

Troubleshooting Radio Problems

Every CERT team should check their radio(s) before leaving the command post. The best way to do this is to find a place where you can see the net control operator and (s)he can see you, but you're not close enough to cause feedback or desensing. Turn on the radio and tune to the proper channel and turn the volume up about half way. If there is radio traffic going on, wait and listen for an opportunity to transmit. Use this time to adjust your volume to a comfortable level. When there is an opportunity, transmit "Control, <your call>, radio check". Hopefully net control will come back with something like "<your call>, loud and clear".

If not, you need to troubleshoot your radio.

Is the radio on?

If you need to, ask a team member or look in the manual for how your particular radio turns on.

Are the batteries dead?

Change the batteries or recharge the radio to see if that solves the problem.

If other people are talking on the radio, but you are not hearing them:

Check your volume, turn it all the way up to see if that is the problem.

Check the channel you are using, be sure you are using the correct one.

Make sure you don't have a privacy channel on. If you do, everyone will be able to hear your transmissions (if they are not using any privacy channel), but you won't hear them. If it is the case, turn off the privacy channel (see your manual).

If you hear other people, but they don't hear you:

You try to transmit, but other radios make a warble or ringing tone, but they don't hear your voice. You are pushing the CALL button, not the PTT (push-to-talk). Find the PTT (usually on the side of the radio) and use that.

Is your radio transmitting when you use the PTT? Be sure you are pushing on the center of the PTT. Be sure to place your finger squarely on the PTT. If it continues to be a problem, compare the problem radio to another. I've seen PTT buttons fail and get sticky. Note too, there can be other buttons on the side of the radio, make sure you are using the PTT.

Be sure to place the microphone close to your mouth but to the side a bit, so you speak across the mic, not directly into it.

Your voice is too quiet, but your signal is strong:

Hold the radio close to your mouth, but not directly in front of it.

Speak loud enough. A normal speaking is good enough for most people, but if you have a particularly soft voice you may have to be louder than normal for you.

Your signal is weak:

This is not likely during a pre-deployment test, but often happens when you are away from the command post.

Check your battery, there is an icon on the display of most radios that shows the level of the battery. If your battery is low the radio may not transmit at full power.

If the battery is OK, switch to a higher output power if possible. If you are not already using the highest power output of the radio, switch to a higher output power.

Move around to find a better position. Radios can be very sensitive to position, and moving just a few feet may be enough to get a clear signal to the other station.