

Hot Tips

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



What frequencies to use in the back country

Once in awhile club members post that they plan to hike the back country (mountainous, wilderness terrain), where they'll likely be out of range of the most popular repeaters, and certainly cell towers, and wonder what frequencies they can use, in case of an emergency. The *Intermountain Intertie* and the *Sinbad System* are groups of linked repeaters that were installed in anticipation of people hiking or traveling in remote areas of Utah.

Each system connects to a series of repeaters that include some that reach into Utah Valley and Salt Lake Valley, to offer easy access to most homes should you be able to reach one of their repeaters. When hiking in or around the High Uintas, for example, you can access the 147.180+ (*Snowbird*) repeater from a surprisingly wide area. And because it's linked full-time to the Intermountain Intertie, you might be able to use it to easily reach your family.

It's highly advised to locate nearby repeaters where you plan to travel, especially if they're part of these two linked systems. That should give you a way to seek help, should you be out of cell tower reach and in need of assistance, but what if you're doing fine, and want to help others who might be in trouble?

The Wilderness Protocol

To be the help that others might need while you're out in the back country, the ARRL has devised a voluntary program called the *Wilderness Protocol*. Here's how it works.

As you're hiking around, whether you're with cell coverage or not, turn on your radio to **146.520 MHz** simplex (the National Calling Frequency) and listen while you travel. The ARRL suggests that, every three hours on the hour, announce your call sign, and that you're listening in case anybody needs help. Repeat

that two more times, five minutes apart.

I personally make that announcement every hour, to get the attention of the most people, and in case an injured party has less than three hours of battery life left. If somebody does respond to your announcement, use your best judgment as to how to help the person, including gathering details of the emergency, finding their location, carrying supplies to them, and calling 911 if you have cell coverage or for help through a repeater that's on one of the systems.

A couple of words of advice, if you ever find yourself helping an injured person: 1) the most important person is you, so don't jeopardize your safety and become a victim yourself, and 2) document (time, date, place, names, ages, circumstances, etc.) as much as you can. Good Samaritan laws can help protect you from liability to a point, but the rest will be left to your good judgment, which is why it's good to get first-aid certified or CERT certified.

The Wilderness Protocol also suggests **446.000 MHz** simplex (another National Calling Frequency) as an alternative. If you're carrying a dual-band radio, it's good practice to listen and then make the same announcement on both of those frequencies.

Finally, if you're the person in need of help, calling out for help on one or both of those frequencies might just save your life. To get the attention of hikers who are monitoring, use what's known as *Long-Tone Zero* (abbreviated LiTZ for long interval tone zero). Press and hold the **zero Ø** key for three or more seconds. Repeaters that support the Wilderness Protocol will respond to this signal by opening for your transmission. But at the very least, it might get the attention of a ham hiker who's monitoring and willing to help you.