

VHF Radio Usage for Dummies



By Paul Donoski

I'm no dummy, but in my home library, I have all the "Dummy" how-to books including *Kayaking for Dummies*. The one important book I don't have is "How to use a VHF radio for Dummies". So, I decided to write my own.

VHF stands for Very High Frequency - that's because they transmit at 156.025 to 163.275 MHz. That's a pretty big and fast number. It doesn't mean you have to talk that fast when using your radio.

VHS vs Cell Phone...

Let me start by dispelling a belief that a cell phone is just as good as a VHF radio for marine emergency use.

1. In an emergency you may not be in a cell phone call area.
2. A cell phone is limited to party to party transmission while a VHF transmission can be received by any number of active VHF receivers (such as near-by boaters).
3. A 911 call can be misdirected to a land based rescue team resulting in critical delays.
4. A cell phone has no direction finding capabilities like a radio signal.
5. With a cell phone, rescuers may not be able to reach you for critical information.
6. With any water exposure you can lose your cell. A good portable VHF with a JIS7 Submersible Rating is extremely reliable. I wear mine on my PFD without protection and after 3 years it is still like new.

With cell phone versus VHF radio out of the way let's get into what features most radios

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Seldon Island Revisited

by Dave Hiscocks

The day started off with weather like no previous Seldon Island campout had ever seen. Blue sky and sun. With the wind at our backs, and an outgoing Spring tide, nine campers and eight day trippers embarked from Goodspeed Opera House.

We set course down river past Rich's Island and east into Chapman Creek. This is not actually a creek but a canal. The channel leading to Chapman Pond is known as the Great Ditch. It was dug a century ago, due to a land dispute between a landowner and commercial shad fishermen. The landowner had blocked passage of the shad netter's boats down the north end of Chapman Creek. It is a beautiful tributary full of a variety of wildlife including great heron, egrets and osprey. From there, we paddled on the east side of the river past Seven Sisters Hills, past Gillette's Castle and into Whalebone Creek. Whalebone Creek turns into an open cove known as Whalebone Cove. It is known for its beauty and fifteen-foot tall wild rice stands which bloom in late summer. Proceeding down river we found a 40-foot driftwood log for everyone to sit and eat lunch. After lunch, still heading down river, the group split, with campers heading into the north end of Seldon's Island and the day-trippers paddling upriver back to Goodspeed.

We rode the current through the creek

undisturbed by boat traffic or jet skis. Seldon's Island was once known as "the neck." In 1854, a severe late spring freshet breached the north end creating Seldon's Island. Seldon's Island in the late 1800s was known for its dense granite. Six hundred Irish and Italian stonemasons labored from May through October at four quarries on the Island.

The men stayed in barracks whose foundations stand to this day. A narrow gauge railroad, located riverside, carried stone to three wharfs to be loaded on waiting ships bound for New York and parts elsewhere. The quarry company went out of business in 1903.

Paddling to the southern tip of the Island, we rounded the Island and headed upriver to Spring Ledge campsite, located across from Deep River landing and Eustacia Island. I was a little nervous about squatter's taking the campsite and having to send Dick Gamble in to kick them out. But that didn't happen. Cheryl Barnaba, who had injured her shoulder, arrived via motorboat along with all the trimmings of a large capacity craft - namely food and beer. What an ending to the start of a wonderful campout!

Waiting also was a good friend of mine, Steve Troy, who arrived in his handmade strip boat to have dinner with us. We all set

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Wayne Smith off of Jamestown, RI.

UHF Radios continued...

have and how you use them.

A. A broad spectrum of radio channels dedicated for different communication purposes from distress calls to boat to boat messages.

B. A rechargeable battery pack providing 10 to 15 hours of operation on a full charge. Radios 3 years or older have Ni-Cad batteries while newer ones now have metal-hydride or lithium batteries which hold greater charges and have a better life.

C. A charging stand that recharges your radio with household voltage.

D. A battery life indicator

E. Selectable transmit power of 5 and 1 watt. 5 watts is normally reserved for distress calls and drains down the charge significantly faster than 1 watt transmission.

F. A selectable lighted display for nighttime use.

G. Reception of NOAA weather channels and storm alerts.

H. Push-To-Talk (PTT) switch which activates radio transmission.

I. A squelch control for setting the threshold of random noise reception.

J. An auxiliary non-rechargeable battery pack as a backup for long trips.

Water and your radio - Kayaking is a water sport and most of the time you are only inches from the surface of the water or you can be below the surface. "Water-resistant" or "waterproof" is only safe if you put your radio in a electronic device dry bag. This means taking your radio out of the bag to use it. In an emergency I don't want to deal with a bag or the risk of losing radio operation due to submersion. Most if not all of the better radios I have seen lately have the JIS7 submersible rating. For a kayaker this is the only way to go.

MAKING CALLS ON THE VHF

• With radio on and paddling along you should be monitoring channel 16 or 9. Channel 16 is for marine emergency and distress calls. In our area Coast Guard District 1, urgent marine info such as storm warnings are broadcast on channel 9. All VHF radios have a button that tunes in the Coast Guard monitored channel 16.

Making a distress call on channel 16.

1. Make sure it is a real emergency situation. A capsized in a ConnYak group paddle doesn't normally qualify. A serious medical emergency on the water definitely would qualify.

2. Depress the PTT switch.

3. Clearly say three times "MAYDAY".

4. Say "THIS IS" spoken once and then identity of kayaks spoken three times. Eg: two sea kayaks, one red over white and the other yellow over white.

5. Give your name and position by latitude and longitude if you know it. Otherwise use your compass bearing (true or magnetic, state which one you are using) and the approximate distance from a well known landmark in the

area. This can be an island or a chart navigational aid.

6. State the nature of your distress (severe illness / capsized, lost your paddle and unable to get back into your boat).

7. Release PTT switch.

8. Wait 10 to 15 seconds, if no reply then repeat your "MAYDAY" call.

• For important announcements such as busy channel crossings at night or in a fog use channel 9 as follows.

1. Depress the PTT switch.

2. Clearly say three times "SECURITAY" (French pronunciation of security).

3. State the nature of the information you want others to know. Eg: This is brown Betsy Bay on channel 9. There are five sea kayaks crossing the Stonington Harbor channel at red channel marker 10 on heading 220 magnetic. All vessels in the vicinity please be advised. Brown Betsy Bay out.

• Channels 68, 69, 71 and 72 are for boat to boat communication. ConnYak group paddles normally use channel 68.

• Channel 13 is for ship to bridge communication. This is both movable land bridges and the bridges of large vessels. In a kayak we will not need to use this channel except in poor visibility in a busy shipping lane it is helpful to listen to what large vessels are doing. Your manual will have all the channels and their designations.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

• Turn your radio on to channel 9 and listen to how people are making their calls. Not all the examples will be proper radio usage. The poor ones will be pretty obvious.

• Always listen before you transmit to avoid "stepping" on another person's call.

• Speak clearly in plain English.

• Foul language or false distress calls are illegal.

• Make your calls short and sweet.

• Remember that anything you say will be heard by anybody in your area tuned to the same channel.

A good kayaker should rarely if ever need to use his VHF for emergencies. It is important to have for that time when the unexpected happens and all your other skills fail.

Selden Island continued...

up camp trying to find level ground for the tents. Each year brings new people and old friends to the island to share stories, laughs and a variety of cuisine. It's a diverse group with many kayaking and life experience stories told. We even had our own fireman at the campout whose vigilance kept us warm and on our toes. Most of all we had fun and enjoyed being outside, fireside, riverside and side-by-side. Seldon's 2003 was a success!

DEP's Paddling Course

by Rusty Norton

Partially because of the recent introduction of legislation to register paddle craft and require a safe boating certificate, I signed up for the DEP Boating Safety Class for paddlers. We were honored to have the course taught by Allen Ames who developed the curriculum but who had retired 10 days earlier partially in response to recent state budget and service cuts. Allen in turn honored us by writing a check for \$15 and joining ConnYak as the class started!

Allen's presentation was thorough, beginning with boat type and selection. For someone new to paddling or thinking about buying a boat it would be a good introduction to hull shapes, materials, length, rocker and types of canoes and kayaks. The extreme dangers of downstream paddling at flood stage including hydraulics, strainers, and low head dams were all well presented. Hypothermia and cold shock were also thoroughly covered. Was all this merely preaching to the choir? Nope, I learned a few things that seem worth passing on:

1) Accidents that require more than simple first aid require mandatory written reports on DEP Boating Division forms within 48 hours. Accidents with property damage in excess of \$500 must also be reported within 5 days.

2) Paddle craft do not even appear on the Coast Guard pecking order! Not only does a boat have the right of way if it is bigger or faster (the 'tonnage' rule), but EVERYTHING has the right of way over paddle craft. We are indeed floating speed bumps.

One section of the course dealt with the apparently high fatality rate involved in paddle sports as compared to other boating. The serious issue facing us is that the Coast Guard lumps all paddle craft fatalities for the region. Even though they are aware that the majority of deaths involve inland fishermen and hunters in canoes and recreational kayaks, the reporting makes us look bad --- very bad.

The irony is that although the DEP Boating Division is located in the same building as the DEP Fisheries Division, the CT Angler's Guide says nothing about the dangers of hypothermia and cold shock! If anyone is serious about reducing fatalities that would be a much better place to start than registering sea kayaks.



Skegs and Rudders (ConnY Newsletter June) WAS from: Anorak Vol 1 #1 Jan/Feb 2003 ANorAK c/o RayKillen, 358 Rt 679, Egg HarborCity, NJ 08215 - To subscribe: \$20 -1 year, \$35- 2 years



Mark your calendar Upcoming Events...

Arctic Boat Weekend - Sep 6 & 7

Come to Mystic Seaport to celebrate the watercraft of the far north! Bring your own boat and join in the gathering of builders, paddlers or just plain enthusiasts. This two day event features boatbuilding (see how a Greenland kayak is built, or help build and paddle an Umiak - the tractor-trailer of the north), paddling (learn some of the more than 30 ways to roll your kayak over and back up again, or how to paddle with one of those skinny traditional paddles) and the history of the sport (attend lectures on the watercraft you use, or watch videos of the boats in action.) Join experts in the skill sharing sessions both on and off of the water to improve your paddle stroke, or watch Qajaq USA members as they demonstrate how capable these boats can be. Check the Mystic site for updates closer to the event.

Contact: Mark Starr: 860.572.0711 or arcticboatweekend@mysticseaport.org

3rd Annual Rescue Clinic Sat, Aug 16th

Spread the word - everyone's welcome

The Annual ConnYak Rescue Clinic will take place on Saturday - August 16 - at Bluff Point State Park. This is a forum type of affair with demonstrations of various rescue techniques by paddlers who would like to share experiences and knowledge. We need paddlers who would like to demonstrate things. We will start at 10:30 am.

Special Rec. Boat Reality Demos for Recreational Users and Rescuers
(A very humbling event for both parties)

... Canoe Rescue and Rescue Races!
Rescue and Swimmer teams picked from a hat.

ConnYak Picnic Sat, Sept 20 - Chester

MISSING from the ConnYak Library:

Deep Trouble • Eldridge Tide and Pilot Book First Roll • Kayakers' Edge • Building a Greenland Kayak • Keep Australia on your Left • Performance Sea Kayaking • Grace Under Pressure • Greenland Style Paddling Guide to Wooden Boats • Kayakers Edge Nanouk of the North • Savvy Paddler • Sea Kayaking • River Days • Source to Sea If you have them, please contact me.
Claudine 203-248-6051

In the future, if you borrow a book from the library, you must sign for it and YOU are responsible for its return to me or YOU must replace it. I will have books at paddles.

3RD ANNUAL JAMESTOWN CIRCUMNAVIGATION & INTERMEDIATE

Sunday, July 20th

Jamestown, RI- Joint Paddle with RICKA

(Directions are in the launchsite list)

Advanced Paddle

In the water at 9:30 AM

19 Nautical mile circumnavigation of Conanicut Island (Jamestown) beginning and ending at Ft Wetherill with 2 scheduled stops.

This paddle is tide dependent, so you need to be able to keep up with the group. There is only one bailout point once we're around Beavertail Point. Pack plenty of food and water. Paddle may have to be lengthened to 22 miles if conditions at Beavertail warrant. Spare paddle, VHF, chart, compass (or GPS), towline, all strongly recommended.

Rain, predicted thunderstorms, wind in excess of 20 knots, or seas larger than 6 feet at entrance to the bay cancel. Check the marine forecast for Narragansett Bay before you decide to go. Cancellation will be posted on the ConnYak bulletin board if needed.

Intermediate Paddle - Led by ConnYak

In the water at 10:30 AM

Paddle the east passage of Narragansett Bay under the Newport Bridge, up to Gould Island (lunch on Gould) & back. Optional rock gardening after return to Ft Wetherill along cliffs between there & Mackerel Cove.

Contact: Wayne Smith (860) 875-0642 or email: connyak@connyak.org

2003 Gulf of Maine Sea Kayak Symposium

July 11,12 & 13 Castine, Maine

The original and famous L.L. Bean Symposium is no longer going. However, the original and famous Ken Fink, who started the L.L. Bean symposium and pioneered the "symposium" concept has put together a group of interested parties and started the Gulf of Maine Symposium. It offers a variety of lectures, demos, clinics and instructional opportunities. The roster of instructors and demos is extensive and the event has all the amenities of the L.L. Bean gathering except it's geared more towards the intermediate and advanced paddler.

GOMSKS P.O. Box 50, Bath, Maine 04530

For info : (207) 751-8998 or

info@kayaksymposium.org

Web site: www.kayaksymposium.org

New "Incidents" section on the BB

Jon Tobiassen will run the new section on the ConnYak web site "Incidents/Lessons Learned". We can all learn from each other's mistakes, so... don't get into any problems until we get this up and running.

EVENTS



GREAT ISLAND - LYME

Sat - July 12 - 10 AM

Inter coastal waterways, Lt. River & open water to CT River & L.I. Sound.

Sunday - July 13 - 11:30 AM Joint event with Housatonic Valley Paddlers.

Picnic / paddle - Lake circumnavigation takes 2 hrs. Bring food to share- Grill provided, picnic tables and paper goods. **Directions:** The lake is in New Preston, going east on route 202. Turn left onto route 45 and go around the lake, following signs for the park. Many Housatonic Valley Paddlers are ConnYak members. It would give eastern members a chance to visit the beautiful NW Litchfield Hills.

MYSTIC - ANTIQUE BOATS

10 AM - MEET AT OLD BOATS (N)

Sat - July 26

View the boats on display and paddle the loup around and have lunch etc. No highway traffic and no parade.

Sun - July 27 - Parade Day

View the boats on display and paddle the loup around and have lunch and catch the parade as the boats leave Mystic.

wednesday night paddlers

After 5 years of honing our rolling and conversation skills on Lake Quanaupaug, we are ready to venture out into open water. We will have our usual practice sessions at the lake and now incorporate some open water paddles. Watch the bulletin board for more listings.

GUILFORD SHORELINE

WED JULY 16 - IN THE WATER AT 5:30

Madison St. Lunch Ramp

Evening paddle along the Guilford Coast.

GREAT ISLAND

WED JULY 2 - IN THE WATER AT 5:30

Destination by group desires and the ferocity of the bug population.

Check the bulletin board for other trips listed by members - www.connyak.org

CLASSIFIED

NORDKAPP HM good condition. Day hatch, rear oval hatch, canvas storage bag, compass. Orang / white \$1600 860-633 7254

16' x 22" Yellow/White Dagger 'Meridian SK' f/g kayak with skeg, 2 hatches, Nexus Type 85 Compass, spray skirt, f/g paddle, Milford, CT \$1600 203.877.8493 'clayluce@hotmail.com'

FOR SALE - Janautica "ANADYR" Sea Kayak 17.5' X 21.25" Adjustable seat and footpegs, 2 hatches, bulkheads, rigging etc. Designed for speed and rough water. See Mfg. webpage for complete specs. www.splashdance.com \$1845- free delivery in CT. E-mail ritey@lycos.com or call 917 567 9430

Necky Tormae 15' Kevlar w/rudder, carbon paddle, spray skirt, Yakama rack and saddles \$1300. all. Must sell - Moving 203-458-2362

Skin on Frame - Baidarka- brand new- (back problems) Willow Kayaks, only 29 pounds, 18' x 21", 8" depth to shear, skeg, very fast, Rye NY, \$1950 or best offer. 914 698 8354 or sd.a@att.net

Perception Pirouette white water/surf boat for sale. Paddle, helmet, cockpit cover, air bags. Very good condition. Asking \$300. Call (860) 653-5899.

North Shore Freewater Trek. Fiberglass, Fast, light. 16 ft 22 in, 45 lbs. Great for small to medium sized paddler. \$990 - 203 853 2909

VCP Nordkapp HMC Good Condition, Golden Yellow Deck White Hull \$1000.00 860-643-1609 or email: nordkappdg@aol.com

300 MILE BENIFIT PADDLE

The Long Island Alzheimer's Foundation's annual "Memory Paddle Challenge" -A 300-mile circumnavigation of Long Island by a team of kayaking champions in a tandem kayak--will take place July 8-14. Support from the kayaking community would be most appreciated, and can be shown in various ways:

Join LIAF for the (free) opening ceremony and launch: Tuesday, July 8, 11 am ceremony / reception, and noon launch, Danfords on the Sound, 25 E. Broadway, Port Jefferson, NY. Info: web site--www.liaf.org. Carol Steinberg, Director of Public Relations LI Alzheimer's Foundation 866-789-5423

NORTHERN CT RIVER CAMP OUT

July 26 - 27

2 Days - Vernon Dam, VT to Northfield MA. call **David Cornell 860-875-4981 to reserve a spot and for info.**

Fee's: The \$25 dollar camping fee will be split between the participants, and \$10 per person fee for the shuttle. Trip is limited to 8 people.

Send newsletter articles or classifieds to:
Jay Babina e-mail: jbabina@snet.net
7 Jeffrey Lane, Branford, CT 06405
203-481-3221 Fax 203-481-1136

Please contact the Newsletter when classified items are sold.

TO JOIN CONNYAK...

ConnYak is a non profit club that is open to all paddlers interested in sea kayaking from any location. ConnYak annual membership fee is \$15.

Membership includes monthly newsletter, paddles, functions, etc. Send check to:

ConnYak, P.O. Box 197, Ellington, CT 06029

E-MAIL: CONNYAK@CONNYAK.ORG

WEBSITE / BULLETIN BOARD: WWW.CONNYAK.ORG

T-shirts for Articles

Authors of articles for the newsletter get a free T-shirt.

CONNYAK PADDLES RESPONSIBILITY

All open water paddles are (N/I) Novice/ Intermediate because the sea conditions can drastically change in an hour. Novice paddles are inter-coastal and river paddles. Advanced paddles will always be marked on the listing and encompass offshore crossings, and usually rougher conditions and longer distances.

Any paddle can change dramatically which is the nature of our sport and something we should always be aware of. Although paddlers will always help one another, ultimately, you are always responsible for your own safety when paddling on any trip.



ConnYak
CONNECTICUT SEA KAYAKERS

P.O. Box 197, Ellington, CT 06029