file shown below) or type a new file name (such as *shipping.ctw*):



6. When the *Counter Setup* window appears, select the *Counter 1* tab. Then type in the values as shown below:

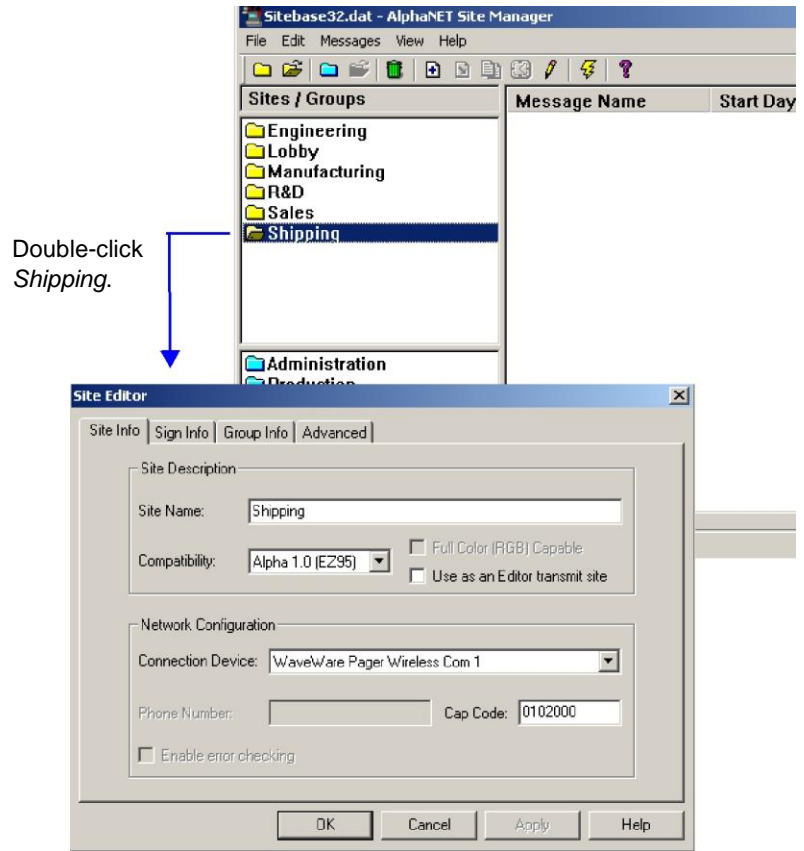
**Table 15: Counter Example 1 — Counter 1 setup**

A		
B		
C		
D		

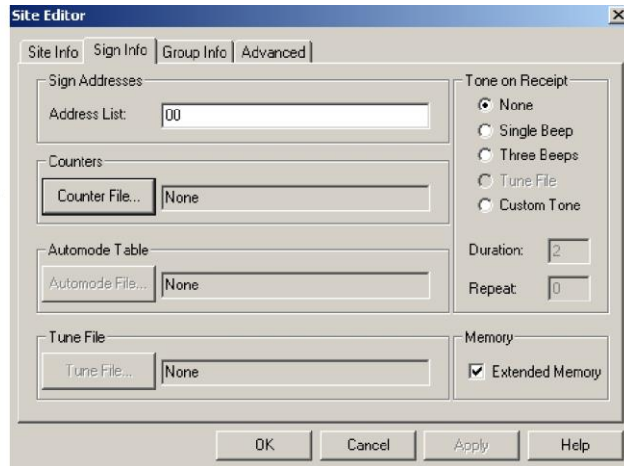
Item	Name	Directions	
A	<i>Counter 1–5</i>	Select <i>Counter 1</i> tab.	
	<i>Target Files</i>	This is where a message is assigned to a target file. One to five messages can be displayed on a sign when counter 1 reaches its target value. (No target files are used in this example.)	
B	<i>Counter On</i>	Make sure this box is checked for this example.	
	<i>Increment Decrement</i>	In this example, select <i>Decrement</i> because we want counter 1 to count down, not up.	
	<i>Minutes Hours Days</i>	Select <i>Minutes</i> because we want counter 1 to count in units of minutes.	
C	<i>Counter Values</i>	<i>Start</i>	Enter <i>60</i> because we want counter 1 to start at 60 minutes and then count down to 0.
		<i>Target</i>	Enter <i>0</i> .
		<i>Dec</i>	Enter <i>1</i> because we want counter 1 to count down 1 minute at a time—60, 59, 58, and so on.
	<i>Target Files</i>	<i>One–Five</i>	This is where you would select which target file messages to display when counter 1 reaches its target value. (No target files are used in this example, so none are checked.)
	<i>Counter Run Time</i>	<i>Start Time Stop Time</i>	In this example, <i>Always</i> is selected because we want counter 1 running continuously. Since <i>Always</i> is selected, <i>Stop Time</i> is not available.
D	<i>On Weekends</i>	Since we do not need our counter running on weekends, this is unchecked.	
	<i>Auto Reload</i>	This box is checked because we want our counter to count down continuously. If this box was not checked, counter 1 would count down from 60 to 0 just once.	

7. Select *OK* after entering the setup information. Double-click the *Shipping* site to open the *Site Editor* window:

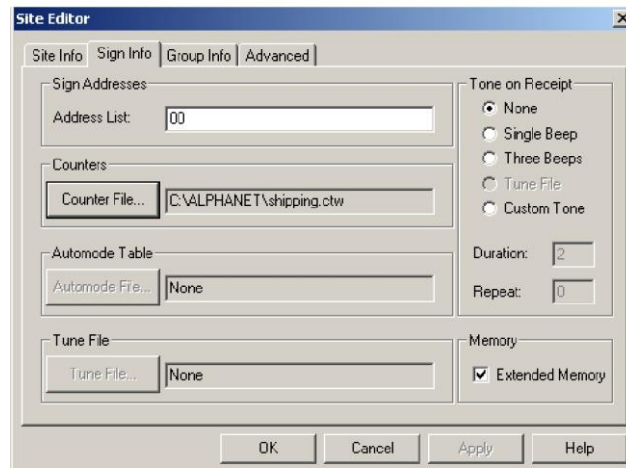
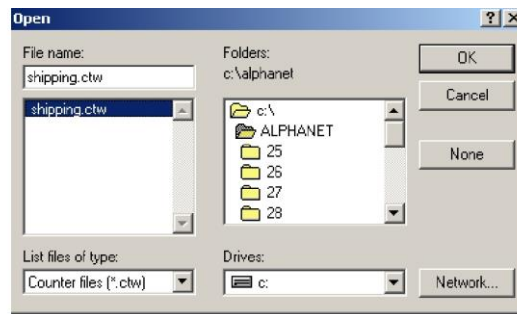


8. Next, select the *Sign Info* tab and attach the counter file you just created to the Shipping site:

**Deleting a counter file**  
 If you want to delete a counter file from a sign, click *Counter File*, click *None*, and then click *OK*.

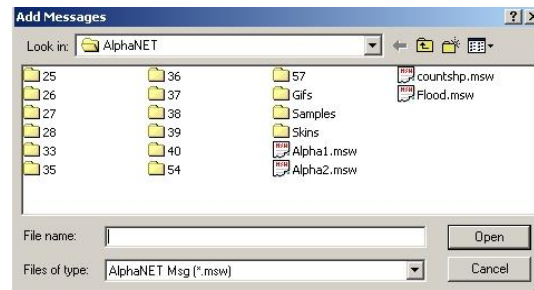
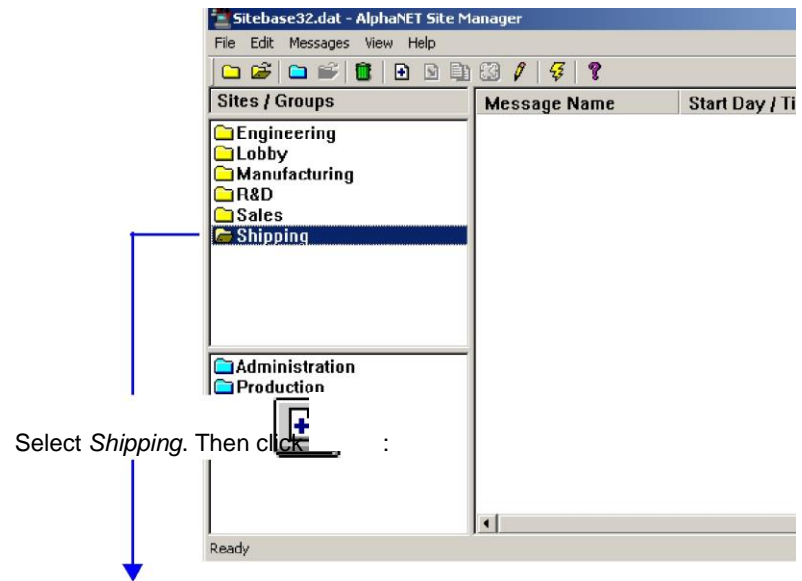


After clicking *Counter File*, select the counter file you just edited (in this case, *shipping.ctw*). Then select *OK*.



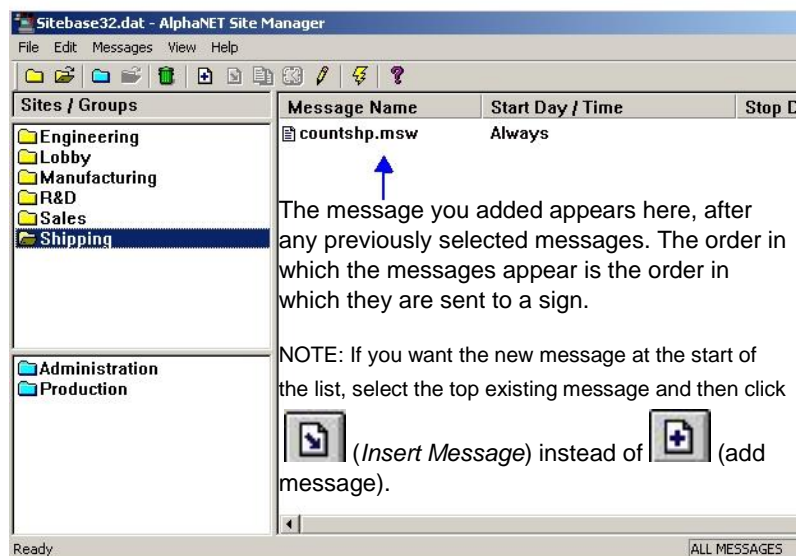
Select *OK*.

## 9. Add the message that contains counter 1 to the Shipping site:

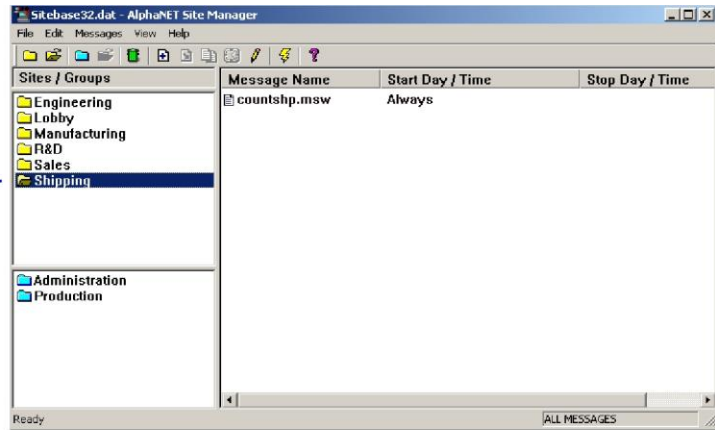


Select the message that contains counter 1 (*countshp.msw*).

Click OK.



**10.** Finally, in order to display the message you just added to the Shipping sign, the message must be transmitted. To do this, select the Shipping site and then the transmit icon:



Select *Shipping* because this is the only site to which we want messages sent.

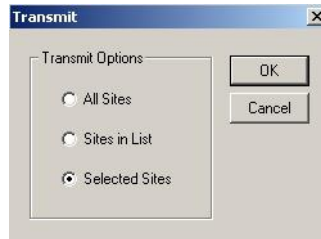


Click the Transmit icon.

**Resetting a counter**

If you are prompted to reset a sign counter, select *Yes* to reset the counter to its start value.

Otherwise, select *No* to leave the sign's current value intact.



Click *Selected Sites* and then *OK*.

All the messages will be sent to the Shipping site sign.



## Example 2 — Using a counter in a message and displaying a target file message

In this example, we will end up with a message on the Manufacturing signs that keeps track of the number of days without an accident.

Also, when 50 days is reached, a message appears on the Manufacturing signs that reads *Another 50 days without an accident!* (this is called a target message.)

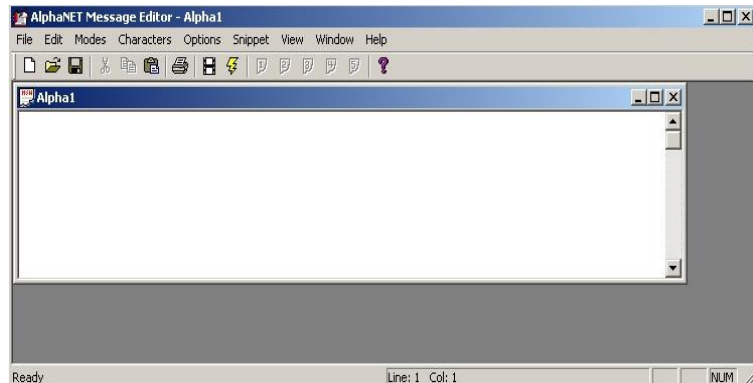
NOTE: The Manufacturing signs can still display other messages.



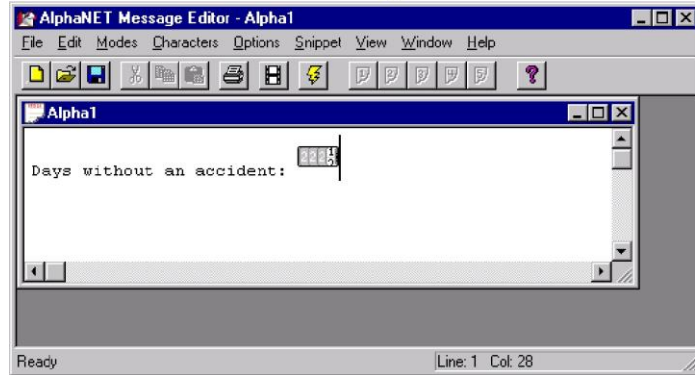
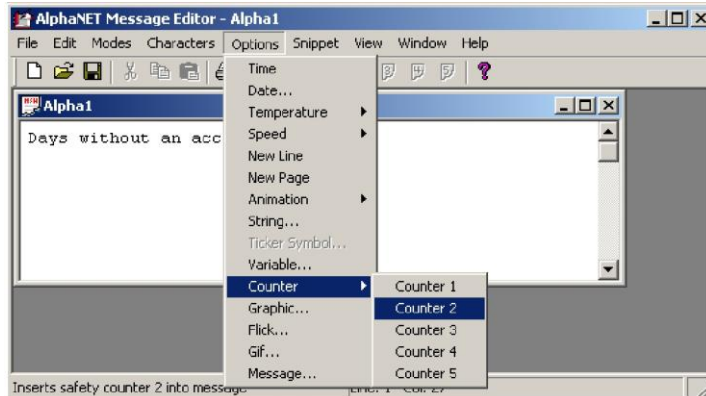
After 50 days, the counter included in the top message (which counts up from 0 to 50) is set up to display the target message below:



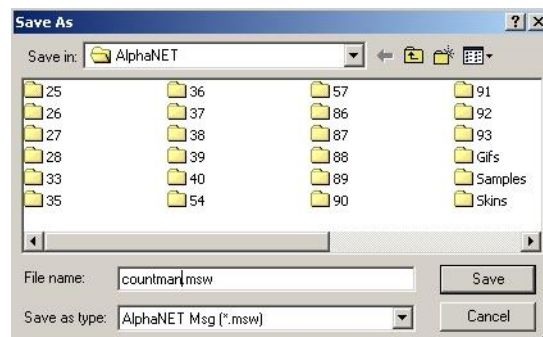
### 1. Open *Message Editor* and create a new message:



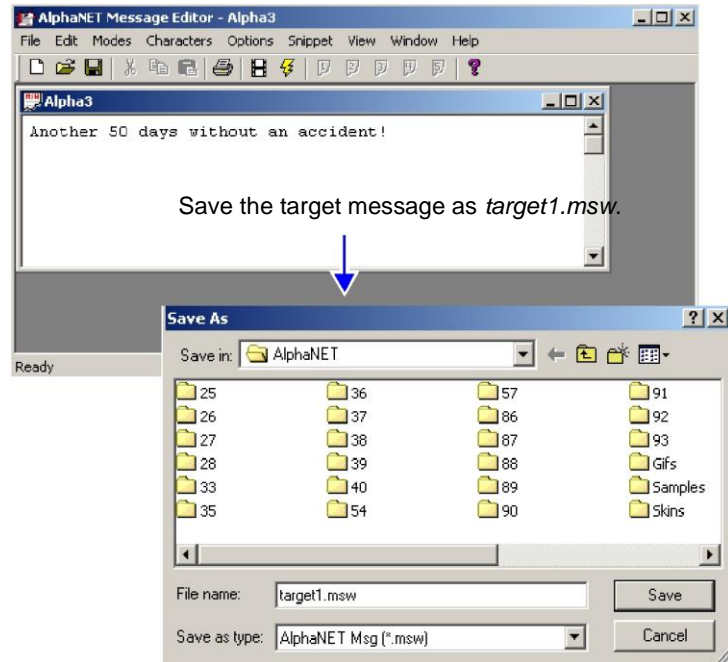
- In the message window, type *Days without an accident:* and a space. Then add a counter to the message by selecting *Options>Counter>Counter 2:*



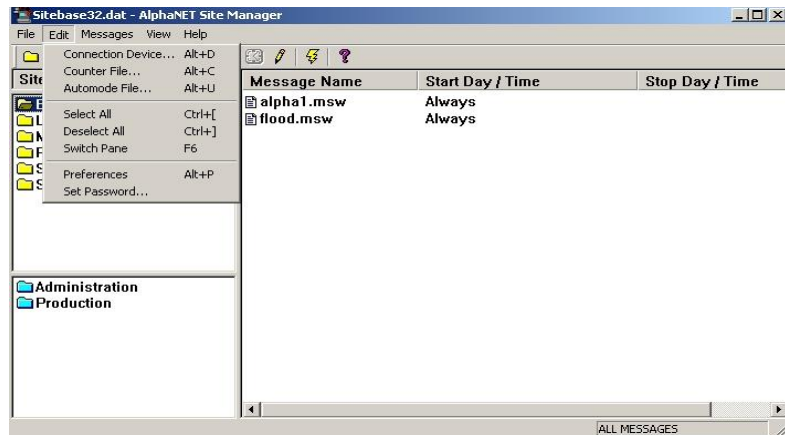
- Save this counter message as *countmar.msw* and close the message:



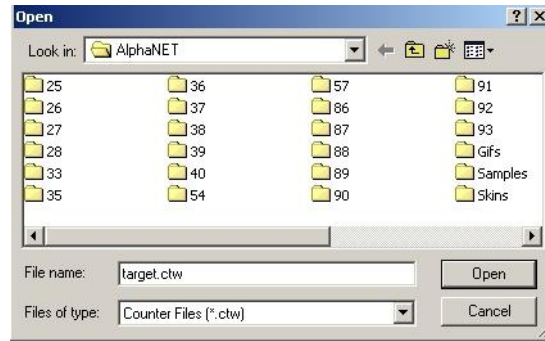
4. Next, create the target message — the message that will appear when counter 2 reaches 50 days. Then save this message as *target1.msw*:



5. Close *Message Editor*. Open *Site Manager* and select *Edit>Counter File*:

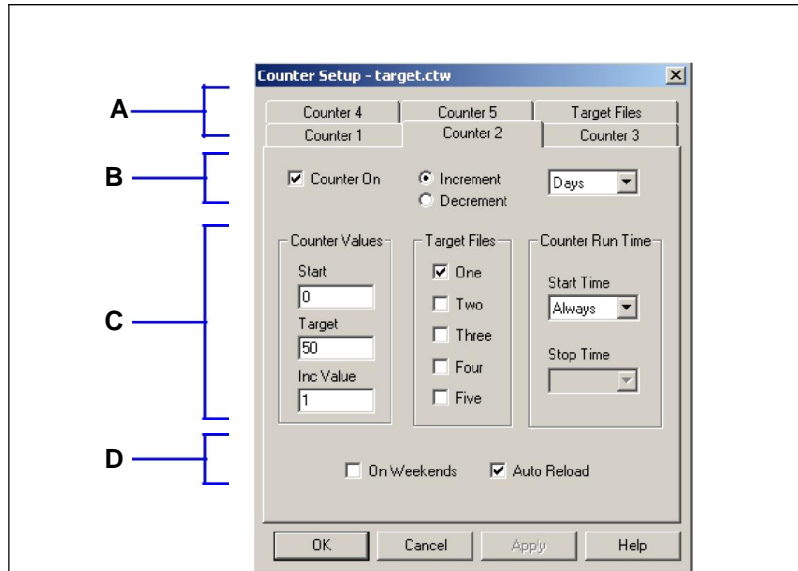


6. Next, either open an existing counter file or type a new file name (such as *target.ctw*) and click *Open*:



7. When the *Counter Setup* window appears, select the *Counter 2* tab and enter the values shown below:

**Table 16: Counter Example 2 — Counter 2 setup**

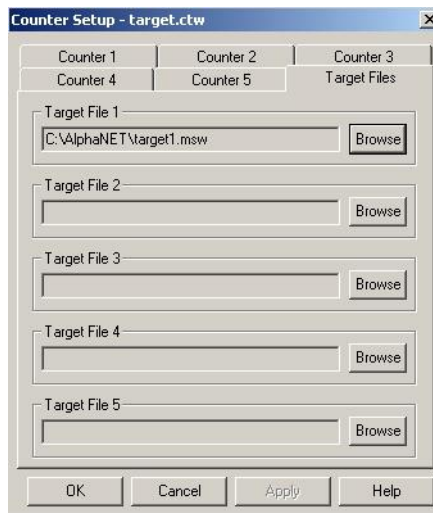


Item	Name	Directions
A	Counter 1–5	Select the <i>Counter 2</i> tab.
	Target Files	This is where a message is assigned to a target file. One to five messages can be displayed on a sign when counter 2 reaches its target value.  The largest file runs indefinitely. Send a new message to delete it.
B	Counter On	Make sure this box is checked for this example.
	Increment Decrement	In this example select <i>Increment</i> because we want counter 2 to count up, not down.
	Minutes Hours Days	Select <i>Days</i> because we want counter 2 to count in units of days.

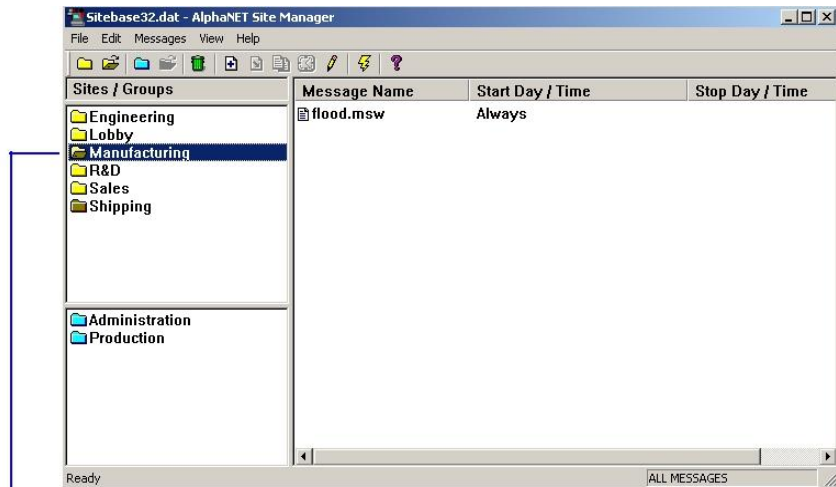
**Table 16: Counter Example 2 — Counter 2 setup**

<b>C</b>	<i>Counter Values</i>	Start	Enter <i>0</i> because we want counter 2 to start at 0 days and then count up to 50.
		Target	Enter <i>50</i> .
		Inc	Enter <i>1</i> because we want counter 2 to count up 1 day at a time — 1, 2, 3, and so on.
	<i>Target Files</i>	One–Five	Check <i>One</i> . This means that one message will appear on the sign after counter 2 has reached its target value.
<b>D</b>	<i>Counter Run Time</i>	Start Time Stop Time	In this example, <i>Always</i> is selected because we want counter 2 running continuously.
	<i>On Weekends</i>		Since we do not need our counter running on weekends, leave this unchecked.
		<i>Auto Reload</i>	This box is checked because we want our counter to count continuously. If this box was not checked, counter 2 would count up to 50 just once.

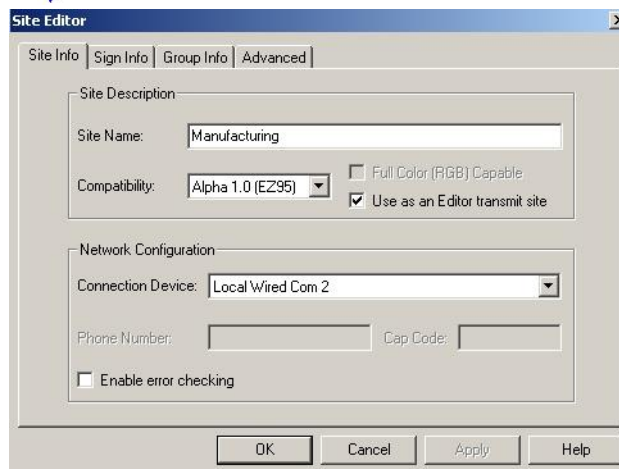
- 8.** Next, select the *Target Files* tab and for *Target File 1*, select *Browse* and then the file you created (*target1.msw*):



9. After selecting the target file, click *Open*, and then *OK* to close the *Counter Setup* window. Then double-click the Manufacturing site to access the *Site Editor* window:

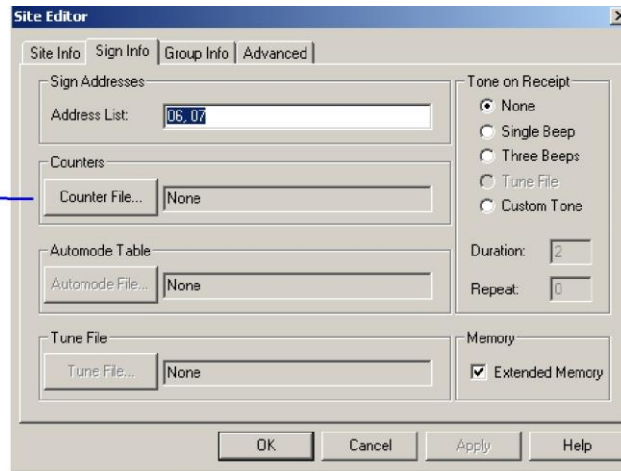


Double-click *Manufacturing*.

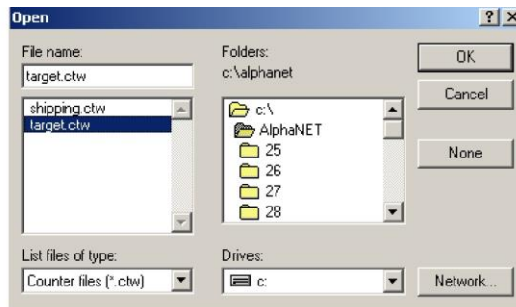


**10.** Next, select the *Sign Info* tab and attach the counter file you just created to the Manufacturing site:

**Deleting a counter file**  
If you want to delete a counter file from a sign, click *Counter File*, click *None*, and then click *OK*.

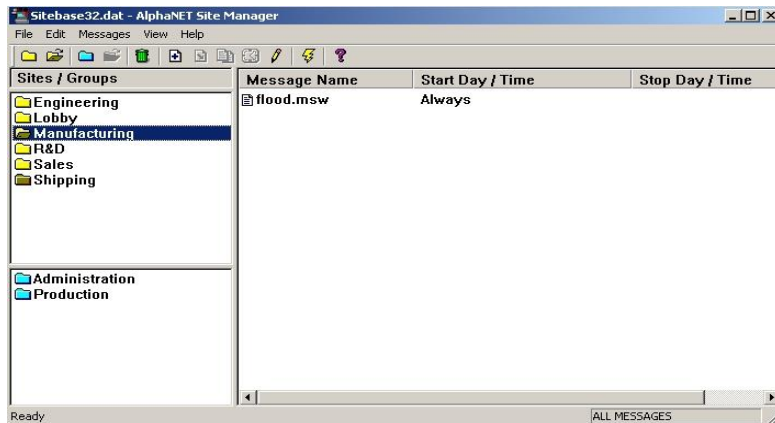



After clicking *Counter File*, select the counter file you just edited (in this case, *target.ctw*.) Then select *OK*.

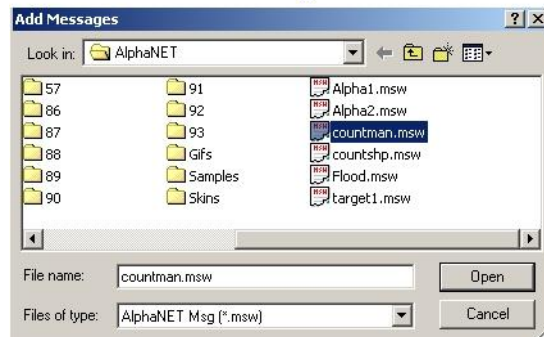


Select *OK*.

# 11. Add the message that contains counter 2 to the Manufacturing site:

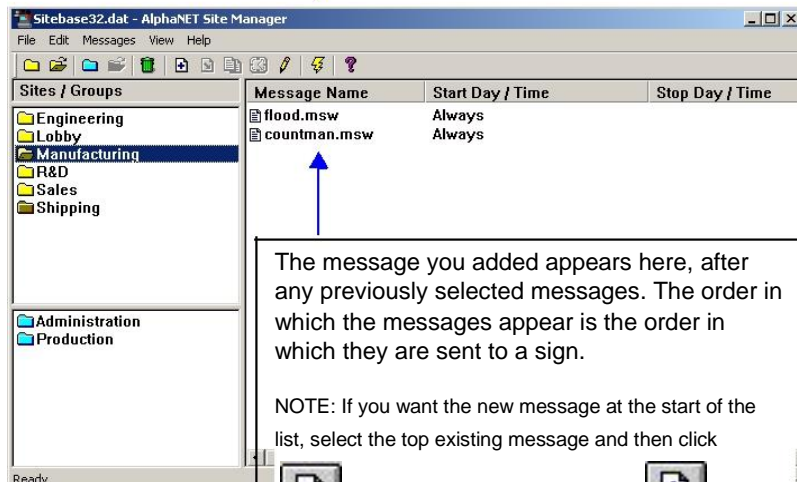


Select *Manufacturing*. Then select  :





Select the message that contains counter 2 (*countman.msw*).

Click *Open*.

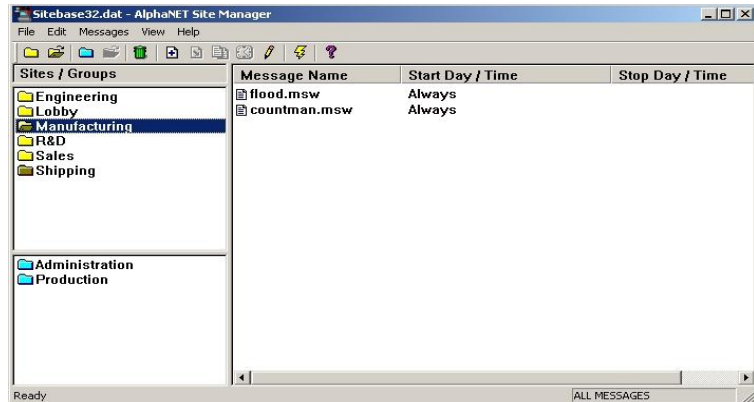


The message you added appears here, after any previously selected messages. The order in which the messages appear is the order in which they are sent to a sign.

NOTE: If you want the new message at the start of the list, select the top existing message and then click

 (*Insert Message*) instead of  (*add message*).

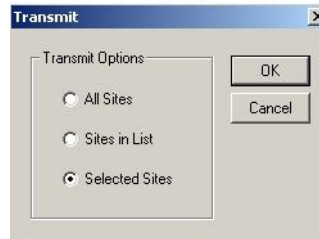
12. Finally, in order to display the message you just added, it must be transmitted to the Manufacturing signs. To do this, select the Manufacturing site and then the Transmit icon:



Select *Manufacturing* because this is the only site to which we want messages sent.



Click the Transmit icon.



Click *Selected Sites* and then *OK*.

**Resetting a counter**

If you are prompted to reset a sign counter, select *Yes* to reset the counter to its start value.

Otherwise, select *No* to leave the sign's current value intact.

All the messages will be sent to the Manufacturing site signs.



After 50 days, the counter included in the top message (which counts up from 0 to 50) will display the target message below:



### Example 3 — Using a counter to display just a target message

**HINT**

This example is nearly identical to Example 2.

In Example 2, the counter was displayed as well as a target message.

In Example 3, only the target message will be displayed. The counter will just count.

In this example, we will use one of the five counters (in this case, counter 3) to display the message *Another 100 hours of safe operation!* When counter 3 reaches 100 hours, the message will appear on all the signs in the Engineering site. (This site was created in the previous section “How to change a sign’s serial address” on page 15.)

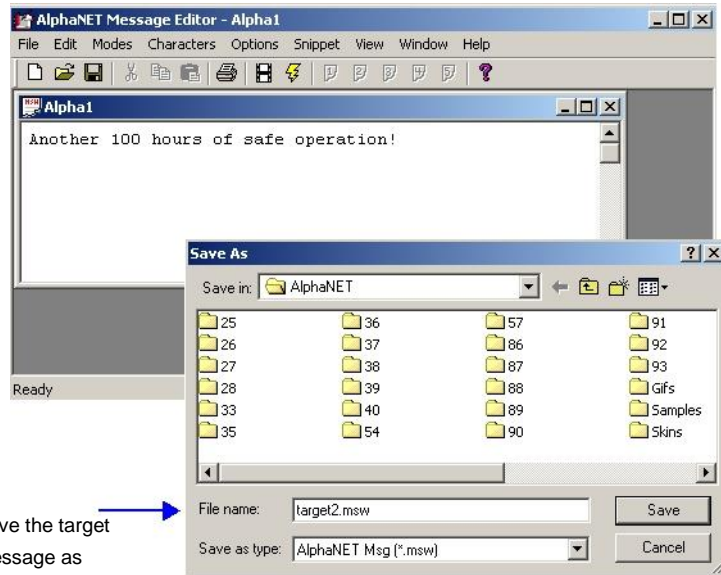
NOTE: The Engineering signs can still display other messages.



1. Open *Message Editor* and create a new message:



2. Next, create the target message — the message that will appear when counter 3 reaches 100 hours. Then save this message as *target2.msw*:

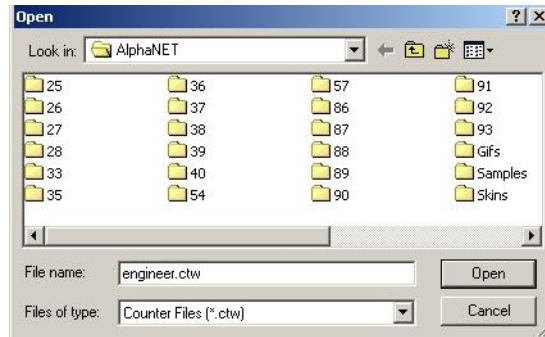


Save the target message as *target2.msw*.

3. After saving the target message, close *Message Editor*. Open *Site Manager* and select *Edit>Counter File*:

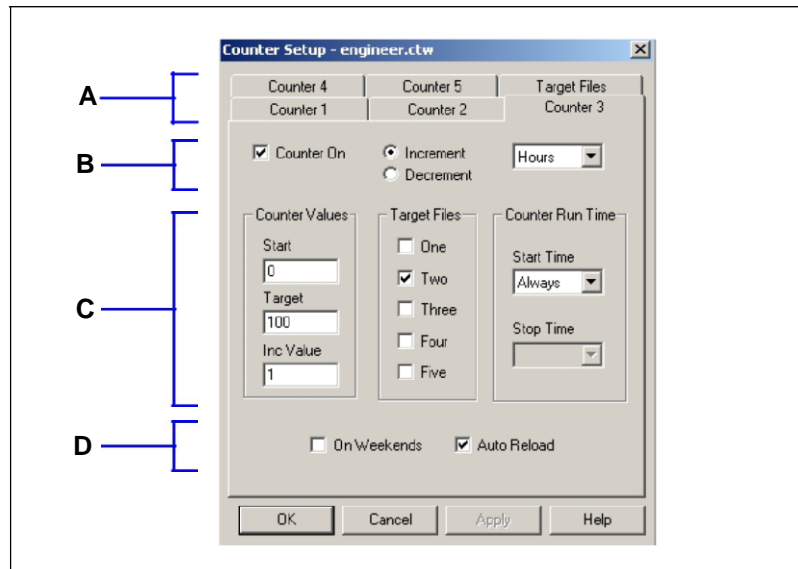


4. Next, either open an existing counter file (like the default file shown below) or type a new file name (like *engineer.ctw*):



5. When the *Counter Setup* window appears, select the *Counter 3* tab and enter the values shown below:

**Table 17: Counter Example 3 — Counter 3 setup**

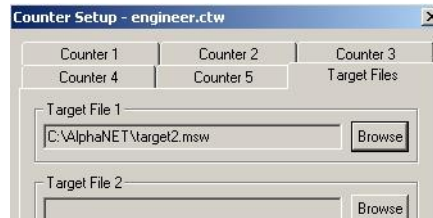


Item	Name	Directions
A	Counter 1–5	Select the <i>Counter 3</i> tab.
	Target Files	This is where a message is assigned to a target file. One to five messages can be displayed on a sign when counter 3 reaches its target value.  The largest file runs indefinitely. Send a new message to delete it.
B	Counter On	Make sure this box is checked for this example.
	Increment Decrement	In this example, select <i>Increment</i> because we want counter 3 to count up, not down.
	Minutes Hours Days	Select <i>Hours</i> because we want counter 3 to count in units of hours.

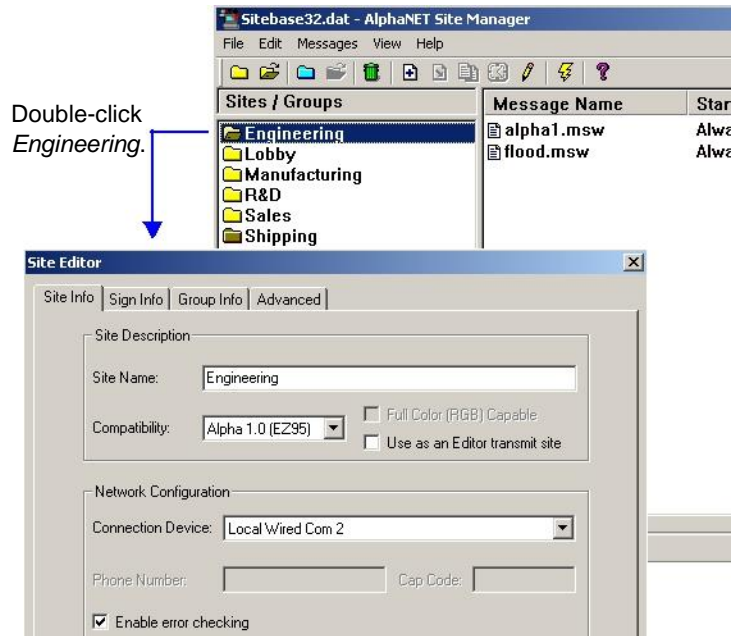
**Table 17: Counter Example 3 — Counter 3 setup**

<b>C</b>	<i>Counter Values</i>	<i>Start</i>	Enter 0 because we want counter 3 to start at 0 hours and then count up to 100.
		<i>Target</i>	Enter 100.
		<i>Inc</i>	Enter 1 because we want counter 3 to count up 1 hour at a time—1, 2, 3, and so on.
	<i>Target Files</i>	<i>One–Five</i>	Check <i>Two</i> . This means that one message will appear on the sign after counter 3 has reached its target value.
<b>D</b>	<i>Counter Run Time</i>	<i>Start Time</i> <i>Stop Time</i>	In this example, <i>Always</i> is selected because we want counter 3 running continuously.
	<i>On Weekends</i>		Since we do not need our counter running on weekends, leave this unchecked.
	<i>Auto Reload</i>		This box is checked because we want our counter to count down continuously. If this box was not checked, counter 3 would count up to 100 just once.

6. Next, select *Target Files*. For *Target File 1*, select *Browse* and then select the file you created called *target2.msw*:

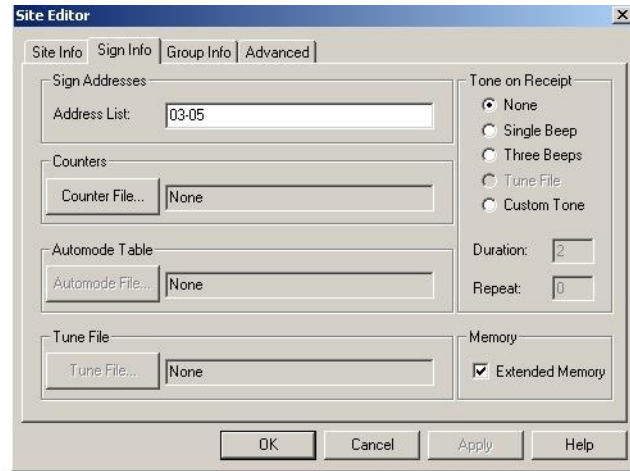


7. After selecting the target file, click *OK*. Then double-click the *Engineering* site to access the *Site Editor* window:

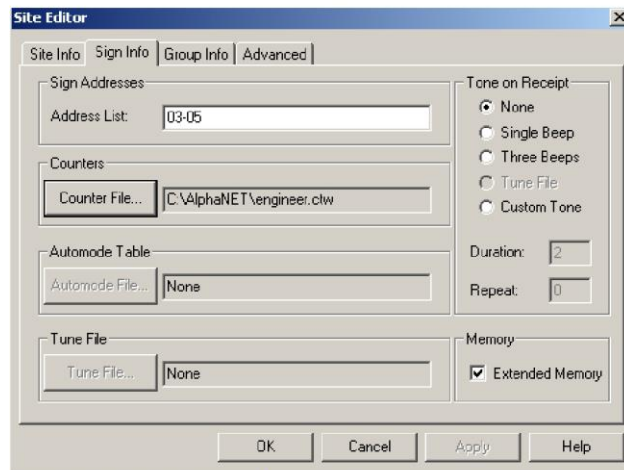
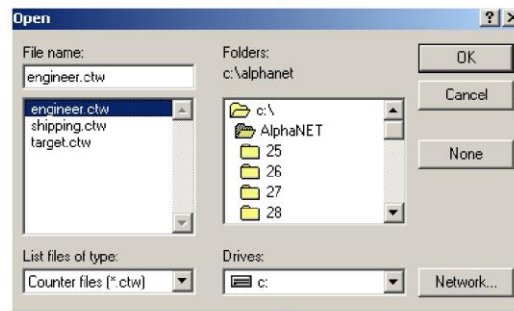


8. Next, select *Sign Info* and attach the counter file you just created to the Engineering site:

**Deleting a counter file**  
If you want to delete a counter file from a sign, click *Counter File*, click *None*, and then click *OK*.



After clicking *Counter File*, select the counter file you just edited (in this case, *engineer.ctw*). Then select *OK*.



Select *OK*.

## How to use real-time data in a message

### String Variables + ActiveX® = real-time data

Data from external sources (for example, Microsoft® Excel, Access, and Visual Basic® software) can be displayed on Alpha® signs by using two features included in AlphaNET™ 3.0 software:

- String variables
- Alpha® String Update Control (an ActiveX® component)

A variable in the AlphaNET™ 3.0 software represents real-time data that can change (for example, temperature or production rates, date, or time). Variables can be put into messages.

The value of a variable can be changed using the Alpha® String Update Control. Because this is an ActiveX® control, it can be used with a variety of ActiveX®-compatible applications, such as Microsoft® Excel, Access, and Visual Basic® software.

**NOTE:** Besides using the Alpha® String Update Control, you can also write your own application to update variables. For more information, see the **Alpha® Sign Communications Protocol** manual.

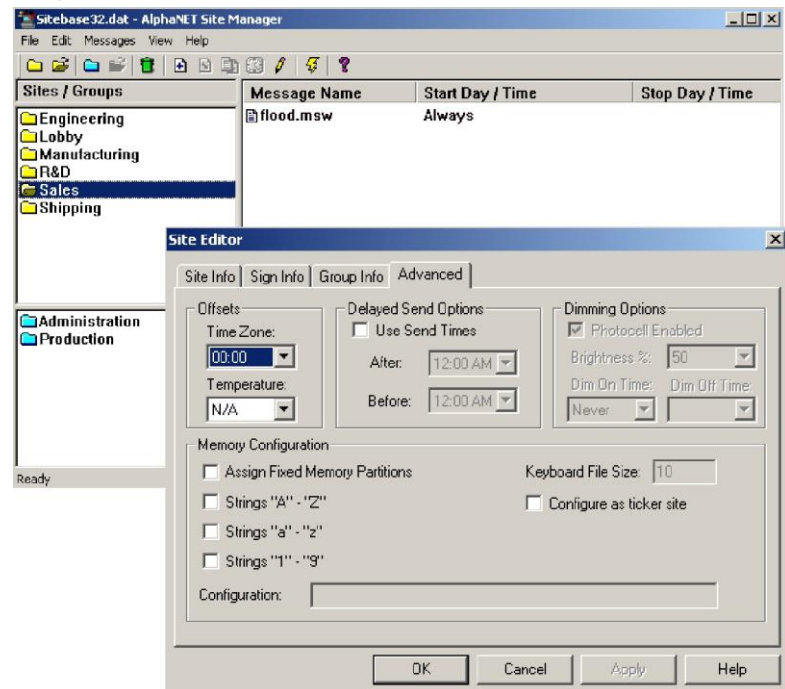
#### HINT

The AlphaNET™ 3.0 software CD ROM contains examples on using the Alpha® String Update Control.

### Real-time data example

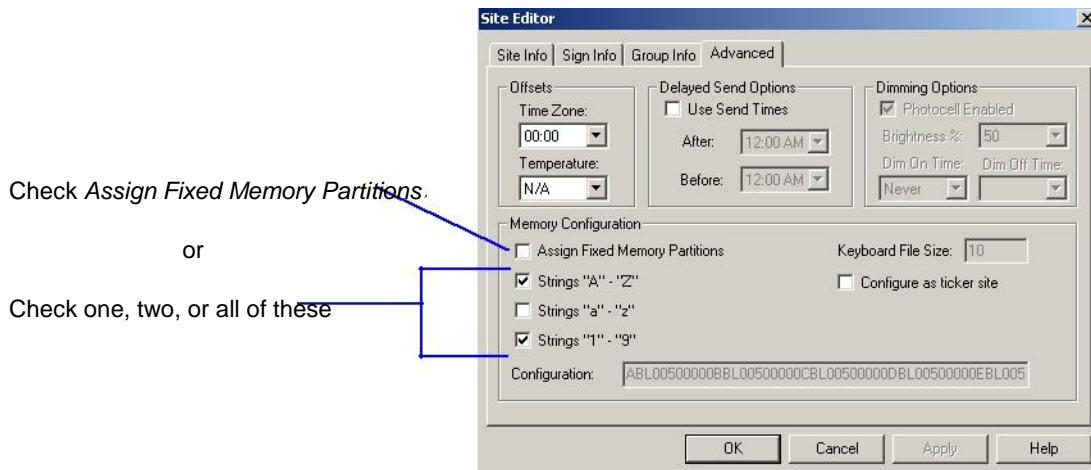
#### Create sign memory configurations using Site Manager

1. In *Site Manager*, double-click the site for the sign which will use string variables. Then click the *Advanced* tab.



**2.** Create a sign memory configuration by checking either:

- *Assign Fixed Memory Partitions* — Check this to assign your own sign memory configuration in the *Configuration* box. (For detailed information, see the Memory Configuration examples in “Appendix G: Protocol Examples” of the **Alpha® Sign Communications Protocol** manual.)
- *Strings “A” - “Z”, Strings “a” - “z”, Strings “1” - “9”* — Check one, two, or all three of these to create a sign memory configuration in the *Configuration* box. For example, checking *Strings “A” - “Z”* would set up 26 string file names “A” through “Z”. These files could then be used by the Alpha® String Update Control. (Checking *Strings “a” - “z”* would set up an additional 26 strings, and checking *Strings “1” - “9”* would add another 9 strings.)

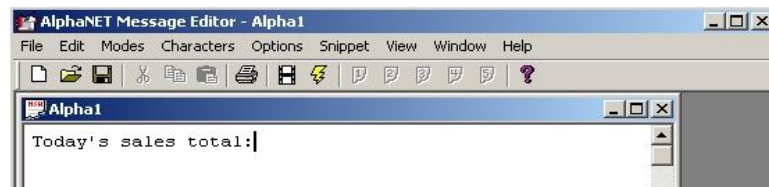


**Create a message with a string variable using Message Editor**

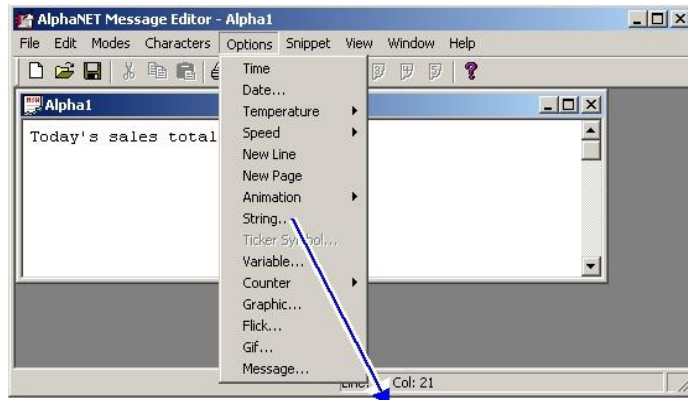
**3.** In *Message Editor*, create a new message by selecting *File>New*:



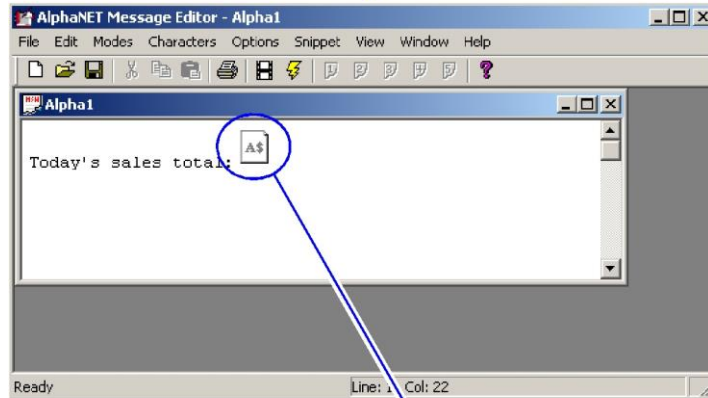
**4.** Type *Today's sales total*:



5. Select *Options>String* to insert a string variable into the message:



The string label value is determined by what you selected in step 2. For example, if you selected *Strings "1" - "9"*, then type a number from 1 to 9.



The string variable icon.

### Update the string variable using the ActiveX® control

6. Use the Alpha® String Update Control (the ActiveX® component of AlphaNET™ 3.0 software) to update the message's string variable.

Following is a description of the available methods and properties of this ActiveX® control:

**Table 18: Alpha® String Update Control Methods & Properties**

<b>METHODS</b>		
<b>Initialize</b>	Syntax:	<i>AlphaStringUpdateCtrl.Initialize</i>
	Parameters:	none
	Remarks:	Method must be called prior to calling any other method of this control. This method opens a COM port or creates a socket connection to the display.
<b>UpdateString</b>	Syntax:	<i>AlphaStringUpdateCtrl.UpdateString("String Label", Value, Color, Flash)</i>
	Parameters:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>String Label</i> — String. One character only. (In the previous example, the <i>String Label</i> is 1.)</li> <li>• <i>Value</i> — String. This is the value to be passed and displayed.</li> <li>• <i>Color</i> — Integer. 1 = Red, 2 = Green, 3 = Amber.</li> <li>• <i>Flash</i> — Byte. 0 = off, 1 = on.</li> </ul>
	Remarks:	This method will pass any value to the designated string. The <i>Color</i> parameter will override any color definition set by the message itself. The <i>Flash</i> parameter will only work in the <i>Hold</i> mode.

<b>PROPERTIES</b>		
<i>ConnectMode</i>	Type:	Byte
	Values:	0 = Serial connection, 1 = TCP/IP connection
<i>NetworkAddress</i>	Type:	String
	Values:	TCP/IP address of the network adapter. (Only applicable to a TCP/IP connection.)
<i>NetworkPort</i>	Type:	Integer
	Values:	3001 (default)
<i>SerialBaudRate</i>	Type:	Integer
	Values:	110, 300, 600, 1200, 4800, 9600, 14400, 19200, 28800, 38400, 56000, 115200, 128000, 256000
<i>SerialComPort</i>	Type:	Byte
	Values:	1 through 16
<i>SerialDataBits</i>	Type:	Byte
	Values:	4 through 8
<i>SerialParity:</i>	Type:	String
	Values:	None, Even, Odd, Mark, Space
<i>SerialStopBits</i>	Type:	Byte
	Values:	1 or 2
<i>Serial Address</i>	Type:	Integer (use 2 digits)
	Values:	00 (default)

## How to create and use a custom automode sequence

The message mode called *Automode* is the default mode used if no other mode is selected in a message. It displays the message with all the other modes provided with AlphaNET™ 3.0 software. (For descriptions of the modes, see “Appendix B — Modes available on signs” on page 137.)

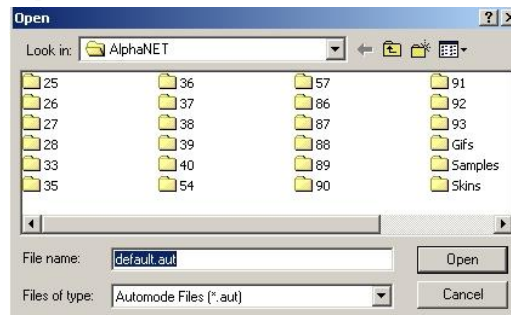
A custom automode sequence can be created for each sign site. You can set what modes automode will use by doing the following:

### Creating or editing an Automode sequence

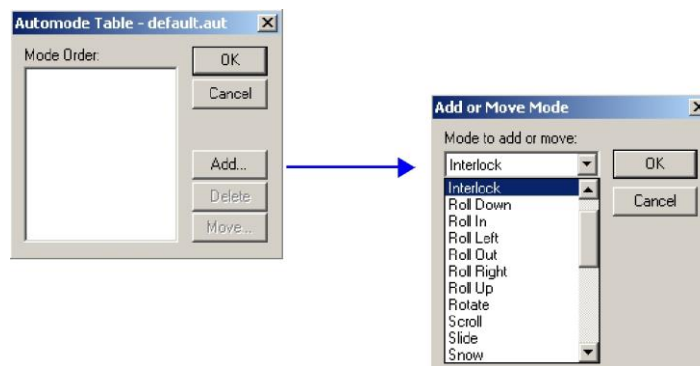
1. In *Site Manager*, choose *Edit>Automode File*:



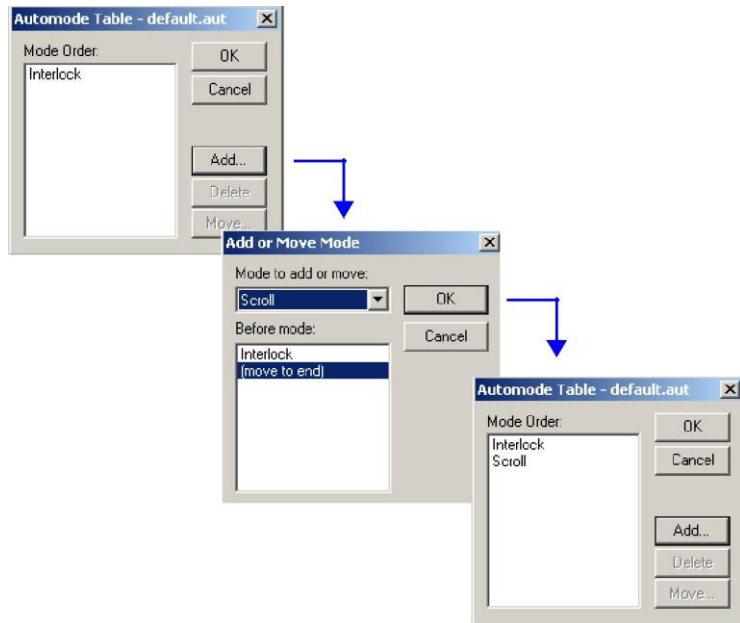
2. Accept the name of *default.aut* for the file, choose an existing file if there is one, or type in a different name for a new file to use. Then click *Open*.



3. Click *Add*. Then select the *Interlock > OK* to add the Interlock mode to our custom automode sequence:



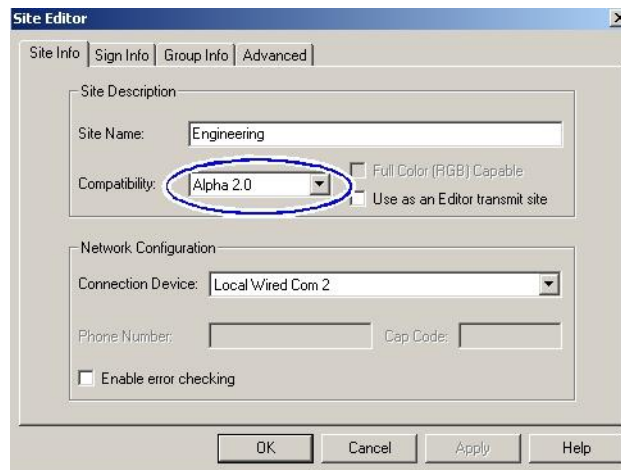
4. To add another mode to our custom automode sequence, click *Add* again. Then select another mode and click *OK*.



NOTE: The order of the modes can be changed using *Move*. Modes can also be added or deleted using *Add* and *Delete*.

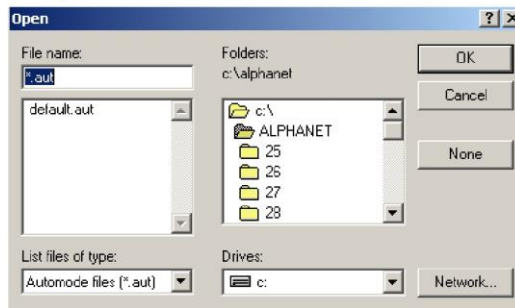
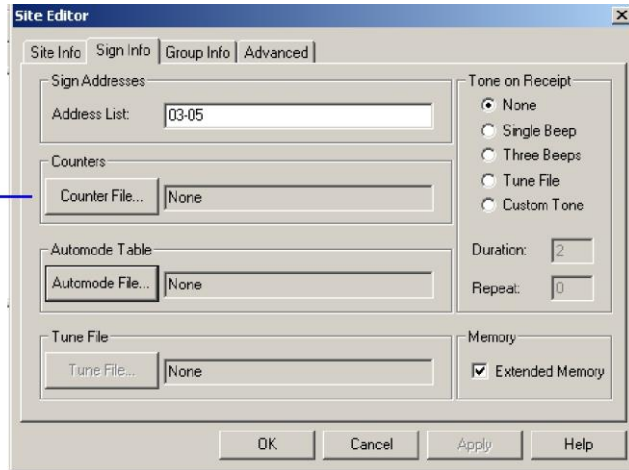
## Using a custom Automode sequence

1. Using *Site Editor*, double-click the site that is to have the custom automode. Select the *Site Info* tab and choose *Alpha 2.0* for *Compatibility*.

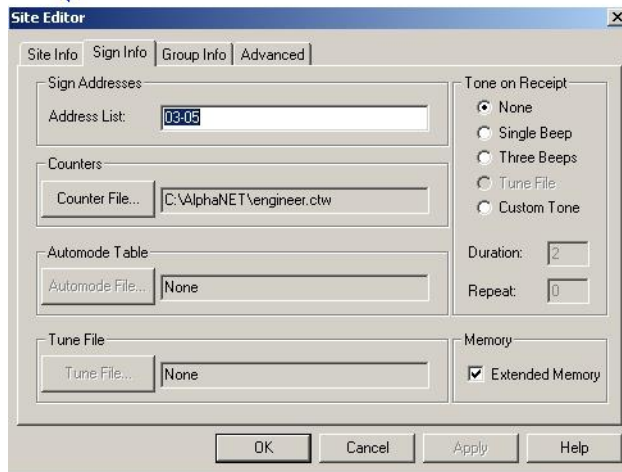


2. Select the *Sign Info* tab. Then click *Automode File* and select a custom automode file:

**NOTE**  
To revert back to the default automode setting, click *Automode File*, click *None*, and then click *OK*.



Messages sent to this site will now use this custom automode.



↑  
Select OK.