

## How to Buy

### Two Way Radios (Walkie Talkies) For Car Trip Coordination

This paper attempts to give some general guidelines as to which radios are suitable for organized group car trips.

Walkie Talkies are very useful for keeping a group of cars together on a road trip. Two types are commonly used, Family Radio Service (FRS) and General Mobile Radio Service (GMRS). They will work together.

**FRS and GMRS both share FRS/GMRS Channels 1 through 7. FRS radios are limited to 1/2 Watt transmitting power and GMRS radios operating on channels 1 through 7 are limited to 5 Watts power. Inexpensive GMRS radios are typically 2 to 5 Watts, but radio quality is more important than rated power so don't base your decision on power alone.**

FRS radios do not require an FCC license. GMRS radio users are supposed to buy an FCC license, however, "Estimates of the number of hybrid FRS/GMRS radios sold to date range from 20 to 50 million units or more. This is compared with approximately 80,000 active GMRS licensees (per the FCC database)." (1) Let your conscience be your guide.

Expect to pay \$30 to \$60 for a pair of decent quality Walkie Talkies at a store like Fry's Electronics. Motorola, Uniden, Midland and Cobra are all established brands that for the most part have adequate products. Based on group member's recent experiences, some Motorola's seem to have clearer sound than other radios. The radios that LHSCG purchased in 2011 are Motorola MR350R, \$51 a pair at Amazon.com. They also have a somewhat longer useful range than some others do. They definitely work better than the Unidens the group previously used.

#### ***Important things to look for:***

Get a set of radios with rechargeable batteries and a charger. These radios can go through about a set of batteries a day, so it's nice to be able to just set them in a charging stand at night.

Ask others in your group with Walkie Talkies about their experience. Sound quality is important as most of them have unimpressive sounding speakers. Recent Motorola and Cobra brand radios seem to be above average.

The manufacturers make outrageous range claims, that said, bigger is usually better. However, don't expect much more than a reliable 1/2 mile range between cars. Not even if the radio package claims 25 miles! Under good conditions a full mile between cars is possible, going around a mountain, range may be significantly less than 1/2 mile.

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1 [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/GMRS#Frequency\\_assignments\\_and\\_FRS](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/GMRS#Frequency_assignments_and_FRS)

**Features:** On a group car trip, features other than transmitting and receiving on the one channel out of channel 1 through 7 that the group selects are rarely used. Sub-channels, Privacy Channels or whatever they are called by different manufacturers aren't used on group trips because different brands of radios don't use the same codes. If you want certain features for your personal use, go for it, but extra features are useless on group trips.