

Gairloch Boat Club Radio Procedure tips

V2.1 September 2024

Make sure that your radio is working properly

It's essential to know before you go out on the water that your radio is fully working. Firstly make sure it turns on, and the channels you want to use and functions (including squelch, see below) work properly. Do a radio check with a colleague on the shore.

If it's a hand portable radio make sure the radio is fully charged, and **fastened securely** to your PFD/lifejacket/person

Practice your Microphone Technique

It's important to have a good microphone technique to convey your messages clearly. Hold the radio microphone one inch from your mouth, speak slowly in a normal tone of voice so you avoid any distortion.

Be brief, disciplined and clear in all your transmission.

You will need to be brief, clear and disciplined when you operate your radio. Think about what you're going to say before you say it. Talk slowly and wait for the other person to reply. During your communication make sure the person you are talking to acknowledges your communication by saying 'Over', or 'Understood' or 'Say again' if it's not. Ensure each transmission ends with 'Over' if a response is expected and 'Out' if it's not. This will pay dividends when you're communicating in very windy conditions, so everyone knows what is happening.

Only use the radio as part of the session or if you need to use it in an emergency. Ask yourself, do I need to send this message? Would it be easier to motor over to the other patrol boat or shore crew if they are nearby.

Squelch

Always make sure the squelch control on your radio is set just at the point where it cancels out static noise but not so far up it prevents you from hearing other radio traffic. If you're not sure how to adjust Squelch, ask someone who does.

There are manuals available in the clubhouse for the types of radio we use.

Politeness is a Virtue

It's a good habit to say please and thank you when using the radio. Thanking other users will make them think more kindly about you.

Watch your language

Don't forget that a VHF radio is open to the world and everyone in range can hear you! Bad language is unacceptable and isn't allowed under the rules in our licence.

Radios aren't toys!

Our radios meet the highest standards of waterproofing and dust proofing. But radios can be damaged due to repetitive mistreatment such as being dropped, chewed aerials (yes, this really does happen!) and swinging the radio by the antenna etc. Continued manipulation of the aerial may break the aerial or reduce its performance.

This may lead to the wrong conclusion that the radio isn't working when in fact the aerial is impaired. Protecting the exterior of your radio will help protect its components, minimising repairs and cost of replacing the equipment.

Charging

For day to day battery charging make sure all the battery contacts are clean from corrosion both on the charger and the rear terminals of the battery. If the contacts are dirty then the battery may not be detected by the radio charger and will not charge the battery correctly. Make sure that you charge your radio batteries in a compatible charger otherwise you could potentially damage your battery and radio.

The Dangers of Salt Corrosion

It's a fact that over time your VHF radio and other marine electronic equipment can suffer from salt corrosion. If corrosion is the bad news then the good news is there are steps to ensure that your VHF radio continues to be your trusty safety aid.

As mentioned in most manuals, it is good practice to clean your radio thoroughly with fresh water after exposure to saltwater. Otherwise, keys, switches and controllers may become inoperable due to salt crystallisation. This simple, practical procedure will ensure that you can prolong the life of not only your VHF radio. If rinsing any other waterproof portable marine electronic equipment that you might be using, ensure it is waterproof before giving it a bath. Don't forget to dry the radio after cleaning it.

Most of our radios float, but it's not a good idea to test them!

Storage

After the radios have been washed to reduce salt corrosion, they should be stored in a clean, dry, cool place. When you store your radio for long periods, e.g. end of the season, you should remove the battery (if the battery is removeable).

Ref <https://www.rya.org.uk/news/top-tips-on-using-your-vhf-radio-during-onboard>