

Walkie-Talkie Use Guidelines for the LHSCG

Everyone on a Tour Can Use Their Walkie-Talkies But Don't Get Too Chatty When You Are Talking, the Leaders and Sweeps Cannot Communicate

Why We Use Walkie-Talkies.

We normally travel 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.

Cell phones are useful also, but have two major problems:

- It can take a while to call a person on the road that isn't on your speed dial because you need to find their number and call them. Or you might not have their number.
- 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 they use a different cellphone service. You will be depending on two cell phone service providers having coverage where you are in the boonies.

Which Walkie-Talkies Do We Use?

Everyone on a tour can benefit by having their own walkie-talkie. We highly recommend that each member purchase their own. Any decent quality FRS or GMRS walkie-talkie will work for our tours. Choose one that allows the use of privacy codes. Most modern walkie-talkies, other than children's toys, allow the use of privacy codes. You can ask the Tour Officer or other members for recommendations on which walkie-talkies work well.

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 also use privacy code 1 (CTCSS 1). This helps to reduce or eliminate extraneous noise on our radios.

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 to press the transmit button for a second before talking. This lets people know that a call is coming through and 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 are calling and who you are.

If you keep the walkie-talkies up at window level they work better. It's usually enough just to 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 which helps with the range.

What Are Their Limitations?

The manufacturers make wildly optimistic range claims for their walkie-talkies. Sometimes they claim over 30 miles. But in reality, they are good for 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 more than 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.

Who Should Use Them?

As we said before, everyone on a tour can use their walkie-talkies. This improves the experience of the trip for all the participants. But don't get too chatty. Minimize talking to brief comments or important trip related information such as lost cars, traffic hazards, physical well-being stops, spectacular scenery, etc.

The Club has 6 walkie-talkies which are kept ready for Tour Leaders and sweeps. The Board Member that is the Tour Officer (see <http://lhsportscars.com/Board.htm>) is the keeper of those walkie-talkies. Members can borrow one of the club's radios on the day of a trip if they are not needed for the leaders and sweeps.