

November 2010

Radio Communications on PACE Club Drives

I was going to continue with the Miata suspension articles by next going into alignments. But as I am happy to take special requests for this monthly article, I am writing this month's article on radio communications for the PACE Club Drives. I will come back to alignments later.

We have found chatting on the CB radios during the club drives to be a lot of fun, plus it does add to the safety aspect of the drive. I highly recommend that everyone have a 40 channel CB radio in their Miata during the drives. When you hear the playful banter you will understand the fun aspect. But in the event of a car problem or the line of cars getting separated, the safety aspect has already proven itself for sure.

The club has in the past tried the small hand held "Family Channel" radios, but they proved to not be up to the task. These small hand held radios are only good for clear line of sight communications. They may advertise a 25 mile range, but they do not do well thru or around obstacles. The weak FM signal is easily blocked by buildings, wooded areas, hills, and is degraded by amazingly short distances between cars. Several of the lower channels available are license free, and the higher numbered, more powerful channels require a FCC personal radio license. But even the Family Channel higher powered frequencies just don't cut it. For example when I was leading a drive during our 2007 B&B event, my tail guy and I lost contact several times. I was thankful to have someone in the line to act as relay.

Over time the club has changed over to using Citizen Band, 40 channel CB Radios. We normally use channel 35 during the drives. The CB radio uses an AM Frequency which is able to go around obstacles and travel a longer distance. Hills and wooded areas do not bother the signal nearly as much, so communications can be made in more adverse, not "line of sight" conditions.

Most of us have taken a real liking to the "Cobra C75 WXST", CB Radio. The great thing about this radio is that all of the controls, the microphone and the speaker are in the hand held "Microphone" part. There is a small aluminum box that gets mounted under the seat, and this hand held unit plugs into it. The aluminum box has a socket for the CB antenna to be plugged into it, and the wiring harness to bring electrical power to the unit. The Hand Held microphone can be easily removed and stored in the house when not needed. This unit also has a special feature designed by Cobra called the "Sound Tracker". This helps filter out background noises when talking, and helps filter out interference when listening. It makes a noticeable difference.



We have 2 choices of antennas for the CB radio, but I highly recommend the second one I will list. Some people have been happy with using a magnet mount antenna. The antenna wire can be routed back to the trunk, and the magnet mount antenna put in place when needed. BUT A lot of us have found real value in using a special antenna splitter made just for our Miatas. A retired Antenna Design Engineer named Jeff Anderson makes a splitter that couples the car radio and the CB radio together to use just the car antenna. This way the antenna is

always ready to use. I had one of his in my previous Miata, and I have one now in my NC Miata. Plus this splitter is easily tuned to give your CB the best reception and to transmit the most powerful signal.

If you are thinking of buying a Christmas present for your car, or your spouse, here is a link to where I have been told is good source to buy one:

<http://store.valueweb.com/servlet/buyreliant.com/-strse-4/Cobra-C75WXST-Mobile-CB/Detail>

Here is a second source just for reference: <http://www.amazon.com/Cobra-75WXST-40-Channel-CB-Radio/dp/B00005N5WW>



The antenna splitter is a quality unit and is made and sold by Jeff Anderson in Florida. The best way to contact him is by e-mail, but I will include his phone number for reference. Just tell him what year Miata you own and he will make it up tuned just for your car. His home number in Florida is 1-850-650-2153, but his preferred contact is by e-mail. His e-mail address is: jeffanderson@miata.net.

If you decide to go the route of buying a CB radio and have any questions, please feel free to contact me with them. Next Month I will write some installation tips which might help you more easily install the radio, and get the best from it.

Zoom-Zoom (With Care)
Bill Latsha

