

## Secrets of Successful CB Communications

### Conducting a convoy that creates memories

By Del & Stacie Albright

Many of us use CB's to conduct our events and convoys in the off-road world. And I think it's safe to say that Stacie and I probably attend as many events as anyone in our motorized world. But for sure I can tell you that CB communication is probably the most ignored and ill-tended part of any convoy or event out there! We've had more bad than good experiences with CB's. However there are some secrets and tips that will help you be the best you can be on the CB.

First off, we will tell you that a lot of our trail friends, especially on the Rubicon Trail, say dump the CB and get a HAM (amateur radio) license. CB stands for Citizens Band (no rules) radio and is a low frequency short-distance, mostly line-of-sight radio operating over 40 channels (in the 27-MHz band for you techies). HAM on the other hand is a real radio, with real rules, and even the addition of long-distance repeaters. But CB is our radio of choice for convoys so what say we get it right and make memories on convoys instead of headaches?

From our thousands of hours in trail rides, we can attest to the fact that most folks think a good trail experience is one that includes someone who narrates and talks about the trail – the flowers, the geology, the history, the landscape and the club behind the trail staying open. The narrator does not have to be the Trail Boss, but someone in the convoy who has done some homework and has a GOOD CB RADIO!!!

Secondly, we believe all rigs in an organized club run or event convoy should have a good working CB. That is the only way to keep a bunch of rigs headed in the same direction with folks coming away with good memories (and hopefully useful information). Here are the rest of the tips to make your convoy a great one.

1. **TUNE IT:** Get your CB tuned up (SWR meter and Field Strength) once in a while (at least once a year). Make sure your antenna is set up correctly for your rig and CB. The SWR meter shows us when our CB antenna and cables are mis-matched. You can fix that with adjustment screws and different antennas if needed. But a CB that is not tuned is a liability to a convoy/event.
2. **BUNCH UP BEFORE BLABBING:** Bunch up your group before blabbing on the CB. If you are too spread out, or in a windy snake-like canyon, no one past the third vehicle behind you will hear what you have to say from the front. Remember, it is line of sight.

3. **SCOUT IT FIRST:** Pre-run or scout your trail so you KNOW where you are going, what you are about to see, and where you can BUNCH UP to talk about the cool stuff you are showing folks. Be prepared; know what's coming and what to say about it.
4. **STUDY IT:** Get the background and cool info about your trail or area before you go and make up some 3 x 5 cards with that informative data so you can share it. Use books like from Chuck Wells (FunTreks) or BackCountry Adventures (Peter Massey, Jeanne Wilson of Adler Publishing). Get on the CB often (when bunched up) and tell folks about what they are seeing. They will LOVE it.
5. **GET ORGANIZED:** Use mid and tail gunners who relay your CB info as needed and help you keep the convoy on track. Use landmarks or lathe stakes with numbers in the ground to give you mile markers to refer to. Have your extra gunners tell you where they are in relation to your mile posts (markers). Remember your CB is line of sight – so a 5 mile convoy in a canyon that looks like the tracks of a sidewinder rattlesnake in the sand dunes is NOT going to let you talk to everyone. BUNCH UP; use relays.
6. **FIND THE LINE:** CB radio transmits and receives best when TUNED and when you “find the line.” The “line” is the squelch line (that irritating scratchy noise we all like to tune out). Find that noise and drop your button back a tad to make the noise go away. You have then maximized your radio range. Do this drill every time you change terrain, go over a big mountain, or find the chatter gone from your radio. It might be YOUR radio. If you are the convoy Trail Boss, tell your folks often to “find the line.” You’ll be much happier you did (and so will they).

A couple other miscellaneous things to keep in mind involve interacting with convoy participants. Try not to ask open-ended questions like, “how’s everyone doing?” This will only cause several people to “step” on each other with their answers. Instead, ask your mid-gunner how things look from his angle. Or ask your tail gunner the same question. Also, if you’re going to do introductions, rig by rig, wait until you are going slow and bunched up so folks can hear.

If you have a large event with several different trail rides or groups, designate different CB channels for each group, and leave room between the channels so the frequencies don’t step all over each other. Also we suggest having an admin channel or one channel set up for just the event staff so there is a clear place to communicate in case of event disasters, emergencies or mix-ups.

CB is a handy tool to have when used properly and kept in its place. It is essential to a good memorable trail ride in our book. So take these tips, share them, mention them during driver's meetings, and make ALL your convoys and trail rides memorable.

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More on Del & Stacie Albright at <http://www.delalbright.com> and more about convoys and organizing events can be learned in the Recreational Leadership Training Course (RLTC) at <http://www.rltc.biz>.