# Express Boat Network



The **Express Boat Network** is the single most important duty of the [Interstellar Scout Service](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/Imperial_Interstellar_Scout_Service) performed by its Communications Office within the [Imperium](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/Third_Imperium).

* This office maintains the sprawling express boat network which provides communications between the stars for government, industry, commercial enterprises, and private individuals.
* The network moves [X-mail](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/X-mail), [Xmail](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/Xmail), or [Express Mail](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/Express_Mail), the term/s for interstellar mail carried in-between the [stars](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/Star) (...and their associated [mainworlds](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/Mainworld)) by various kinds of mercantile [starcraft](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/Starcraft).
* [X-mail](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/X-mail) is normally transported by [X-boats](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/X-boat) although [subsidized merchants](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/Subsidized_merchant), [tramp freighters](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/Tramp_freighter), [couriers](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/Courier), and many other kinds of [vessels](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/Vessel) may take mail contracts.
* [X-mail](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/X-mail) is often exchanged via [Postal Unions](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/Postal_Union) and [Free Trade Zones](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/Free_Trade_Zone).
* [X-mail](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/X-mail) is a kind of [cargo](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/Cargo) often carried in [Mail Vaults](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/Mail_Vault) or secure [Staterooms](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/Stateroom).

## Contents

* [1 Library Data Referral Tree](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/Express_Boat_Network#Library_Data_Referral_Tree)
* [2 Description (Specifications)](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/Express_Boat_Network#Description_.28Specifications.29)
	+ [2.1 Xboat Specifications](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/Express_Boat_Network#Xboat_Specifications)
	+ [2.2 Xboat Tender Specifications](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/Express_Boat_Network#Xboat_Tender_Specifications)
	+ [2.3 Scout/courier Specifications](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/Express_Boat_Network#Scout.2Fcourier_Specifications)
* [3 History & Background (Dossier)](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/Express_Boat_Network#History_.26_Background_.28Dossier.29)
	+ [3.1 Timeline](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/Express_Boat_Network#Timeline)
* [4 References & Contributors (Sources)](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/Express_Boat_Network#References_.26_Contributors_.28Sources.29)

### Library Data Referral Tree

Please refer to the following [AAB](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/AAB) [Library Data](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/Library_Data) for more information:

* [Imperial Navy](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/Imperial_Navy) (IN)
	+ [Colonial Navy](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/Colonial_Navy)
		- [Subsector Navy](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/Subsector_Navy)
		- [Planetary Navy](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/Planetary_Navy)
	+ [Imperial Star Marines](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/Imperial_Star_Marines) (ISM)
	+ [Imperial Naval Intelligence](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/Imperial_Naval_Intelligence) (INI)
	+ [Naval Depot](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/Naval_Depot)
* [Imperial Army](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/Imperial_Army) (IA)
	+ [Close Orbit and Airspace Control Command](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/Close_Orbit_and_Airspace_Control_Command) (COACC)
	+ [Ground Force Command](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/Ground_Force_Command) (GFC)
	+ [Nautical Force Command](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/Nautical_Force_Command), a [Wet Navy](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/Wet_Navy) (NFC)
	+ [Sylean Rangers](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/Sylean_Rangers)
	+ [Colonial Forces (Planetary Defense Forces)](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/Planetary_Defense_Force)
* [Imperial Interstellar Scout Service](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/Imperial_Interstellar_Scout_Service) (IISS)
	+ **Express Boat Network**
	+ [Imperial Intelligence](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/Imperial_Intelligence) (ImpInt)
		- [IISS Rangers](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/IISS_Rangers)
		- [Rhylanor Taoiseach](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/Rhylanor_Taoiseach)
	+ [Imperial Secret Service](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/Imperial_Secret_Service) (ISS)
* [Mercenaries](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/Mercenary)
	+ [Imperial Rules of War](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/Imperial_Rules_of_War)

## Description ([Specifications](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/Specifications))



*The Express Boat Network:* Like the arteries and veins of a body, the express boat network binds the Imperium together by providing worlds with a constant flow of information and communications for official, commercial, and private purposes.

This system has three basic components:

* The [Express Boat](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/Express_Boat) itself,
* The [Express Boat Tender](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/Express_Boat_Tender), and...
* The [Scout/Courier](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/Scout/Courier).

Each performs a different purpose, and each has its own niche to fill within the whole program.

### Xboat Specifications

The express boat (also called an xboat) is a small, fast ship filled with a pilot compartment, message data banks, and jump drives. The fit is so tight that there is no room even for maneuver drives. Each is capable of jump-4 (four parsecs per week); it jumps, relays its messages to the station on arrival, and then waits to be picked up by a tender, to be refueled and sent on its way with a new load of messages. The local station, meanwhile, accepts messages, encodes them, and transmits them to a tender at the edges of the stellar system. Messages brought by the arriving xboat and intended for further down the line are consolidated with the new data and all are sent on to another xboat already fueled and standing ready to leave. The entire network operates like the pony express — messages are always moving at top speed. Transfer time for messages from one xboat to another can be as short as ten minutes, and is rarely more than an hour.

### Xboat Tender Specifications

The express boat tender is responsible for servicing the xboats when they arrive. It constantly roams about the stellar system, picking up newly arrived xboats, refueling them, performing minor maintenance operations, replacing fatigued pilots, and generally seeing to the welfare of the xboat station. The tender also carries data banks which relay messages to the xboats just before they leave for the next system. It also carries replacement pilots for the xboats.

### Scout/courier Specifications

The scout/courier is the final part of the network, although this type of ship is not restricted to working with the express boat system. The xboat network is a general framework of routes connecting major worlds and population centers with other similar worlds. Economic considerations make it impossible for the network to reach every single world in the Imperium; the scout/courier is used to fill the gaps. When a message can no longer be forwarded by xboat along the major routes, it is transferred to a scout/courier which then carries it to the specific world in question.

* Main routes are plotted to come within several parsecs of every star system in the Imperium, so the added transit time is rarely more than an extra three or four weeks.

## History & Background ([Dossier](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/Dossier))

The X-boat network is a vital part of maintaining communications throughout the [Imperium](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/Third_Imperium).

* The express boat (abbreviated X-boat) system, established originally in [624](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/624) and expanded to cover the entire Imperium by [718](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/718), cuts this communication time by nearly 75 percent. Selected locations along major trade routes are established as sites for [express stations](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/X-Boat_Station), which are orbital facilities which service and refuel the X-boats on their communications runs.
* It can literally take months to years for information to cross Imperial-controlled space. Some estimates state that it can take up to four years for information to travel from the Imperial core to certain border areas.

### Timeline

* ([624](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/624)): The Express Boat Network is first set up and made operational.
* ([718](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/718)): The system matures to cover all of [Imperial Space](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/Imperial_Space).
	+ It can now grow with the [Third Imperium](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/Third_Imperium) as it grows and as the [interstellar economy](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/Interstellar_economy) and [star lanes](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/Star_lane) expand.

# X-mail



Logo of the IISS X-Boat Service.

**X-mail**, [Xmail](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/Xmail), or [Express Mail](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/Express_Mail) is a term for interstellar mail carried in-between the [stars](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/Star) (...and their associated [mainworlds](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/Mainworld)) by various kinds of mercantile [starcraft](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/Starcraft).

* It is normally transported by [X-boats](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/X-boat) although [subsidized merchants](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/Subsidized_merchant), [tramp freighters](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/Tramp_freighter), [couriers](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/Courier), and many other kinds of [vessels](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/Vessel) may take mail contracts.
* It is often exchanged via [Postal Unions](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/Postal_Union) and [Free Trade Zones](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/Free_Trade_Zone).
* It is a kind of [cargo](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/Cargo) often carried in [Mail Vaults](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/Mail_Vault) or secure [Staterooms](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/Stateroom).

## Contents

 [[hide](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/X-mail)]

* [1 Description (Specifications)](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/X-mail#Description_.28Specifications.29)
	+ [1.1 Image Repository](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/X-mail#Image_Repository)
	+ [1.2 Mail Cargo](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/X-mail#Mail_Cargo)
	+ [1.3 Selected Forms](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/X-mail#Selected_Forms)
* [2 History & Background (Dossier)](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/X-mail#History_.26_Background_.28Dossier.29)
	+ [2.1 Abbreviated History](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/X-mail#Abbreviated_History)
	+ [2.2 Primary X-mail Ship Types & Classes](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/X-mail#Primary_X-mail_Ship_Types_.26_Classes)
* [3 References & Contributors (Sources)](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/X-mail#References_.26_Contributors_.28Sources.29)

## Description ([Specifications](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/Specifications))

A variety of mail types exist from old-fashioned paper missives, to bulky packages, to crates of message tablets, to electronic messages, and more. Mail is typically carried within a secure [Mail Vault](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/Mail_Vault) by contract specification although mail might be transported otherwise when vaults are not available. A very wide variety of messaging and communications technologies exists throughout [Charted Space](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/Charted_Space). [[1]](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/X-mail#cite_note-1)

Despite the name X-mail or *Express Mail,* it can sometimes be quite slow, taking weeks, months, or even years to reach its destination. In the case of [misjumps](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/Misjump), some mail has even been recorded as taking decades or even centuries to reach its destination due to time dilation effects. And, of course, some mail *NEVER* reaches its destination. [[2]](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/X-mail#cite_note-2)

However, within the core sectors of the [Third Imperium](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/Third_Imperium), X-Mail arrives within twice the minimum time between [systems](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/System) (...usually twice a week for many systems and several times a day in more frequented systems), along the [X-Boat Routes](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/X-Boat_Route), with 99.974% reliability. [[3]](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/X-mail#cite_note-3)

### Image Repository

1. A typical [Purcell class Express Boat Tender](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/Purcell_class_Express_Boat_Tender), one of the prototypical [Express Boat Tenders](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/Express_Boat_Tender).


### Mail Cargo

*Mail Cargo* is a special form of freight, typically consisting of large [data storage drums](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/Mail_Drum) which contain a vast amount of information that must be transported from one world to another, but is not vital enough to be entrusted to the [X-Boat](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/X-Boat) service or a private courier. [[4]](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/X-mail#cite_note-4)

### Selected Forms

*Forms:*

1. [IS Form 6 Xboat Message](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/index.php?title=IS_Form_6_Xboat_Message&action=edit&redlink=1)
2. [IS Form 7 Xboat Image Facsimile](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/index.php?title=IS_Form_7_Xboat_Image_Facsimile&action=edit&redlink=1)

## History & Background ([Dossier](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/Dossier))

The sheer size of the [Third Imperium](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/Third_Imperium) means that ordinary communications must depend on [ships](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/Ship) travelling along the [main](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/Main) [trade routes](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/Trade_route), making [Regina (Regina / Spinward Marches 1910)](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/Regina_%28world%29) nearly four years out from the Imperial [Core Sector](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/Core_Sector).

### Abbreviated History

The [express boat](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/Express_boat) (abbreviated [X-boat](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/X-boat)) system, established originally in [624](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/624) and expanded to cover the entire Imperium by [718](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/718), cuts this communication time by nearly 75 percent. Selected locations along major [trade routes](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/Trade_route) are established as sites for [express stations](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/X-Boat_Station), which are [orbital facilities](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/Space_Station) which service and refuel the X-boats on their communications runs. Often an [express boat tender](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/Express_boat_tender) serves as the station.

The Xboat System was established by [Empress](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/Empress) [Arbellatra](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/Arbellatra) in [624](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/624), and expanded to cover the entire Imperium by [718](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/718). It has been expanding to cover new areas of the [Third Imperium](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/Third_Imperium) ever since. Some political theorists think that the Imperium may have reached the practical limits of expansion possible for [TL-15](http://wiki.travellerrpg.com/TL-15) communications and transportation technologies.