

NationalSOS School Project

Stay in Touch with Your Child During an Emergency

- Your child's school's in lockdown
- There's a major storm that's knocked out cell phone towers or land line phones
- Cell phone circuits are overloaded because of a terrorist incident
- Your child's cell phone's battery is dead
- Roads between home and school are closed or impassible

Wouldn't it be comforting to know that no matter what happens you can always communicate with your child at school? Wouldn't it be helpful to have a nearly invulnerable, always working, way to talk to your son or daughter at school if you can't get there yourself?

The NationalSOS School Project shows parents how they can use FRS and GMRS radios to communicate with their children at school during an emergency. Peace of mind is priceless.



NationalSOS' School Project goes hand in hand with NationalSOS' mission of using handheld FRS and GMRS* radios to provide a reliable, robust and easy-to-use emergency communications system. Using these inexpensive, battery operated radios, every American can be part of this national network: When cell phones, land lines or the Internet fail, FRS and GMRS radios will work. In an emergency, tune your FRS or GMRS radio to channel 1, the national emergency channel. Just send your son or daughter to school with an emergency radio, which they can keep in their locker or backpack.

If there's a widespread emergency *all* area schools may be locked down — nobody goes in and nobody goes out. A NationalSOS radio may be your only way to communicate with your son or daughter at school.

You should have a pre-planned channel that your family will use in an emergency.

There are 14 FRS channels and 38 privacy/subchannels; these combinations make it possible for your family to communicate without interference from others. On your radio, the channel may appear as a large number and the privacy as a smaller number: Perhaps something like:

7₁₂

This would mean you're on channel 7, subchannel/privacy channel 12.

What these 532 different channel configurations do is let you talk without interference. Write your family's channel/subchannel combination on your radios.

This is all much easier to do than to describe, since all you need to do is set your child's radio and your home radio to the same channel/subchannel just once and it remains on that channel. A fresh set of batteries will last the entire school year: On the first day of school, your son or daughter can put their radio in their locker and it will be ready to work on any day and at any time.

NationalSOS radios can also be used in cars — they're meant to be portable.

Some Questions and Answers about the NationalSOS School Project

What is FRS? Is FRS radio like CB radio? Why does DCERN use FRS and GMRS radios?

Family Radio Service radios are just that: portable, battery-operated radios intended for individuals and families. FRS radios are easy to use, inexpensive and don't require a license. People use FRS radios to stay in touch while on ski slopes, at sports events, at the beach, at amusement parks, on hiking trails — just about everywhere. GMRS (General Mobile Radio Service) radios, which have a greater range than FRS radios, are often sold side-by-side with FRS radios. FRS radios have a range of about ½ mile; GMRS radios can communicate up to 5 miles. (As a rule of thumb: 1 watt = 1 mile.)

Does it cost anything to use these radios?

Unlike cellular phones, there's no fee to use FRS and GMRS radios, other than the initial purchase price. You can spend as little as \$25 or as much as \$150, depending on the radio's features

Would I need a DCERN radio if cell phones didn't work but land line phones did work?

During an emergency, cell phone networks can fail or become overwhelmed. Cell phone towers have backup batteries that only last a few hours; in a crisis when everyone's trying to use their cell phone, most people's signals won't go through. During the east coast blackout of 1993, cell phone users discovered that their mobile phones were useless after a few hours, as cell phone tower backup batteries died. Land line phones, while more robust than cell phones, obviously won't work when you're outside. Your emergency FRS or GMRS radio can provide you with a way to communicate with your family and neighbors if you can't use your cell phone.

What if I live or work far from my child's school and out of the radio's range?

During an emergency, chances are that you'll be able to get close enough to your child's school to be able to talk with them. If the schools in lockdown, nobody will be allowed to enter or leave, but you will be able to get in range. GMRS radios have a workable range of 5 miles.

How is using these radios different for communicating with my daughter at school, than it would be in other emergencies?

The national emergency channel is channel 1. During an emergency —severe weather, chemical spill, earthquake, terrorist attack, for example— just tune your radio to the national emergency channel to communicate with neighbors or officials. But because the NationalSOS emergency channel will be crowded in an emergency, and because you want to talk with your son or daughter, you should have a “family” frequency, other than channel 1.

Is it hard to learn to use these radios? My child can probably figure out how to use it, but I'm not technically inclined.

The most difficult part of using an FRS or GMRS radio is getting it out of the nearly impenetrable plastic enclosure many of these hand held radios are sold in. FRS and GMRS radios are designed to be easy to use — these are the radios you see many families with at places like Disneyworld and amusement parks. FRS and GMRS radios are easier to operate than cell phones.

Won't my child's radio's batteries go dead if the radio is just sitting in his locker?

In a radio that's turned off, a fresh pair of batteries will last for years. Be sure to buy a radio that takes AA batteries, and doesn't have to be recharged. For extra long life, use lithium batteries.

What else do I need to know?

An emergency can happen at any time and without any warning. It could be something specific to your child's school, such an escaped prisoner in the area; or it could be an area-wide problem. The best time to get your family and your child a radio to bring to school is now. In an emergency, your son or daughter will be relieved to be able to talk with you.

About NationalSOS

NationalSOS was founded by Eric Knight and is the national organization for using hand handheld radios during an emergency. Recently, the DC Emergency Radio Network, which was created by Bill Adler to provide emergency communications in the nation's capital has become part of NationalSOS. Visit www.nationalsos.com for more information.

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* FRS, Family Radio Service, and GMRS, General Mobile Radio Service, radios can be purchased at almost any electronics store, drug stores and elsewhere. Channel 1 is the agreed upon emergency channel: This is the channel you can use to call for help and to give help.