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Federal Communications Commission

# EMCOMM

## Amateur Radio's Highest Calling

The FCC especially appreciates those FCC Amateur Radio Licensees who provide volunteer emergency radio communications to the governments and residents of State and local governments and Volunteer Organizations Active in Disasters (VOADs).

**Tip:** Ensure you have a minimal “Go Kit” in your car for emergencies.

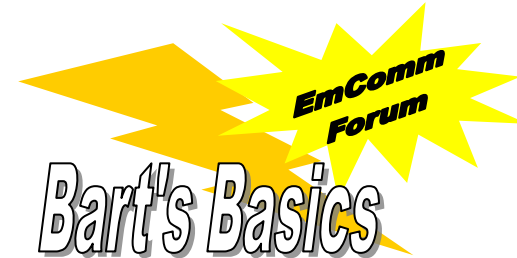
This topic is the subject of whole articles. However, as a minimum, you should carry the following items in your vehicle besides your mobile rig:

- 2-meter hand held
- Paper and pencil
- Spare fuses
- First Aid Kit
- Flashlight
- Extra batteries (alkaline battery holder is a plus)
- Copy of FCC license and County-issued ID for access to the EOC
- Earphone / headphones
- Appropriate clothing
- Food/snacks and water
- Electrical and duct tape
- Cheap Volt-Ohm-Meter

*Next Step: Join your local Emergency Communications Team!*

### For More Information:

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## Ten Tips to Make You a Better Communicator!

- 1 Ensure your transceiver is working.
- 2 Ensure your microphone is located where it won't be keyed accidentally.
- 3 Ensure you are tuned to the proper frequency.
- 4 Don't “ker-chunk” the repeater.
- 5 Ensure you know how to set the CTCSS (PL tone) without the manual.
- 6 Pause a second before speaking.
- 7 Communicate Clearly.
- 8 Adjust for background noise and interference.
- 9 Use Plain Language.
- 10 Ensure you have a minimal “Go-Kit” in your car for emergencies.



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**It's Polite Conversation.** The first thing that comes to mind, is that good radio procedure is merely polite conversation in a normal situation. However, when we find ourselves operating in an emergency radio situation, it is *absolutely* required. On further reflection, one might note that these practices apply to everyone who speaks into a microphone.

**1 Ensure your transceiver is working.** Have you ever gone somewhere in a hurry and noted when you arrived that your rig wasn't working? Forget to recharge those batteries? Forget a connecting cable? Loose connections? No spare fuse on hand?

**2 Ensure your mike is located where it won't be keyed accidentally.** You've heard of "hot mikes" or "open mikes." This can be caused by the mike resting in a location that allows it to easily key itself. Some people have even been known to be sitting on their mike! Use a *mike hook* and keep everyone happy.

**3 Ensure you are tuned to the proper frequency.** Have you ever keyed the mike and no one answered? Keyed it again and the repeater courtesy tone did not sound? Maybe you nudged the memory switch or the tuning knob. Don't forget to monitor your local emergency radio net frequency if you suspect an emergency is in progress.

**4 Adjust for background noise and interference.** If you are a police officer running "code," you may not realize how hard it is for dispatch to hear you over your siren. And you frankly may not care much because you have to pay attention to driving to get somewhere fast. So we can excuse you. However, have you ever listened to someone on the repeater who had his radio, iPod, MP3, or CD player turned up, was talking from the highway in a convertible, or just had his windows rolled down? The wind howling down his mike usually won. Or maybe you have to talk near loud conversations, generators, announcements, helicopters, or loud machinery.

The solution? *Cup your hands around the mike.*

You already know that most mikes work best when your mouth is a couple of inches away from its front grill and that talking at it from its side rather than head-on works better. If you get any closer to the mike, you will only sound like a bad sixties Rock 'n Roll singer.

**5 Communicate Clearly.** Before transmitting, ask if the frequency is in use. There may be a pause in communications there during an ongoing net operation.

Always make it clear who you are and who you are talking to.

State the name or call sign of the station you are calling followed by your name or call sign. For example, "KI4SLQ this is KI4VLR."

In a formal communications situation, you would be calling a Net Control Station. Once you have called the Net Control Station, you will then be told to proceed or to stand by.

Ask permission of the Net Control Station before you contact any other station on that frequency. For example, "Net Control this is K3KAT. Request informal with N3GQ."

A good Net Control Station will then direct stations requiring direct communication off the main frequency to a named, pre-arranged tactical net. For example, "K3EP call KJ4CCU on Tactical One," requiring the two stations to shift to a secondary tactical frequency labeled Tactical One.

During events such as Bike-a-Thons, marathons, and parades, tactical call signs are often more useful than regular call signs. "Milemarker One" and "Water Point One" are more descriptive in these situations. Remember that all stations must still ID with their FCC call signs every 10 minutes. The repeater's call sign and group's name are normally used by the Net Control Station when used in this manner. For example, "This is Net Control station WW4VA for the Stafford County Amateur Radio Association operating in support of the Parkridge Elementary 5K Run."

**6 Pause a second before speaking.** After keying the mike, allow the repeater relays to do their thing before you speak into the mike. Otherwise, your first words will be clipped off.

**7 Ensure you know how to set the CTCSS (PL tone) without the manual.** Have you ever tried to access an unfamiliar repeater and didn't know how to change the CTCSS tone on your rig? How many menu items did you have to go through to find the right commands?

**8 Don't "ker-chunk" the repeater.** Not only is it illegal to key a transceiver's mike without identifying yourself, it is annoying to everyone who is monitoring the frequency.

**9 Use Plain Language.** It is especially important to use clear communications during emergencies. Speak slowly and clearly. Like your English teacher used to say, "Enunciate and articulate." Think before you talk.

Keep your transmissions brief.

Pause every 30 seconds during lengthy transmissions – this allows the receiving station to catch up while writing it all down – and allows other stations with priority traffic to break in.

USE PLAIN ENGLISH. Don't use slang, jargon, or acronyms that could confuse others listening.

When transmitting numbers, fourteen can sound like forty, fifteen like fifty, etc. Say the number in two different ways, such as, "There are forty – four zero – cars in the pileup." When the noise level is high, count up to the number, such as, "There are four – one, two, three, four injured persons on scene."

Say "Affirmative" and "Negative" instead of "yes" and "no." They are easier to understand over the radio.

The ARRL communications procedures require the use of "Roger" to indicate a transmission has been received correctly (2005 ARES Field Resources Manual, p. 61). Other acceptable words are "Understood" or "Acknowledged." Some hams use "QSL," but this is considered as jargon in a formal net, as is the use of "QTH" rather than "location."

If you are in a busy net, say "Over" when you have finished what you are saying on the air for that exchange. If no further communication is expected, conclude with the word "Out." Never say "Over and Out," unless you are rehearsing for a part in an old war movie.

Remember that there are many people listening to you when you use the local repeater. Communicating in a professional manner speaks well for you and the Amateur Radio Service you represent.