



Marine Radios and Staying in Touch on the Water

help on the water An Extended Guide · No. 2061

————— An Extended Guide · No. 2061 —————

Tech Made Simple. Service Made Personal.

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What's Inside

Everything in this guide, with page numbers. Skip to whichever chapter answers your question right now.

1. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech	5
2. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech	6
3. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech	6
4. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech	7
5. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech	8
6. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech	9
7. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech	10
8. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech	11
9. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech	11
10. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech	12
11. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech	13

12. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech	14
13. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech	15
14. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech	16
15. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech	17
16. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech	18
17. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech	19
18. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech	19
19. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech	20
20. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech	21
21. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech	21
22. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech	22
23. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech	23
24. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech	24

25. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech 24

26. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech 25

A Picture to Follow Along 26

A Second Look 27

A Note From Bill 27

Your Visit — and My Promise 28

1. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech

What's Inside Everything in this guide, with page numbers. Skip to whichever chapter answers your question right now..... 5

1. The Whole Idea in One Glance.....	5
2. What a Marine Radio Is.....	6
3. VHF in Plain English.....	6
4. Handheld Versus Fixed-Mount Radios.....	7
5. Do You Even Need One on a Small Lake?.....	7
6. When a Phone Is Enough.....	8
7. When a Radio Beats a Phone.....	8
8. Channel 16, the Calling and Distress Channel.....	9
9. Other Common Channels.....	9
10. How to Make a Routine Call.....	10
11. How to Call for Help.....	10
12. DSC, the Digital Distress Button.....	11
13. Getting an MMSI Number.....	11
14. Registering Your Radio.....	12
15. Reading the Range Honestly.....	12
16. Antennas and Why They Matter.....	13
17. Powering a Fixed Radio.....	13
18. Charging a Handheld.....	14
19. Waterproof Ratings and Floating Radios.....	14
20. Mounting a Fixed Radio.....	15
21. Weather Channels on the Radio	

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..... 15	22. Pairing With Weather Apps..... 15	23. Satellite Messengers for No-Signal Country..... 16	24. The Phone as a Backup..... 16	25. Northeast Ohio Reservoirs and What You Really Need..... 17	26. Mogadore, West Branch and Berlin..... 17	27. Big Open Water Versus Small Reservoirs..... 18	28. Teaching Everyone Aboard..... 18	29. A Float Plan Ashore..... 19	30. Radio Etiquette and Courtesy..... 19	31. Testing Your Radio Before You Go..... 20	32. Buying a Radio Without Overbuying..... 20	33. Brands and What to Look For..... 21	34. New Versus Used Radios..... 21	35. License Rules for Recreational Boaters..... 22	36. Programming and Favorite Channels..... 22	37. Keeping the Radio Working for Years..... 23	38. Common Problems and Quick Fixes..... 23	39. Storing the Radio Off-Season..... 24	40. A Simple On-the-Water Routine..... 24	41. Life Jackets, Whistles and the Basics..... 24	42. Your On-the-Water Communication Checklist..... 25	43. When It Is Worth Calling Me..... 25	Everyday Cheat Sheet
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..... 27	A Picture to Follow Along..... 28	A Second Look..... 28	A Note From Bill..... 29	Your Visit — and My Promise
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THE 60-SECOND VERSION

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1. The Whole Idea in One Glance If you read only this page, you will still know how to call for help. A marine radio, called a VHF radio, is a two-way radio made for boats. It lets you talk to other boaters and, in a real emergency, call for help on a channel everyone monitors. On a big open lake it is the dependable way to reach help. On a small reservoir close to home, many boaters simply carry a charged cell phone instead. A VHF marine radio talks to other boats and to help Channel 16 is the one everyone monitors for hailing and distress On big open water, a radio is the reliable choice On small inland lakes, a charged cell phone often does the job Whichever you carry, know how to call for help before you need to GOOD TO KNOW The most important thing is not which device you own but that you can reach help fast and know what to say. On our small local reservoirs, a charged phone in a waterproof case is often all you truly need. THE BASICS 2. What a Marine Radio Is A marine radio is a special two-way radio tuned to the channels set aside for boats. Unlike a phone, it does not need a cell tower or a signal plan; it talks directly to other radios within range. That is its great strength on open water, where cell coverage can be spotty or missing. It comes in two forms: a handheld you carry like a walkie-talkie, and a fixed unit mounted at the helm with a bigger antenna. Both talk on the same channels; they just differ in power and reach. TIP Think of a VHF radio as a party line that every boater and the authorities can hear on the emergency channel. That is exactly why it works when a private phone call might not reach anyone.

VHF EXPLAINED

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3. VHF in Plain English VHF simply stands for a band of radio waves, the same kind set aside worldwide for boats to talk on. You do not need to understand the science. What matters is that these channels are shared, monitored, and reserved for marine use, so when you speak on them, the right people are listening. VHF is a band of radio reserved for boats. The channels are shared and monitored. No cell plan or tower is needed. Other boaters and authorities listen on the emergency channel. GOOD TO KNOW Because VHF channels are monitored by other boaters and rescue services, a call for help on the right channel reaches far more ears than a phone call to a single number. TWO TYPES 4. Handheld Versus Fixed-Mount Radios A handheld radio is small, battery-powered, and goes in your pocket or a life jacket. A fixed-mount radio bolts to the helm, draws from the boat's battery, and uses a tall antenna for much greater range. The handheld is simple and portable; the fixed unit is more powerful and always ready. Handheld: small, battery-powered, carry it anywhere Fixed-mount: more power and a taller antenna for longer range Handheld floats on some models and survives a dunking Fixed needs installation and the boat's battery TIP A floating, waterproof handheld is a popular choice for a small boat. It needs no installation, works the moment you turn it on, and you can grab it if you end up in the water.

BE HONEST

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5. Do You Even Need One on a Small Lake?

The most money-saving page in this guide. Here is the honest talk. On a small inland reservoir where help is minutes away and cell coverage is good, a charged phone in a waterproof case often does everything a radio would. A VHF radio earns its keep on big, open water, far from shore, where a phone may not reach and other boaters are your nearest help. Small reservoir, good cell signal: a charged phone often suffices Big open water, far from shore: a radio is the reliable choice A radio reaches nearby boaters a phone call cannot Match the gear to where you actually boat WATCH OUT Do not buy a fixed marine radio for a pond you can see across, then skip the simple thing that matters more: a charged phone in a waterproof case and a life jacket on every person aboard. PHONE ENOUGH 6. When a Phone Is Enough On our local lakes, a cell phone is often the practical choice. You can call for help, reach a family member, and use maps and weather all on one device. Keep it charged and in a waterproof case or pouch, and it covers most of what a casual boater needs close to home. Works where there is cell coverage, which is most local lakes Calls help, family, and runs maps and weather too Keep it charged and in a waterproof case The device you already carry, with no extra gear My guide on keeping your phone charged and dry on the water covers the cases, pouches, and power banks that make a phone a dependable safety tool. On a small lake, that may be your whole communication plan.

RADIO WINS

7. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech

7. When a Radio Beats a Phone A phone has limits a radio does not. A phone call reaches only the one number you dial, and only where there is a signal. A radio reaches every boater and rescue service within range at once, with no signal needed. On big water or far from shore, that difference can matter a great deal. A radio reaches every nearby boater at once It needs no cell signal, only another radio in range Rescue services monitor the emergency channel A phone reaches only the one number you dial GOOD TO KNOW In a true emergency on open water, a radio call for help can bring the nearest boat to your aid in minutes, long before anyone could reach you from shore. CHANNEL 16 8. Channel 16, the Calling and Distress Channel Channel 16 is the single most important channel to know. It is the one everyone monitors for hailing another boat and for distress calls. You use it to get someone's attention or to call for help, then often switch to another channel to chat, keeping 16 clear for emergencies. Channel 16 is for hailing and for distress Everyone, including rescue services, monitors it Use it to call for help or get attention Switch to another channel for ordinary chatting WATCH OUT Do not use Channel 16 for idle chatter. Hail a boat on 16, then move to a working channel to talk. Keeping 16 clear means a distress call can always get through.

OTHER CHANNELS

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9. Other Common Channels Beyond Channel 16, there are working channels for ordinary boat-to-boat talk and channels that carry the weather. Your radio's manual lists them, and most radios make it easy to flip between 16, a chat channel, and the weather. You do not need to memorize them all, just know where the important ones are. Working channels are for ordinary boat-to-boat talk. Dedicated channels carry the weather forecast. Your radio's manual lists them for your area. Most radios flip easily between 16, chat, and weather. **TIP** Set your radio's favorites to Channel 16, one working channel, and the local weather. Then you can move between the three you actually use with a single button. **ROUTINE CALL 10.** How to Make a Routine Call Calling another boat is simple once you have done it once. You hail them on Channel 16 by name, wait for an answer, then agree to switch to a working channel to talk. Press the button to talk, let go to listen, and speak plainly. There is no secret language required.

- 1 Turn to Channel 16 and press the talk button
- 2 Say the other boat's name, then your own, clearly
- 3 Wait for them to answer
- 4 Agree on a working channel and switch to it
- 5 Press to talk, release to listen, and keep it brief **GOOD TO KNOW** The one habit new users forget is to let go of the talk button to hear a reply. If you hold it down, you cannot hear the other person at all.

CALL FOR HELP

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11. How to Call for Help If you are ever in real trouble, stay as calm as you can and make a clear distress call on Channel 16. Say the word that signals an emergency, give your boat's name, where you are, and what is wrong. Speak slowly and repeat it. Rescuers would rather hear a clear, calm call than a panicked rush of words.

- 1 Turn to Channel 16 and press the talk button
- 2 Say 'Mayday' three times for a life-threatening emergency
- 3 Give your boat's name and your location on the lake
- 4 Say what is wrong and how many people are aboard

- 5** Release the button, listen, and repeat if no one answers **WATCH OUT** Save the word Mayday for a genuine, life-threatening emergency. For a serious but non-life-threatening problem, the lesser call is 'Pan-Pan.' Using the right word helps rescuers judge how fast to respond. **DSC 12.** DSC, the Digital Distress Button Many modern radios have a feature called DSC, which is a digital distress button under a little cover. Press and hold it, and the radio sends out an electronic distress message with your boat's identity and, if connected to GPS, your exact location. It is like a silent, automatic Mayday that reaches rescuers instantly. DSC is a digital distress button on the radio It sends your boat's identity and location automatically Works best when the radio is connected to GPS A fast, reliable way to signal a serious emergency **GOOD TO KNOW** The DSC button only works fully if your radio is registered with an identity number and connected to a GPS. Setting that up ahead of time is what makes the button worth having.

MMSI

10. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech

13. Getting an MMSI Number For the DSC distress button to tell rescuers who you are, your radio needs a registered number called an MMSI. It is a free, nine-digit identity you get by registering your boat and radio with the proper authority. Think of it as the radio's phone number that rescuers can look up. An MMSI is a nine-digit identity for your radio It tells rescuers which boat is calling You get one by registering your boat and radio Usually free for recreational boaters; confirm the current process **TIP** Register for an MMSI before you ever need it, and write it down where you can find it. A DSC radio without a registered number cannot tell rescuers who is calling. **REGISTER 14.** Registering Your Radio Registering your radio ties your MMSI number, your boat, and your contact details together so rescuers know who and where you are. The process is done through the proper boating authority, and the rules can change, so confirm the current steps. It is a one-time job that makes your radio far more useful in an emergency. Registration links your radio, boat, and contact details Done through the proper boating authority A one-time job that makes the DSC button work Confirm the current process, as rules can change **GOOD TO KNOW** Keep your registration details up to date if you sell the boat or change your number. Out-of-date information could send rescuers looking for the wrong vessel.

RANGE**11. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech**

15. Reading the Range Honestly VHF radios reach only as far as the line of sight, roughly from your antenna to the horizon. A handheld with a short antenna reaches a few miles; a fixed radio with a tall antenna reaches farther. On a small lake that is plenty, but do not expect a radio to reach across a whole county of hills. Range is roughly line of sight to the horizon A handheld reaches a few miles A fixed radio with a tall antenna reaches farther Hills and distance limit how far you can talk WATCH OUT Salespeople sometimes quote generous range numbers that only hold in perfect conditions. On a real lake with hills and trees, expect less, and do not count on reaching far shore with a pocket handheld.

ANTENNAS 16. Antennas and Why They Matter The antenna matters more than the radio's power for how far you can talk. A taller antenna mounted high gives more range, which is why fixed radios outreach handhelds. If you add a fixed radio, a good antenna mounted up high is money better spent than a fancier radio with a stubby one. A taller, higher antenna reaches farther The antenna matters more than raw power Fixed radios outreach handhelds thanks to their antennas A good antenna is worth more than a fancier radio TIP If you install a fixed radio, mount the antenna as high as you reasonably can. Height is what buys you range, more than any feature on the radio itself.

POWERING FIXED**12. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech**

17. Powering a Fixed Radio A fixed radio wires into the boat's 12-volt battery, the same as the other electronics. It draws little power while listening and a bit more while you talk. As with any wired gear, put a fuse on the line near the battery and keep the connections tight and dry so it is ready whenever you reach for it. Wires into the boat's 12-volt battery Draws little power while listening Put a fuse on the line near the battery Keep connections tight and dry My 12-volt power guide covers fuses and clean wiring in detail. A radio you may trust with your safety is worth wiring properly the first time. CHARGING 18. Charging a Handheld A handheld runs on a rechargeable battery, so it is only as good as its charge. Top it off before every trip, the same way you charge your phone, and keep it off when you do not need it to save power. A dead handheld in a crisis is no help at all, so make charging part of your routine. A handheld runs on a rechargeable battery Charge it fully before every trip Turn it off when not in use to save power A dead handheld is no help in a crisis WATCH OUT Tie charging the handheld to charging your phone the night before a trip. If they live on the same charging shelf, you will never grab a dead radio.

WATERPROOF**13. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech**

19. Waterproof Ratings and Floating Radios A radio lives in a wet world, so look for one rated to survive a dunking, and better yet one that floats. A floating radio bobs on the surface instead of sinking if you drop it, and a waterproof rating means a splash or a rainstorm will not kill it. These features are worth the small extra cost on the water. Look for a radio rated to survive a dunking A floating radio bobs instead of sinking Waterproof ratings guard against splash and rain Worth the small extra cost for a device you may need GOOD TO KNOW A radio that floats and lights up when it hits the water is easy to spot and grab. For a device meant to save you in trouble, those are features worth paying for.

MOUNTING 20. Mounting a Fixed Radio A fixed radio mounts at the helm where you can reach the microphone and read the screen, out of the worst spray. Run the antenna cable neatly and mount the antenna up high. A tidy installation keeps the radio reliable and the wires out of the way of your feet and your fishing. Mount the radio at the helm within easy reach Keep it out of the heaviest spray Run the antenna cable neatly, mount the antenna high Secure wires so they are out of the way TIP Mount the microphone where you can grab it without looking, the same way you would want a phone within reach in the car. In a hurry, you should not have to fumble for it.

WEATHER CHANNELS

14. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech

21. Weather Channels on the Radio Most marine radios can tune in the weather broadcasts that run around the clock. A press of a button gives you the forecast and any warnings in a steady, automated voice. On the water, it is a handy way to hear what the sky is planning without pulling out your phone. Marine radios receive the around-the-clock weather broadcasts A button gives you the forecast and warnings A handy check without reaching for the phone Listen before you head out across open water GOOD TO KNOW The weather broadcast will carry warnings when serious weather is coming. Hearing a warning on the radio is one more reason to head for shore early. WEATHER APPS 22. Pairing With Weather Apps The radio's weather broadcast and a weather app on your phone work well together. The app shows you the radar and the wind before you launch, and the radio's broadcast keeps you posted while you are out, where the phone may lose signal. Use both and you are rarely caught off guard by a storm. A weather app shows radar and wind before you launch The radio broadcast keeps you posted on the water The radio works where the phone loses signal Together they cover the whole trip My weather and lightning safety guide covers the apps and the 30-30 rule for getting off the water ahead of a storm. The radio is a fine backup to all of it. SATELLITE 23. Satellite Messengers for No-Signal Country If your boating or camping takes you far beyond any signal, a satellite messenger is another way to reach help. Devices like the Garmin inReach send texts and an SOS over satellite from anywhere with a view of the sky. They need a subscription, and they shine where neither a radio nor a phone can reach.

GOOD TO KNOW

15. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech

Satellite messengers reach help from anywhere with open sky. Devices like Garmin inReach send texts and an SOS. They need a paid subscription. Best for remote country beyond radio and cell range. My satellite messenger guide covers the inReach and the satellite help built into newer phones. For our local lakes, though, a radio or a cell phone is usually all you need. **PHONE BACKUP 24.** The Phone as a Backup. Even if you carry a radio, keep your phone charged and dry as a backup, and the other way around. The two reach different kinds of help, so having both covers more situations. A radio for nearby boaters and rescue, a phone for family and the exact address of the ramp, together they are a strong pair. Carry both a radio and a charged phone when you can. They reach different kinds of help. Keep the phone in a waterproof case. Two ways to call for help beats one. My guide on keeping your phone charged and dry on the water covers the cases and power banks that keep your backup alive. Redundancy is cheap peace of mind on the water. **OHIO WATERS 25.** Northeast Ohio Reservoirs and What You Really Need. On our local reservoirs, help is rarely far away and cell coverage is generally good, so a charged phone in a waterproof case covers most boaters. A radio becomes more worthwhile the bigger and more open the water, and if you also boat larger lakes beyond the county. Match the gear to where you spend your days. Local reservoirs usually have good cell coverage. A charged phone covers most boaters close to home. A radio matters more on bigger, open water. Match your gear to where you boat most.

GOOD TO KNOW

16. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech

There is no shame in boating a small lake with just a charged phone and a life jacket. For many local anglers, that is a sensible and safe setup. LOCAL LAKES 26. Mogadore, West Branch and Berlin Our lakes differ in size and feel. Mogadore Reservoir is quiet and small, often electric-motor-only. West Branch, or Michael J. Kirwan, and Berlin Lake are larger and more open, where a radio starts to make more sense. Whatever the lake, confirm the current rules with ODNR, as they differ by lake and can change. Mogadore Reservoir: small and quiet, a phone usually suffices West Branch and Berlin: larger and open, where a radio helps Bigger water means help may be farther away Confirm the current rules for each lake with ODNR WATCH OUT Rules and motor limits differ from one lake to the next and can change. Always confirm the current ODNR rules for the specific lake before you launch there. OPEN WATER 27. Big Open Water Versus Small Reservoirs The deciding question for a radio is how far you get from help. On a small reservoir you can often see every shore and another boat is never far. On big open water you may be a long way from anyone, and that is where a radio earns its place. The more open and remote the water, the more a radio matters. Small reservoir: shore and other boats are always close Big open water: you may be far from any help The more remote the water, the more a radio matters Judge by how far you get from help, not the lake's name TIP If you can always see a shore with people on it, a phone is likely enough. If you regularly get far from any help, that is your signal to add a radio.

TEACH ABOARD

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28. Teaching Everyone Aboard In an emergency, you might be the one who needs help, so everyone aboard should know how to call for it. Show your spouse, your friends, and the grandkids how to turn to Channel 16, press the button to talk, and say where you are. A few minutes of teaching could save a life. You might be the one who needs help Show everyone how to reach Channel 16 Teach them to press to talk and give your location A few minutes of teaching could save a life GOOD TO KNOW Tape a short, simple set of distress instructions near the radio. In a panic, even an experienced boater is glad to have the words right there to read. FLOAT PLAN 29. A Float Plan Ashore Before you launch, tell someone ashore where you are going and when you expect to be back. This is called a float plan, and it means that if you do not return on time, someone knows to raise the alarm and where to look. It costs nothing and is one of the oldest, simplest safety habits there is. Tell someone ashore your plan and return time If you are late, they know to raise the alarm They know roughly where to send help Costs nothing and takes a minute GOOD TO KNOW A float plan is the one safety step that works even if all your devices fail. A phone call or note to a family member before you launch is free insurance.

ETIQUETTE

18. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech

30. Radio Etiquette and Courtesy The airwaves are shared, so a little courtesy goes a long way. Keep Channel 16 clear for hailing and emergencies, move to a working channel to chat, and keep your conversations brief. Do not use bad language or tie up a channel; others may be waiting to make an important call. Keep Channel 16 clear for hailing and emergencies Move to a working channel to chat Keep conversations brief and polite Others may need the channel WATCH OUT The radio is not a telephone for long visits. Tying up a channel with chatter can block someone trying to call for help, so keep it short and move off 16. TESTING 31. Testing Your Radio Before You Go A radio you never test is a radio you cannot trust. Before a trip, turn it on, check the battery, and make sure it receives the weather broadcast. You can do a quick radio check on a working channel, but never test by calling Mayday or using Channel 16 for a test. A minute of checking ensures it works when it counts.

- 1 Turn on the radio and check the battery charge
- 2 Confirm it receives the weather broadcast
- 3 Do a radio check on a working channel, not on 16
- 4 Never test by calling a false distress WATCH OUT Never make a false distress call to test the radio. A fake Mayday sends rescuers scrambling and is a serious offense. Test on a working channel instead.

BUYING

19. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech

32. Buying a Radio Without Overbuying Decide first whether you need a radio at all for the water you run, then buy the simplest one that covers it. A floating, waterproof handheld suits most small-boat owners, while a fixed radio makes sense on a bigger boat on open water. Prices range widely, so confirm the current price and skip features you will not use. Decide if you need a radio for your water at all A floating handheld suits most small boats A fixed radio fits a bigger boat on open water Prices range widely; confirm the current price GOOD TO KNOW Handhelds often run from the low hundreds, fixed radios a bit more, with installation on top. Buy for how far from help you actually get, not for the longest range on the box. BRANDS 33. Brands and What to Look For Several trusted makers build good marine radios, and no single one is the only right choice. Look for a radio that floats, is rated waterproof, has the DSC distress feature, and is easy to operate with the controls you can work in a hurry. The one you can use calmly under stress is the best one for you. Several trusted makers build good radios Look for floating, waterproof, and the DSC feature Easy controls you can work in a hurry matter most No single brand is the only right choice TIP Handle a radio before you buy if you can. The one with buttons you can find and press without squinting is worth more than a fancier model you fumble with.

USED

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34. New Versus Used Radios A used radio can save money, but check it over. Confirm the battery still holds a charge, that it transmits and receives, and that any DSC identity number is cleared so you can register your own. A radio you may stake your safety on is one place where buying new for peace of mind is often worth it. Confirm the battery still holds a charge Check that it transmits and receives Make sure any old identity number is cleared For a safety device, new is often worth the peace of mind WATCH OUT A used DSC radio still carrying the previous owner's identity number can send rescuers the wrong information. Confirm it can be reset to your own registration before you rely on it. LICENSE RULES 35. License Rules for Recreational Boaters Rules about radio licenses for recreational boaters depend on where and how you boat, and they can change. Many small recreational boaters on domestic waters do not need an individual operator license, but this is worth confirming for your situation. Check the current rules with the proper authority so you are sure. License rules depend on where and how you boat Many recreational boaters on home waters need no operator license Rules can change, so this is one to confirm Check the current rules with the proper authority GOOD TO KNOW Do not let uncertainty about licensing scare you off a radio. Confirm the current rules for your situation; for most local recreational boaters they are simpler than people fear.

PROGRAMMING

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36. Programming and Favorite Channels Most radios let you set favorites and scan, so you can keep an ear on Channel 16, a working channel, and the weather at once. Setting these up at home, following the manual, means you are not hunting through menus on the water. A few minutes at the kitchen table makes the radio easy to use when it matters.

- 1 Read the manual at home with the radio in hand
- 2 Set Channel 16 and a working channel as favorites
- 3 Add the local weather channel
- 4 Learn how to scan or flip between your favorites TIP Set the radio up at home, not at the ramp. Learning the buttons calmly on the kitchen table means you can use them without thinking when the water gets rough. UPKEEP 37. Keeping the Radio Working for Years A

marine radio lasts for years with simple care. Rinse salt and grime off a handheld, keep the connectors on a fixed radio clean and dry, and charge batteries before they sit. Store it where it will not bake in the sun or freeze over the winter, and it will be ready whenever you reach for it. Rinse grime off a handheld after use. Keep a fixed radio's connectors clean and dry. Charge batteries before long storage. Store it out of extreme heat and cold. A radio is a safety tool, so treat it like one. A little regular care keeps it dependable for the one day you really need it.

TROUBLESHOOTING

22. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech

38. Common Problems and Quick Fixes Most radio trouble comes down to power, the antenna, or the squelch setting. Work through those before you decide a radio has failed. A dead handheld needs charging, a fixed radio that is silent may have a loose antenna, and a hissing radio just needs the squelch adjusted.

- 1 No power: charge the handheld or check the fixed radio's fuse
- 2 No range or no transmit: check the antenna connection
- 3 Constant hiss: adjust the squelch until it goes quiet
- 4 Cannot hear replies: make sure you release the talk button
- 5 Still stuck: check the manual before assuming it is broken **TIP** A hissing radio is almost always just the squelch turned down too far. Turn the squelch up until the hiss stops, and quiet signals will still come through. **STORAGE** 39. Storing the Radio Off-Season When the boat goes away for an Ohio winter, bring a handheld radio indoors where it is dry and above freezing, and charge it part way before it sits. A fixed radio can stay aboard if the boat is sheltered, but protect it from damp and extreme cold. A little care now means it works in the spring. Bring a handheld indoors, dry and above freezing. Charge it part way before it sits for months. A fixed radio can stay if the boat is sheltered. Protect it from damp and extreme cold. My winterizing guide covers batteries, cameras, and electronics for the whole boat. The radio is one small piece of putting the boat to bed for the season.

ROUTINE

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40. A Simple On-the-Water Routine A short routine keeps your communication ready without fuss. Before you launch, charge and test the radio, leave a float plan, and set the radio to monitor Channel 16. On the water, keep an ear on 16 and glance at the weather now and then. It becomes second nature after a trip or two.

- 1 Charge and test the radio before launch
 - 2 Leave a float plan with someone ashore
 - 3 Set the radio to monitor Channel 16
 - 4 Keep an ear on 16 and check the weather as you go
- GOOD TO KNOW** Monitoring Channel 16 while you boat means you hear if another boater is in trouble nearby, and you are already on the right channel if you need help yourself.
- THE BASICS** 41. Life Jackets, Whistles and the Basics No radio replaces the simplest safety gear. A life jacket worn, not stowed, saves lives, and a whistle carries a call for help when a radio cannot. Keep these basics aboard and used, and treat the radio and phone as the next layer on top of them, never as a substitute. A worn life jacket is the first safety tool, always. A whistle signals help when devices fail. Keep the basics aboard and actually used.
- Radios and phones are a layer on top, not a substitute.**
- WATCH OUT** The fanciest radio aboard is no help if no one is wearing a life jacket. Get the simple, life-saving basics right first, every single trip.
- YOUR CHECKLIST** 42. Your On-the-Water Communication Checklist Here is the short version to keep aboard. If you can check these off, you are ready to call for help calmly and clearly if the day ever turns. Decided whether my water needs a radio or a phone is enough

GOOD TO KNOW

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Radio charged and tested, or phone charged in a waterproof case Know how to reach Channel 16 and make a distress call Registered an MMSI if my radio has the DSC button Left a float plan with someone ashore Everyone aboard knows how to call for help Confirmed the current lake and radio rules Life jackets worn and a whistle aboard Tape a copy of this list and a simple set of distress instructions near the helm. In a crisis, having the words right in front of you keeps everyone calm. WHEN TO CALL 43. When It Is Worth Calling Me Deciding whether you even need a marine radio, and setting one up so it truly works, trips a lot of people up. If you want help weighing a radio against a phone for the water you run, registering an MMSI and setting up the DSC distress button, installing a fixed radio and antenna, or simply learning to make a distress call with confidence, that is exactly what I am here for. I will sit beside you and get it all working, and I will give you the honest answer, even when the honest answer is that a charged phone and a life jacket are all your small lake calls for. WATCH OUT I can help you choose between a radio and a phone, register and set up a DSC radio, install it and its antenna, and practice calling for help so you are never caught unsure on the water. Call or text me at (330) 200-8042. CHEAT SHEET Everyday Cheat Sheet Keep this page handy. It is the short answer to the questions boaters ask most about radios and staying in touch. Channel 16 is for hailing and distress; everyone monitors it, so keep it clear On a small local reservoir, a charged phone in a waterproof case is often enough A VHF radio earns its keep on big open water, far from help To call for help: turn to 16, say Mayday three times, give your location and what is wrong

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If your radio has DSC, register an MMSI so the distress button tells rescuers who you are Carry both a radio and a charged phone when you can; they reach different help Leave a float plan ashore and make sure everyone aboard can call for help Confirm the current lake and radio rules, and wear a life jacket every trip Get help: call Bill at (330) 200-8042

HOW I CAN HELP

26. For electrical, gas, water, or ladder work, please call a licensed professional. — Bill's Home Tech

Your Visit — and My Promise In-home visit — \$99 flat for your first visit. No contracts and no surprise charges, and a 30-day follow-up is included. Remote Support — \$49 for a screen-share session. I only connect with your permission, you watch the whole time, and you can end anytime. If I can't fix it over the screen-share, I refund the \$49 — and if it turns out you need me in person, that \$49 goes toward your visit. It's included free for Support Plan members (\$39/mo). GOOD TO KNOW My promise — If you're not 100% satisfied with your visit, I'll come back at no charge, or refund the full \$99. No questions, no awkwardness. That's how I'd want to be treated. Call or text (330) 200-8042 · Book a visit: billshometech.com/book · bill@billshometech.com This free guide is for general information only — not professional advice, and no substitute for your device's own manual. Any prices or outside products mentioned can change; please confirm current details before you buy. Please use your own good judgment and follow it at your own risk — for anything involving electricity, gas, water, or heights, stop and call a licensed professional. Bill's Home Tech and Bill Davis can't be responsible for any damage, data loss, or injury that results. © 2026 Bill's Home Tech, LLC.

AT A GLANCE

A Picture to Follow Along

Radio or Phone for Your Water?

Match the device to how far you get from help.

Charged Phone

Small reservoir, good signal
Reaches family and help
Keep it in a waterproof case

Handheld VHF

Mid-size or busier water
Reaches nearby boaters fast
Floating and waterproof is best

Fixed VHF

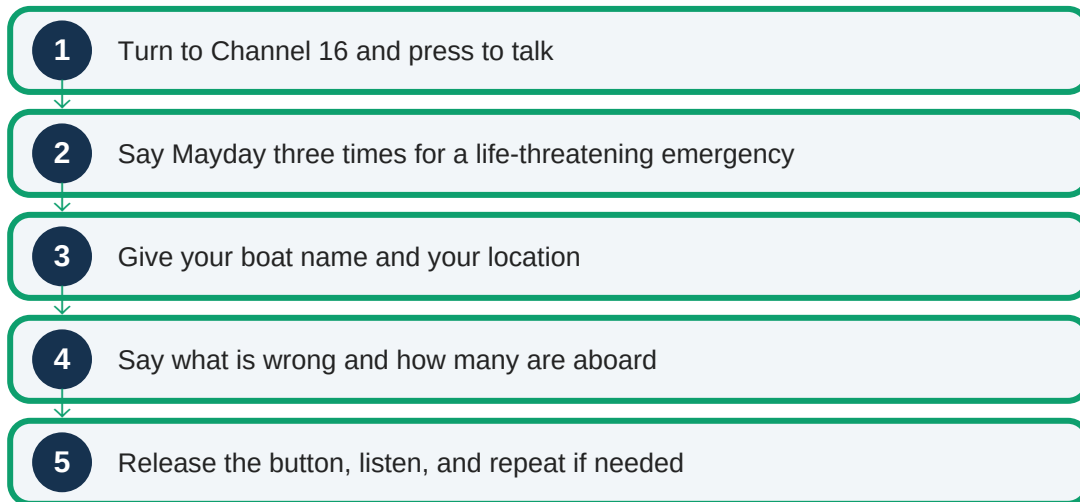
Big open water, far from help
Most range with a tall antenna
Add DSC and register an MMSI

AT A GLANCE

A Second Look

Making a Distress Call

Stay calm and say it clearly.



BEFORE YOU GO

A Note From Bill

A quick note from Bill. I write these guides to make home tech a little less frustrating, and I do my best to keep every step accurate and up to date. Still, every home, device, and setup is a bit different, so I can't promise a guide will match yours exactly or fix your particular problem. These guides are for general information only — they're not professional, legal, or financial advice, and they don't replace your device's own manual or the manufacturer's instructions. Please go slow, use your own good judgment, and use everything here at your own risk. If a step involves electrical wiring, a gas appliance, a water heater, plumbing, or climbing a ladder — or if anything just doesn't feel safe — please stop and call a licensed professional (or give me a call at 330-200-8042). Bill's Home Tech and Bill Davis can't be responsible for any damage, data loss, or injury that results.



HOW I CAN HELP

Your Visit — and My Promise

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Remote Support — \$49 for a screen-share session. I only connect with your permission, you watch the whole time, and you can end anytime. If I can't fix it over the screen-share, I refund the \$49 — and if it turns out you need me in person, that \$49 goes toward your visit. It's included free for Support Plan members (\$39/mo).

GOOD TO KNOW

My promise — If you're not 100% satisfied with your visit, I'll come back at no charge, or refund the full \$99. No questions, no awkwardness. That's how I'd want to be treated.

Call or text **(330) 200-8042** · Book a visit: **billshometech.com/book** · **bill@billshometech.com**

This free guide is for general information only — not professional advice, and no substitute for your device's own manual. Any prices or outside products mentioned can change; please confirm current details before you buy. Please use your own good judgment and follow it at your own risk — for anything involving electricity, gas, water, or heights, stop and call a licensed professional. Bill's Home Tech and Bill Davis can't be responsible for any damage, data loss, or injury that results. © 2026 Bill's Home Tech, LLC.