

Walkie Talkie Use Guidelines for the LHSCG

The LHSCG uses Walkie Talkies to co-ordinate the movement of groups of cars, sometimes on tours of several hundred miles.

Why we use Walkie Talkies.

We normally caravan in 1 to 3 groups of 6 to 9 cars. Each group has a lead car and a sweep car. The sweep car is the last car in the group. The driver of the sweep car stays in contact with the lead car and advises the leader of problems, delays due to traffic lights, people who took a wrong turn, had car trouble etc. This lets the leader know if there is need to stop and regroup without continually looking in the review mirror and guessing whether all of his or her group is there. It significantly simplifies traveling as a group. Since we have started using walkie talkies, we rarely have problems with the group getting split up and have significantly cut down on the number of stops required to regroup.

Before we started using Walkie Talkies, we often used cellphones and they are still useful. However, there are two major problems with cellphones.

1. It can take awhile to get a hold of a person on the road who isn't on your speed dial because you need to find their number and call them. Or you might not have their number.
2. Many of the places we go have poor cell phone coverage and the odds are that if you want to call another tour participant on a cell phone that they use a different cellphone service, so you will be depending on two cell phone service providers having coverage where you are in the boonies.

Which Walkie Talkies do we use?

Any decent quality FRS or GMRS Walkie Talkie will work for our tours. Please refer to <http://lhsportscars.com> and go to the Information tab for Walkie Talkie selection guidelines.

How do we use them?

We use channel 6. Any channel from 1-7 will allow FRS and GMRS radios to work together, we stick with 6 so people won't have to guess which channel we are using.

We don't use any sub-channels, privacy codes (same thing). Set your privacy code or sub channel to 0 or Off. We don't use privacy codes or sub-channels because different brands of radios are often incompatible at that level and we try to keep things simple.

Please speak clearly in a normal voice with the radio about 2 inches from your lips. If you speak loudly, the sound distorts and makes you difficult to understand. It helps if before you initiate a call you press the transmit button for a second, then wait a couple of seconds before talking. This lets people know that a call is coming through and that they should listen.

It also helps a lot if you say the name or title of the person you are calling and give your own name or title. The sound quality on these Walkie Talkies isn't very good so it's hard to guess who is talking, particularly if you don't know them. For leaders and sweeps, it helps if you use your title, For instance if group 2 Sweep wants to call group 2 Leader, they could say "Group 2 Lead, Group 2 Sweep" to let

Group 2 Lead know the call is for them. The advantage to using “titles” is that the people in the other groups who don't know your names will know that the call isn't for their group. This isn't a military operation so do what's comfortable for you, but please try to let the others know who you calling and who you are.

If you keep the Walkie Talkies up at window level they work better. It's usually enough to just pick the Walkie Talkie up when you hear something if you have it sitting at a lower level. If you get separated from your group, hold it up at window height, that helps with the range.

What are their limitations?

The manufacturers make wildly optimistic range claims for their Walkie Talkies. Sometimes over 20 miles. In reality, they are good for a reliable ½ mile between cars, sometimes as much as mile, and less than ½ mile if there is a big hill between cars. We work around this limitation by keeping our groups relatively compact and not spreading out over ½ mile.

The sound quality is generally not all that good. It helps if we speak distinctly at a normal volume level and keep our messages short and concise.

They won't run much more than a day on a battery charge, Charge them the night before a tour and each night on a tour.

They are essentially a”party line”. You can hear anyone in range that is using the same channel you are on. That's where the limited range works to our advantage. If there are other users on our channel, we will be out of their range in a mile or so. No one has a legal monopoly on usage of a channel. Good manners usually solve the rare usage problem. We don't normally hear many people outside our group and I have never experienced a real problem with other users.

Who should use them?

Everyone on a tour can benefit by having a Walkie Talkie in their car.

The LHSCG presently has 4 Walkie Talkies which are maintained and kept ready for trip leaders and sweeps. As of April 2009, Dick Brewster is the keeper of those Walkie Talkies. There has always been enough other individually owned Walkie Talkies on a tour to equip a 3rd or 4th group if we have that many cars.

The primary users are the group leaders and sweep. Any participant is welcome to bring their own Walkie Talkie but please minimize talking on Channel 6 to brief comments or important trip related information such as lost cars, traffic hazards, physical well being stops, spectacular scenery etc. If you are talking, the leader and sweep can't communicate. For non-trip related conversations, please select another channel. 1 through 7 will work with the widest variety of FRS and GMRS radios