

Info Sheet – Handheld Radios



So you're thinking of bringing / buying a radio for Blaze...

Here at Blaze (and in Australia in general) we use the UHF "CB" Citizen Band which doesn't require a license to use.

One of the biggest users of this system at Blaze are Theme Camps who stay in touch with Black Swan (the Ranger radio dispatch operator) who relay messages to the different teams / departments (who operate on their own set of private channels) and other members / camps.

The channel used by theme camps *and monitored by Black Swan* is **channel 13**.

If you're going to stay in touch with other people or it's not related to Theme Camps / event issues, please use another channel.

Do not use channels 5 or 35 – these are designed emergency channels in Australia.

In short after stepping somewhere away from the noise (and big steel structures) and sheltering your radio from the wind your conversation should go like this –

You	"Black Swan, Black Swan, this is Theo from Kamp Kaos"
Black Swan	"Go for Black Swan"
You	"We need someone to help with a generator at Kamp Kaos at the corner of Esplanade and Halcyon as we have no power"
Black Swan	"Copy that – you need someone to help restore generator power at Kamp Kaos at the corner of Esplanade and Halcyon. We will contact DPW and get back to you shortly."

This exchange shows how quickly you can get hold of someone, explain concisely what you need, where and why and what the action is going to be.

At this year's Blaze Ranger HQ will be equipped with a much more powerful receiver to allow more calls to be received.

If you can't get hold of anyone (probably because you are out of range – Ranger HQ is staffed 24/7) you can always flag down a Ranger (or any event crew) you see wearing a distinctive site radio.

Buying Guide

- A **5W** radio from a **reputable brand** (e.g. Uniden, Motorola or even GME)
- Antenna, antenna, antenna – ever noticed how radios with a good range tend to have annoyingly large antennas that catch on your shirt? 5W of transmitter power is pointless going into an inefficient antenna. Stubby antennas usually mean short range...
- If you see yourself mounting it in a vehicle outside of Blaze or keeping it somewhere central in your Camp consider a large vehicle mount unit with a large external antenna (note – magnetic base antennas almost always need to be mounted on the steel roof of a vehicle to work properly).

- Buy from a CB radio specialist – sure you can get great deals from the big box stores but zero knowledge or advice.
- Removable battery packs (so you can have spare changed batteries) or radios that can use AA rechargables will make high use much easier.

What not to buy:

- Cheap random brands from big box / retail outlets.
- Chinese radios on eBay (e.g. the very popular “Baofeng” units are not approved for use in Australia and do not work on our UHF frequencies).
- Dinky small toy radios.

Other Notes

Be aware that kids love CB radios and even the cheap units can interfere with site operations. Make sure you dial up a quiet channel (not 13!) for them to talk on.

Beware of fancy features like VOX (voice operated) – there’s been at least one incident where a radio in VOX mode was left on change behind a DJ booth. All traffic on that channel (used by the event staff) was flooded with music for half an hour while people searched for the offending device.

Remember that the CB band is shared. Event staff, operations and others are using channels too. If you bump in to them please find somewhere else on the dial to have your conversation. Agencies such as Police, Fire Brigade and others may also be on these shared channels so please be aware of what you say.

Is having a conversation necessary? Maybe you should be out there enjoying Blaze!

Conclusion

I hope this short guide helped you on the path with all things radio - I look forward to hearing you on the airwaves!

Rangerly Love,

Factotum.

Ranger Factotum (Anton) is a multi-year Blazer / Burner with a life-long interest in amateur radio and electronics.

Further Information

- If you want to read more about “best practices” when using a radio why not read pages 8-10 of the [Ranger Training Manual](#)