

# Technology Today

Technology.Today@worldnet.att.net

Alan Pierce

## The Seiko MessageWatch™

**T**HE Holy Grail in watch technology will finally be reached when the famous Dick Tracy watch becomes a reality. If you are asking "Who is Dick Tracy?" a short description of the man and his watch are appropriate. Dick Tracy first appeared as a syndicated comic strip character around the early 1930s. As you can see, in fiction, a two-way wristwatch communicator has been around almost 70 years.

The Seiko MessageWatch™ doesn't yet allow its owner the convenience of cellular voice communication. The watch does perform activities that no wristwatch has performed before, making it a worthy topic for this month's



Photograph courtesy of Seiko Communications of America, Inc.

column. Its small LCD screen (see illustration) provides both paging communication and personal special services. These services include financial market closings, local weather forecasts, air pollution index, daily sunburn index, professional and college sports scores, winning lottery numbers, and even regional ski and surfing conditions.

To perform these functions, each watch has its own phone number. It is this number or the Seiko Message Center on the internet ([www.messagewatch.com](http://www.messagewatch.com)) that people use to beep you or send you messages. Messages are limited to a number of standardized alphanumeric

short messages that include call home, come home, voice mail, email, or call the office. The sender can also transmit up to 10 different coded messages. Here, a code #1 could mean that you are ready to be picked up at a predetermined place, or a code #5 could mean you will meet at your favorite restaurant. Each message that is sent can be marked urgent, and it is possible to even send a 16-character custom message directly to the watch.

At the website, watch owners can send themselves scheduled meeting reminders or retrieve messages that contacts have left. The watch can also inform you when a voice message has been sent to the Seiko Communications Center or, in most cases, your current voice message provider.

The facts listed above indicate that this is a pretty good communications device that can be strapped to your wrist. But is it an accurate time piece? The watch itself contains a Seiko quartz movement. To upgrade this level of time-keeping accuracy, the watch receives an update 36 times a day from the NIST atomic clock in Boulder, CO.

To perform all of its functions, the Seiko MessageWatch™ contains an FM micro-radio receiver. Carrier signals are transmitted by radio stations in each market where the watch is currently sold. If you travel outside of your signal area, your messages and possibly your time-keeping updates are placed on hold for transmission when you are once again in range of the signal. Until now, transmission limitations have placed constraints on the availability of the watch to the East and West Coasts of the United States and the Netherlands. The watch does meet international broadcast standards, and Seiko is currently working on international agreements to provide full planet coverage. **TD**

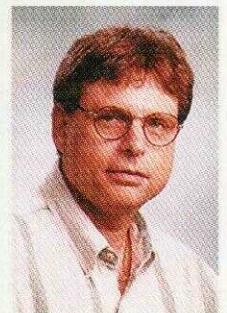
### Recalling the Facts

1. What is the most significant difference between Dick Tracy's watch and the Seiko MessageWatch™?

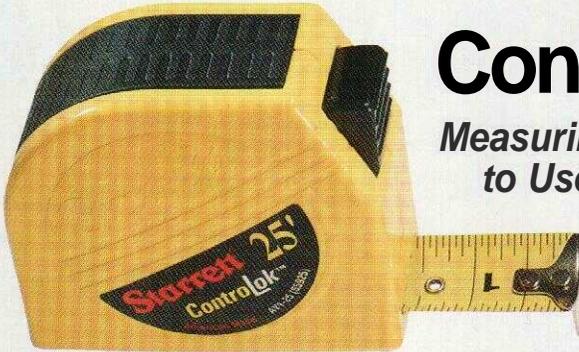
2. What is the most significant difference between a standard wristwatch and this Seiko watch?

What kind of messages can this watch receive?

3. List two very different operations performed by the watch's FM receiver.



Alan I. Pierce is a professor, Department of Technology, Elizabeth City State University, Elizabeth City, NC 27909.



## ControlLok.

*Measuring Made Easy to Use and Read.*

**Innovative features offer control and ease-of-handling.**

- ◆ Blade auto-locks when thumb-pressure is released. No snap backs!
- ◆ Top-lever position eliminates accidental retraction (common in bottom-lever designs).
- ◆ Compact size and contoured ergonomic design features rubber top-grip for comfort and ease-of-handling.
- ◆ Rugged, high visibility yellow case with heavy-duty 1" x 25' blade and triple riveted Tough-Tip® blade protector to eliminate breakage.
- ◆ Also available with 1/8" fractions printed on the blade for fast, convenient reading.

Rapid-Read™ (Catalog #AR1-25F) is available in a high visibility yellow case with a 1" x 25' blade.



**AMERICAN MADE**

# Starrett®

**Innovation with value - nobody else measures up!**

The L.S. Starrett Company, 121 Crescent Street, Athol, MA 01331  
Tel: (978) 249-3551 • FAX: (978) 249-8495

Visit Starrett on the web at [www.lsstarrett.com](http://www.lsstarrett.com)