

Strays – Readily available spare fuses

Blown fuses happen. Decades ago, when your house lights went out, one had to take a flashlight down into the dungeon, open the fuse box, and locate the little guy that so valiantly gave its life to save an appliance from an untimely demise. Thankfully, today's circuit breaker has been developed and manufactured inexpensively enough to have found its way into nearly every home, relieving us of the need to stockpile spare fuses. Still, we find that a few things still do use them, such as our vehicles, small appliances, and yes, our amateur radio equipment.



A **fuse** is a device that's designed to freely conduct electrical current until the flow rate exceeds a particular threshold or "rating", after which the device will self-destructively interrupt the circuit. They're often inexpensive and convenient, compared with the cost of the circuit or appliance it's intended to protect from an over-current or other condition.

Sometimes due to a short circuit or reversed battery connection, fuses do happen to open, or "blow", as we like to say. Using your radio on someone else's power system could bring unwanted surprises. Afterwards, you might find yourself digging around in your kit, only to find fuses of the wrong value.

As the late 1950s General Electric projection lamp advertisement said "Buy a pair! Have a spare!". A cheap and easy solution is to attach spare fuses to the sides of the fuse holder with an adhesive. Rubber cement or a common adhesive makes a good bond, and the fuse can easily be pried off with a knife blade when the spare is needed; a two-part epoxy would be too strong. A small piece of duct tape can also be used for those, as well as the glass tubular kind.

Finally, before attempting to replace the fuse right away, you might want to find out why the fuse blew in the first place, or you could end up with a second blown fuse or worse. If the problem (short circuit, incorrect voltage, etc.) is still present, a new fuse won't fix the problem, and can result in a burned out radio or even a fire that can take your home with it.



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