

Emergency Radios

Last summer, as Hurricanes Katrina and Rita devastated the southern coastline of the United States, millions of Americans took action by evacuating from the coastal regions. Headed inland along the congested interstates, the evacuees learned two critical things: the highway system couldn't cope with the overload and neither could the infrastructure handling their cell phone traffic. They found that in an emergency, they were immobilized and out of touch.

Despite the high-tech convenience of cellular phones, the internet, satellite television, and land lines, they are not without their problems! Both natural and man-made disasters can wipe out many forms of communication in a matter of minutes. With a little planning, you can prepare yourself for similar events in the future and avoid being out of touch with crucial information when you need it the most. Because relief workers are not able to reach everyone immediately after a disaster occurs, a radio that operates without electricity may be crucial to staying informed and proceeding safely during an emergency.

Some criteria for choosing an emergency radio include choosing one that is:

- easy to operate,
- has an effective range,
- inexpensive, and
- readily available.

Battery Operated and Hand Crank Radios



Because power outages frequently accompany emergency situations, choosing a reliable radio that does not require electricity is critical to the safety and welfare of your family's emergency plan. Emergency radios should have the following features:

- hand crank to charge a built-in battery,
- easy enough for a young child to crank,
- solar panel that can generate power during the day,
- at least a half-hour of play time,
- equipped with a flashlight (which will use up the charge much more quickly), and
- lightweight.

Added features available in emergency radios include:

- four-way charging: AC/DC wall adapter, solar cell, self contained hand generator and automobile charger;
- ability to reach local as well as national news and weather reports;
- ability to pick up weak signals; and
- multi-band radio channels: AM/FM/SW (both short wave and broad bands that receive hundreds of channels world wide may be helpful during emergencies).

According to *Consumer Reports Magazine*, important criteria for comparing emergency radios include:

- price,
- length of radio play (in minutes),
- crank time (in minutes),
- weight, and
- length of warranty.

NOAA Weather Radio

NOAA Weather Radio is a service of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) of the U.S. Department of Commerce. Continuous weather information is broadcast 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and originates from local National Weather Service offices around the

country. When appropriate, other natural disasters and national emergencies are broadcast, as well.

NOAA Weather Radio provides up-to-the-second information on severe weather, such as severe thunderstorms, tornadoes, and flash floods. Many weather radio receivers are equipped with a tone alert feature that will sound an alarm when severe weather warnings are issued.

Weather band radios can be purchased from many retail outlets, including electronics, department, sporting goods, and boat and marine accessory stores. When purchasing a radio, consider one with a battery backup, which is crucial since power outages often occur during storms.

Resources

“Are you Ready? An in-depth Guide to Citizen Preparedness.” FEMA. May 15, 2006.

<http://www.fema.gov/areyouready/index.shtm#>

“Preparing for Disaster.” Red Cross. 2006.

http://www.redcross.org/services/disaster/0,1082,0_601_,00.html

“Disaster Services.” Red Cross. 2006.

http://www.redcross.org/services/disaster/0,1082,0_319_,00.html

“Radios for power outages.” *Consumer Reports*. August, 2005.

<http://www.consumerreports.org/cro/electronics-computers/emergency-radios-805-power-outage-radios-battery-charger/overview/index.htm?resultPageIndex=1&resultIndex=1&searchTerm=radios%20for%20power%20outages>

“What is NOAA Weather Radio?” National Weather Service.

<http://www.srh.noaa.gov/fwd/noaaradio.html>

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