

Hot Tips

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



Correcting others over the radio

You might have been listening to two people talking on the radio. Things were going well, but suddenly you noticed that one of them made a mistake. He accidentally said, "10-4" or he said, "broadcast" instead of "transmit" or he let loose with a swear word, or he hadn't given his call sign in eleven minutes. For some of us, our inclination might be to jump on and let the person know what he did wrong, because we are *righteous*, we know best, and we're trying to *set the record straight* by casting that first stone.

Alright, that's a little extreme, but we do find that, occasionally, we feel the need to correct somebody's mistake in front of two hundred other listeners. Still, is there ever a time when it's appropriate to correct somebody over the radio? Well, yes, especially if the facts being conveyed might hold some significance, and it's important that all listeners understand the correction, like the time or date of an important event, or the address of an incident, or a life-threatening detail omitted from a verbal report.

Leave the correction to others

The first rule to correcting others on the radio is, *just don't*. If the information you're attempting to correct is not that important, or the correction can be made by somebody else, just let it go. Chances are, the person who made the mistake already knows he made the mistake. You're not the ham police, and he's likely not a ham criminal. Furthermore, you should decide by your listening audience, whether *you are the person* who should announce the correction, or leave that to somebody else, whose job that is.

Is the correction really necessary?

The second rule is to *use good judgment*. Ask yourself whether this is a correction that really

needs to be made, especially in the earshot of many others. On one hand, it's easy to justify making a correction about a vital piece of information that was announced inaccurately, such as a phone number, a medical need, or the name of a contact official. On the other hand, if a person accidentally uses a CB or police term, did not leave much space before he keyed up last time, or sings a stanza of "Happy Birthday," it's probably best to overlook and ignore the terrible offense.

You're just being helpful

Sometimes, you might want to announce the correction in the spirit of being helpful, like "I believe your WIRE is turned on" or "Sounds like your battery might be running low," or "Could you repeat your call sign phonetically?"

If you need to correct somebody, and the rest of the amateur radio population needs to hear it, proceed to make the correction using only facts, and do so tactfully. If you lack the social skills to make corrections in a kind and gentle way, be patient, and let somebody else make it. It's an art form that takes a little practice to get right. Also, it's easy to blur the line between correction and criticism, so make your suggestion without criticizing the person. Instead of "You sound terrible," maybe say, "I only caught about half of that last transmission."

My bad

Finally, if you're the person who made the mistake, accept the correction with humility, take ownership of the problem, and freely admit to your mistake, if it's appropriate. Avoid making excuses, like "Nobody's perfect," and never retaliate, like saying "Well, *your* audio sounds just as bad." *Be the bigger adult*, thank the person who gave you the correction, and let it end there.