

Here are some quick tips for keeping your VHF/UHF radios operational.

- **Test your batteries!** Usually a handheld radio battery will degrade significantly after a year. A quick voltage measurement can give you an idea of its condition. A fully charged battery should measure at least 1 volt higher than its rated voltage.
- **Invest in a cheap field strength meter.** These can be had for around five dollars at a hamfest. They are invaluable for testing the radio's output, antenna, antenna jack, etc.
- **Do not use a cigarette lighter socket as a power jack in your vehicle.** These plugs and jacks can't provide enough current for a mobile radio. Alternator whine when transmitting is usually caused by a voltage drop and/or ground loop in the wiring. We recommend using 35 amp power pole connectors.
- **Listen to yourself!** Using a second radio to monitor your transmission may reveal a variety of problems. Some of the common ones are unstable transmit, bad microphone cables and bad antennas.
- **Do not carry your portable radio by the antenna.** This carelessness will eventually break either the jack or the antenna.
- **Do not drop your radio!** Merely dropping it once a week adds up to 260 impacts in 5 years.
- **Clean the battery contacts on your portable radio.** An ink eraser can usually be used to clean contacts.
- **Stay away from glass mounted antennas.** They work poorly and should only be used when no other options are available.
- **Buy a wattmeter.** Make certain that it is rated for the power and bands that you intend to use.
- **Make sure your radio is on frequency.** A simple way to do this is to transmit on the unit under test, while also transmitting on the the same frequency with a known working radio. A heterodyne (beat note) of the two signals should be audible on a receiver tuned to the same frequency. If the beat note heard in the receiver is low in frequency, the two transmitters are close to being on the same frequency. If the beat note is high, the unit under test is off frequency.
- **Compare radio performance in general.** We encourage you to check in to local nets, hang out with the LoST Team, and participate in Radio Fun Night.