



Beginner's Classroom

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This column attempts to explain some aspect of our hobby each month. The subjects may be technical or they may concern such things as DX practices and traditions. Suggestions for topics are always welcome.

Different Aspects of our Listening Hobby: Part 1

Welcome to www.odxa.on.ca for our first columns available directly on the Internet. For the summer months, I thought that, as a change of pace, we would take a look at how radio is used in various types of work and recreation, and how we can listen in to these transmissions. If you have any suggestions or ideas for these summer columns, please drop me a line at odxa@rogers.com!

Marine Radio

One of the most important items in a pleasure or working boat is a radio transceiver. People have been using radio on the water to communicate position, problems with both weather and water traffic, and in emergencies. In Canada, any person who transmits on a marine radio must have a Marine Radio Operator's Certificate, and must pass a test on radio rules, regulations and procedures in order to obtain the certificate. A ship/boat is only required to have a ship license in order to operate a marine radio if the ship is going to be traveling in U.S. waters.

Although there are approximately 88 channels that marine boats have available, only about 16 are used in Canada. The transmitting frequencies are from 156.050 – 157.425 MHz. Receiving frequencies begin at 160.65 MHz, and are used to receive some of the channels. The main transmitting channels/frequencies to know are as follows:

Ch. 6 (156.3 MHz) Primary calling channel

Channel 13 (156.65 MHz) Bridge to Bridge (call ships)
Channel 16 (156.8 MHz) Prime Emergency channel.
Channel 68 (156.425 MHz) Primary calling channel.

If you are near water, or have a cottage and a scanner, give these frequencies a try, particularly if you know there are stormy weather conditions, a number of boats in the area, or if you know of some emergency situation.

Weather Radio

"Weatherradio Canada is a nationwide network of radio stations broadcasting weather and environmental information 24 hours a day in both official languages directly from Environment Canada's storm prediction centres." This is directly from the Weatherradio Canada website at [http://www.msc.ec.gc.ca/msb/weatherradio/fact_sheet_e.cfm](http://www.msc.ec.gc.ca/msb/weatheradio/fact_sheet_e.cfm).

Weatherradio Canada began in 1977, and currently has over 170 transmitting sites across Canada. There are seven frequencies are located on the VHF band, including 162.400, 162.425, 162.450, 162.475, 162.500, 162.525, and 162.550 MHz. You can check the same website as to the station and frequency used in your region; for example, Toronto operates on 162.400 MHz. All one needs to listen to Weatherradio Canada is a receiver or scanner that can tune what has been generally called the Public Service Band from about 150 – 175 MHz. As a side note, there are also a few Weatherradio Canada stations that operate on the mediumwave band and on FM, and these can be located on various pages of William Hepburn's website.

In the United States, the NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) has a Weather Radio site at <http://www.nws.noaa.gov/nwr/nwrbro.htm>. From this page on the website one can find out information related to weather conditions in your particular state, and then in a specific region within the state. The NOAA Weather Radio system uses the same VHF frequencies as Weatherradio Canada. If you live in Canada or the USA and do not have Internet capability, but do have a receiver/scanner for VHF frequencies, just take a listen on the area between 162 and 163 MHz and you will soon be rewarded with weather forecasts for your area.

There are other ways to obtain weather information via radio, including RAFAX (Weather Radiofacsimile Broadcast) if you are able to decode FAX transmissions. There are stations in Halifax, Resolute and Iqaluit, Sydney, and Inuvik, as well as a number of stations in the United States. You can also find some forecasts on the standard Offshore Marine broadcasting frequencies of 2054, 2514, 2582, 2598 and 2749 kHz, particularly if there are storms and other marine weather conditions happening in your region.

Much of the information on Weatherradio was originally printed in the *Beginners Classroom* in the April 2006 edition of ***Listening In***. If you know of any updates or changes, please let me know and I will place them in a future column during our summer look at "Different Aspects of our Listening Hobby". Until next month, when we'll delve into other interesting ways and means of radio usage,

73, keep smiling and keep listening,
J O E