

## Umpires and VHF marine radios ...

Revised by Sam Fisher, February 2009

The radios used by Rowing BC are standard marine radios. This means that we have to share the discrete channels with other marine users. In the past we have been using channel 69, however we will now be using other designated VHF marine frequencies. We should be using channels 67, 68 or 73, **NOT 69!!** FYI, a link to BC West Coast channel usage can be found here: [http:// xyz](http://xyz).

We have two models of radio. The older radios [only found in the Interior and the Lower Mainland] are ICOM, and the newer [the submersible ones] are WestMarine. The Lower Mainland has five of the WestMarine radios, and the rest are the ICOM model.

The radios are operated on the *LOW* power setting, not only in order to preserve battery power, but also to reduce the chance of interference with other users of the same channel. These radios have a range of approximately 5 kms, and will usually last the whole day with normal usage.

If the system has worked properly, the radios should be fully charged at the start of the day, and locked onto the settings that should be in use - i.e. it should be a case of turn it on and be ready for immediate use.

After getting your radio from the head umpire, verify on the LCD display that:

- the battery is charged [check the battery power symbol];
- it is set to the correct channel;
- it is on the low power setting [the ICOM should say "LOW", the WestMarine "L"];
- it is locked [the key symbol or the word LOCK].

## Setting up the radio

What should you do if the settings are incorrect? If the radio is locked, it must be unlocked before any setting can be altered.

### Locking/unlocking the radio.

The method of locking/unlocking the radio differs according to the model:

- For the **WestMarine** radios, the lock key is immediately below the PTT key - the key you depress in order to talk. Holding the lock key down for two seconds will switch between the lock states - i.e. from locked to unlocked or vice-versa.
- For the **ICOM** radios, to lock or unlock the radio requires that the H/L/LOCK button be held down for one second. As above, it will toggle between the lock states.

## **Channel mode selection.**

Both models have two channel modes. One is WX [weather] mode, which offers 16 channels, and the other is call mode - the mode in which we always work.

- On the ICOM radios, press the CH/WX button to toggle to the other mode.
- On the WestMarine radios, press the WX/ALERT button to toggle to the other mode.

## **Country modes.**

The radios support three country modes: USA, International and Canadian.

- On the ICOM radios, press the CH/WX/UIC button for one second to select the next country.
- On the WestMarine radios, press the SQL/UIC button for two seconds to select the next country.
- In Canada, we should be using the "C" mode.

## **If the channel is incorrect.**

Both models have up and down buttons [solid triangles], which are used to select the channel.

## **If the power is not set to "LOW".**

- On the ICOM radios, press the H/L/LOCK button to toggle between the various power settings.
- On the WestMarine radios, press the H/L button to toggle between the various power settings.

## **Using the radio**

Make a test transmission to other users to assure yourself that it is working correctly.

When on the water, protect the radio (where possible) from the elements. Although they are supposedly water-resistant, over time they may become less so. Take care not to drop the radio in the bottom of the boat, and please don't lose it overboard! The harnesses are intended to ensure that the radio is always available for use, and that the radio is held securely. Be aware that the wide strap at the base of the radio is inadequate to hold the radio in the harness: the narrow strap that goes around the antenna is what ensures that the radio will not fall out.

What happens if the battery dies on you? In the case of the WestMarine radios, there isn't much that you can do - an exchange for a fully-charged radio is the only option. For the ICOM radios, you can remove the battery case [turn the radio off first], remove the batteries and replace them with spare batteries. Remember to switch the battery-type selector from "Ni-Cd" to "alkaline" if you are putting in alkaline batteries.

**If you encounter an emergency situation that requires immediate assistance from the safety boats or other regatta personnel, identify clearly the nature of the situation, the location and what is required. Safety and distress situations have priority over all other radio traffic.**

## **Here are some general recommendations in radio usage ...**

- Listen first to make sure the channel is clear before you transmit!
- Know what you're going to say before starting the communication.
- (Where possible) hold the radio (or microphone) about 1 or 2 inches in front of you. Speak normally, although this may be difficult in a noisy environment.
- When trying to contact another user, identify the user first and then identify yourself.
- When the user answers your call, make your message clear and concise. Pronounce words clearly. Don't slur sounds or run words together. Speak at a moderate rate and keep the pitch of your voice constant.
- Keep it relatively brief as other users may be waiting to use the channel.

## **Voice-procedure specifics.**

A radio check, or test transmission: something along the lines of "***This is Wayne, radio check, over***" works well. In our informal usage, a reply of something like "***Loud and clear***" would be good.

Initiating a conversation: For example, "***Finish line, this is the Starter.***"

If the need arises, it is quite possible to change the channel. Coordinating the change is what needs some attention. Typically this would be at the call of the Head Umpire. The formal procedure would be for the head Umpire to announce "***All umpires, switch to channel 71. Please confirm. Over***". Each umpire should then respond saying "***This is Fred, acknowledge switch to 71, over***". When everyone has acknowledged, the Head Umpire would say "***All umpires, switch to channel 71 now, Out***". Everyone should then unlock their radio, switch to channel 71, lock the radio again, and then the chatter can begin again. In our circumstances, getting everyone to respond will be a challenge!

If you have the scenario where you can hear both parties attempting to talk to each other without success, you can offer to relay a message. Call both parties, and make the offer: something like "***Wayne and Jane, you can relay through me***".

## **Making life easier:**

Always check that the other party is ready to copy before initiating your message.

If you need to send large quantities of material [e.g. sending the starter the lanes and crews for a couple of finals], break up what you send into small chunks. I'd recommend that you send no more than three lanes per transmission. Wait for an acknowledgement that you can continue!

Use the phonetic alphabet - see following page.

# International Phonetic Alphabet

<b>A</b>	Alpha
<b>B</b>	Bravo
<b>C</b>	Charlie
<b>D</b>	Delta
<b>E</b>	Echo
<b>F</b>	Foxtrot
<b>G</b>	Golf
<b>H</b>	Hotel
<b>I</b>	India
<b>J</b>	Juliet
<b>K</b>	Kilo
<b>L</b>	Lima
<b>M</b>	Mike
<b>N</b>	November
<b>O</b>	Oscar
<b>P</b>	Papa
<b>Q</b>	Quebec
<b>R</b>	Romeo
<b>S</b>	Sierra
<b>T</b>	Tango
<b>U</b>	Uniform
<b>V</b>	Victor
<b>W</b>	Whiskey
<b>X</b>	Xray
<b>Y</b>	Yankee
<b>Z</b>	Zulu