



Rig Readiness for VHF/UHF Mobiles and Portables RACES Net 19 March 2017

We've mentioned this before... But a couple of little incidents that occurred during our recent Santa Fe Days event highlight some things to work on...

The time for figuring out your rig ISN'T during a Net! Spend some "quality time" with your HT when you are sitting on your easy chair or couch. Have the Users' Manual handy to look stuff up. For very popular radios, there are plenty of free "Beginner Guides" available on the Internet. Some folks recommend the Nifty Guides (available for purchase) for your radio – available at HRO and Main Trading.

Here are some things to practice...

1. Adjust the volume. Many newer radios have dispensed with a knob in favor of buttons or menus.
2. Adjust the squelch.
3. Change bands.
4. Change frequencies using
 - a. VFO
 - b. Stored memories.
5. Change between repeater modes to simplex.
6. Configure CTCSS tones.
7. Change power. Note that memory channels typically store the output power as well. You may have adjusted the power, but it will revert to whatever is stored in memory if you power off and back on. Also note – on some models of Wouxun, Baofeng/Puxeng HTs when programmed with software, recalled memory channel settings (including power and tone) cannot be changed from the keyboard!
8. Lock the keyboard. When you shove your HT into your pocket, you'll want to keep your carefully-configured settings.



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9. If you have a Yaesu brand product, learn how to turn on – and **especially how to turn OFF WIRES-X mode**. WIRES-X transmits a very distracting tone when first keyed up, and tends to cut off the first few syllables of your transmission

Practice your mic technique. Most hand microphones require close-talking. Speak in a normal tone of voice—do not shout. It's good practice to talk across the mic rather than directly in front of it.

This is especially important in a noisy environment. If you shout into the microphone loud enough to hear yourself, you are distorting the signal so badly that the person on the other end may not be able to hear or understand you. Instead, practice speaking into the microphone in a normal tone. It can be very difficult to operate under noisy conditions, but it is a skill that you would do well to learn.

A lot of hams have found that a “tactical” earpiece microphone style works better for noisy “public service” events. These are available from a variety of sources and vendors. If you get one of these it is a good idea to have someone else critique your transmitted audio quality – I have discovered that my tactical set sounds muffled, so some microphone modifications are in order.

BTW, do you even know where the mic element is located? It is sometimes possible to cover it with your hand.

For portable rigs, keep your battery charged and ready. The night before a scheduled event – remember to put the HT on charge, so it is peaked up and ready to go. It's always a good idea to have on-hand a back-up battery pack. For some HTs, a case that takes AA batteries is available – we highly recommend having one of those. In case of an extended catastrophe, AC power may not be available for a long time... So the ability to recharge a pack may be restricted. But AA alkaline Batteries are readily available and have a decent shelf life. At least they will provide the means to communicate if necessary.

In previous sessions at Sandy Lake Park, we did some Signal & Range testing to prove that the entire park can be easily worked from HT to HT, using standard antennas – on simplex – using LOW power.



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It's always good Ham procedure to use the LOWEST RF power necessary to provide good communications; in a busy event using low power can stretch your battery time significantly.

Those of us who own the reliable and terrific Yaesu FT-60R HT need to be especially vigilant. The headphone plug/jack design has an issue... If the plug backs out of the jack just a bit – the HT will go into transmit mode without you being aware of it... Which will jam the frequency (and drain your battery quickly.) Wrapping a strong rubber band or Bongo tie around the HT to help hold in the plug are low-cost “insurance” policies to prevent this.

Finally, practice practice practice. In a fast-paced situation, you'll have it well in hand.

73 de David K5GIL
