

# S I T O O T

The hitchhikers guide to ...

## ... operating a pirate radio station

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**In a world of increasing regulation and control, deviance from established modes of behaviour are tolerated less and less. New ways are constantly being discovered by governments to discourage such behaviour. In addition to being regulated by governments, much of the broadcast community is controlled either directly or indirectly by a small group of people who use them to further their own agendas. Pirate radio is controlled neither by the government nor by special interests and so enjoys an unencumbered ability to present alternative expressions to its listeners.**

### Basic station operation

Careful choices regarding station locations, duration of broadcasts, time of broadcasts, and frequency of broadcasts needs to be made in order to minimise the chances of being caught by the authorities

In order to locate "undesirable" radio transmissions, the authorities will utilise direction finding (DF for short) radio equipment. DF equipment utilises a highly directional antenna coupled to a tuner and a field strength meter. After the desired frequency has been selected with the tuner, the operator rotates the DF antenna until he or she obtains a peak reading on the field strength meter and then notes the heading the antenna is pointed in. Next, a vector is drawn on a map beginning at the operator's current location and extending in the direction of the DF antenna's heading. Assuming the "undesirable" radio transmission hasn't moved, successive readings from different locations should intersect at the origin of the transmission.

In practice, because of limitations on the accuracy of the equipment, it is not possible to precisely determine the location of the transmitter from the first set of readings. Usually a second and often third set of readings will be necessary before the location of the transmitter can be narrowed down sufficiently.

The location you broadcast from should not arouse the suspicion of any passing vehicles, police or otherwise. A location that is well hidden from all other vehicles and far enough away from any buildings that might be occupied is one way to avoid unwanted attention. It may be more practical to find a location

that is visible to other vehicles or people but does not arouse suspicion. In addition to having the potential to be a great transmitting location, overlooks are often frequented by sightseers both during the day and evenings. Think about where you would go should the need for a hasty retreat ever become necessary.

After finding a good location to make your broadcasts from, there will be a strong temptation to use that location over and over again for future broadcasts. Resist this temptation. The authorities may have located a site you have used previously, and could be lying in wait nearby for the next time you are scheduled to broadcast. Assume the authorities will scour the area shortly after you leave it so make sure nothing is left behind for them. If there are smooth surfaces around, don't forget about fingerprints. Either wear gloves during your broadcast, or spray everything you might have touched with degreaser before leaving.

It is important to visit the location during the day. This will give you the opportunity to check out the potential site in detail and scout around for the best ways to get to the site and to get away from the site quickly should the need arise pick a location. Relatively high points with a line-of-sight to your listeners are other important things to look for. Think about where you are going to put your antenna.

### Avoiding the authorities

Once the authorities become aware of your operation, they may attempt to apprehend you in the middle of a broadcast. Whenever possible, you should take along someone you trust to your broadcast site and have them stand patrol. They should wear dark clothing and locate themselves where they have a good view of any obvious routes of approach to your broadcast area. A pair of walkie-talkies is ideal for keeping in touch if more than a few tens of feet will separate you.

The key to successfully escaping from the authorities can be summarised as follows: Remaining calm is essential. You should plan several routes of escape beforehand and consider what you will do with your equipment. You will want to pack it up and take it with you. If time doesn't allow, hiding it may be your best option.

The instinctive reaction to the

presence (impending or actual) of the authorities is to flee. The authorities know this and if they are even marginally competent will have taken steps to maximise their chances of capturing individuals employing this method of escape. Unless they have obviously seen you and are actively pursuing you, you should stop and force yourself to look around and consider what options are open to you.

### Dealing with the authorities

Whenever possible, you should take along someone you trust to your broadcast site and have them stand patrol. They should wear dark clothing and locate themselves where they have a good view of any obvious routes of approach to your broadcast area. A pair of walkie-talkies is ideal for keeping in touch if more than a few tens of feet will separate you. Keep in mind that your transmissions could be monitored so watch what you say. Don't use names or other information, which could give away your identity or location.

If the authorities catch you, you should not automatically assume they are aware of your activities. Chances are, they are interested in you for something completely different; trespassing, suspicious appearances, etc.

If they question you about the presence of antennas or radio equipment, tell them that you are an amateur radio operator. If they ask you what you are doing with the equipment, you should tell them you are doing some experiments in radio wave propagation.

At some point, you will learn why they have stopped you and it will become clear whether they intend to arrest you or let you go. As soon as you discover that they intend to arrest you, there are only four words that should come out of your mouth, "I want a lawyer."

If they don't arrest you, you should calmly leave the area and be prepared to lie low for a while.

### Portable operation

If you require more than 25 AH or so of energy, you're looking at automotive batteries. The cost is around US\$75, and they are available with energies from 30 to over 100 AH. You could also run a couple of motorcycle batteries in parallel to double the energy rating, but that is usually not as cost effective as getting an automotive battery.

