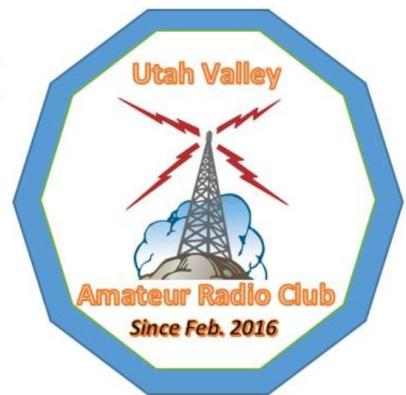# Hot Tips

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

Importance of scanning

Before they became hams, many had learned about searching through public safety and other emergency frequencies for alerts, incidents, and other things that were going down at the moment, using *scanners*. This way, they were usually the first to know about what's going on, and then stayed informed with updates to a situation. Using a ham radio, it turns out that you can do something similar. After programming your radio with important frequencies, you can scan them for information and pertinent chatter.

Most of today's handheld and mobile ham radios are capable of scanning two different ways. One is to scan *all frequencies* in the band, incremented by the amount set by the **STEP** menu setting, which can be 5 kHz, 10 kHz, and so forth. Avoid scanning by searching all the frequencies this way, because of the time it takes to traverse the entire band. Chances of missing important announcements are high, and the scan stopping on noisy or irrelevant frequencies, like the weather channel, will occur way too frequently, costing you precious time if you're looking for real information.

The other is to scan only the frequencies you've *programmed into memory*, but that'll require you to do a little research on what set of frequencies you'd like to scan, to be of most help to you during an incident. For these, I recommend a combination of local repeater, useful simplex, and some public safety frequencies. Many of the public safety frequencies will be part of trunked systems, so you'll likely hear only part of the conversation on them, but it's better than nothing, and you'll often catch the majority of the information by context.

Once these are programmed into memory, you can start the scan by the press of a button or

two. While scanning, if the radio encounters a carrier signal on a frequency it tunes to, it momentarily halts the scan, to allow you to hear it long enough to decide whether that signal is of interest to you. Furthermore, depending on your radio model, you might be able to select how your radio should behave when it encounters a signal. For example, you can set the scanning function in your radio to continue scanning after a few seconds, or remain on the frequency until you prompt the radio to continue the scan.

You might have frequencies programmed in your radio memory that you want excluded from the scan, because of irrelevance. To do this, you can mark the frequency by **SKIP**, so that the scanning function will skip listening to that frequency for a signal. You can do the same for a noisy frequency, because it's a digital signal, or you're near an LED sign, or you use a charger that gives off a lot of noise on that frequency.

After your memory channels are set up, and the noisy ones marked for skipping, you're all set for scanning. Once an incident occurs, and you've taken appropriate steps to ensure your safety and check in to a local net, you can start the scan going, to listen for relevant traffic or life-saving information bulletins.