

EMRG Article #4: OARC Groundwave – March 2009

I want to start by thanking the folks at the January OARC meeting who took away EMRG projects as bags of parts and brought back completed equipment. These are things that EMRG needed built and they each take a bit of time. There seems to be some interest in people doing these small one of projects, so I will keep bringing some in when they are available. Thanks OARC for the help!

This month I want to talk about equipment for emergency communications. The most common equipment used for emergency communications is VHF FM. The choice of hand held radio or mobile is personal and often based on your available resources. There is no right or wrong answer. It is a hobby, so you should go with what works best for your wallet and the way you will use the radio day to day.

The two important criteria for an emergency communications radio are portability and sustainability. In other words, you need to take the radio to where it is needed, such as inside a shelter (bolting it in your house or your car limits the usefulness significantly) and you need to be able to operate effectively for long periods of time (hand held batteries alone may not be enough).

If you have some extra money and don't want to remove your radio from the house or the car, one option is to pick up a used VHF mobile at the local hamfest. It doesn't need to be beautiful, with all the latest features. While your at the hamfest is a good time to look for a length of coax, an external speaker and an antenna to enhance your emergency communications kit (or maybe next year).

If you own or are buying a hand held radio, get the battery pack that takes AA batteries. You can keep some extra batteries on the shelf for a long time and you probably have something else that uses AA batteries, so you can keep them fresh. Get a DC adapter for your hand held radio, so you can operate using an external power source such as a power supply or gel cell battery. This will allow the radio to use other power sources that can last a long time.

As mentioned in a previous article, people are the most important resource for emergency communications. There are always radios available, so building up your own equipment can be done over time, as you have funds available. The benefit of having your own equipment is that you are ready to go, with equipment know.

Once you have a radio, you can begin to add some accessories to improve the effectiveness of your system. Headphones are a must have item in most operating locations. The EMRG headphone control box is another great thing to add to your kit. This unit allows you to have 2 sets of headphones and a speaker, each with their own volume control. The plans are available on the EMRG web site. http://www.emrg.ca/EMRG-212_Headphone_Control.pdf

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