

Hot Tips

Good info for the new ham, and old stuff to refresh your memory



The value of broadcast radio

With all that we discuss regarding two-way radio, especially amateur radio, is it possible that **broadcast radio** might also be useful during an emergency? Broadcast radio is the one-way AM/FM radio we're used to hearing in our cars or personal headsets. And it turns out that broadcast radio could be a life-saver during a disaster or other widespread incident.

In most US states, government agencies have agreements with [a few local broadcast radio and television stations](#) to issue bulletins, alerts, or updates for large-scale incidents such as hurricanes, tornadoes, earthquakes, chemical spills, and even terrorist attacks. They use these news outlets to disseminate much-needed real-time information regarding evacuations, sheltering in place, danger spots, food and medical locations, and much more.

Using broadcast radio, government and news outlets can get more information to you in a shorter amount of time, partly due to reduced time-to-production. They can tell you when the air has cleared, whether it's safe to venture outside, or of other places you can shelter and receive the food, help, and care you might need. Broadcast information might be able to offer next-step instructions on how to navigate the current crisis and help you move to safety, or to simply provide you and your family some peace-of-mind.

Research and collect in advance a list of local and state-designated radio stations you can turn to in emergencies. Often, stations across the state will be linked together to provide nearly statewide coverage, depending on the incident. Either program them into your radio or store the list with your radio.

Portable broadcast radios can be very small and inexpensive. Chances are, they'll run on a



couple of small batteries, so you'll need to keep that in mind when you're storing one. And if you purchase a unit with a [hand crank](#), you'll have nearly unlimited power available for it. Every few months, like when you check your grab-and-go bag and smoke detectors, turn on your broadcast radio that you've packed away, just to be sure it's still operational.

So, while you're planning for a disaster with ham radio in mind, be sure to include broadcast radio as part of that plan. Besides, broadcast radio can provide music, talk, sports, and other entertainment that might give worried people a small distraction from the emergency at hand, and lift the spirits of otherwise unhappy or anxious children. Also, during an emergency or alert the silence can be deafening, so a little irrelevant noise can go a long way to help calm listeners.