RADIO BRIEFING

Radios are being used more and more in ski racing, both on artificial surfaces and on snow. This brief will provide you with tips and guidelines on how to get the best out of your radios and avoid confusion when using them.

The Radios

The most common type of radio now being used, on artificial surfaces and short snow races, is the PMR446 style radio. This radio provides the user with 8 channels and then varying numbers of interference elimination codes or sub-channels. These channels and codes are common, so different manufacturer's radios will be compatible. The normal way to refer to these channels and codes is to say the channel followed by the code, i.e. for channel 4 code 11 use "4-11".

These radios also have the functionality that normally they are able to use either re-chargeable or standard batteries. This makes having a back-up battery easily available, should the battery fail during a race. Other accessories include ear pieces, headsets and hand mike extensions. All of these have their advantages, but beware that some may distort the audio. It is a requirement of BCR/BACR that all officials with a radio must wear some sort of privacy device with the radio, i.e. an earpiece/microphone similar to those available for mobile phones.

Using the radios

It is also a requirement of the regulations that all the major officials (TD, CoR, Referee, Start Ref, Finish Ref, Timing and possibly the Chief Gate Judge) have a radio. This is in addition to the requirement for the timing officials to have their own "private" method of communication. With many of these radios around, try to avoid having too many radio nets; the CoR could end up with one radio for each net and run out of pockets to put then in! However, a communication system between the CoR and the Race Sec could prove useful, but should separate to the race radio net.

Wherever possible issue the radio with spare batteries, you never know the real condition of rechargeable batteries, or how long standard batteries will last. All race administration messages should be complete before the start of the race, and only race essential messages should be passed once the race has commenced. It is regarded as an indication of a well organised race if the radio net has little message traffic.

Passing messages

The convention when you wish to pass a message to another official is to use the format "hello you this is me"; for example "Chief of Race this is Referee". This is a little formal, and is usually shortened to "Chief<pause>Referee". If the Chief Gate Judge is also on the radio then you will have to use the full title to avoid confusion.

The content of your message should be clear and accurate, avoid waffle and "um" or "er". Say what you mean and do not over elaborate; try to be concise, but don't abbreviate too much as this in itself could cause confusion. Another tip is to "think before you speak", meaning know what you want to say before you transmit.

Useful words

Some words have specific meanings and can be used to reduce confusion, here are a few examples:

Roger	I have received and understood your last transmission.
Wilco	I have received your last transmission and will comply with your instruction/request.
Over	My transmission is complete, I expect a reply.
Out	My transmission is complete, I do not require a reply.
Say Again	Repeat your last message.
Affirm	Yes (Yes may also be used)
Negative	No (No may also be used)

Emergency stop

This is a very important procedure, and should be second nature for officials with radios. If you feel there is a need to stop the race due to an injury or hazard in the course then transmit "**Stop Start, Stop Start**", and then wait for the Start Referee to respond " **Start Held, racer number XX on course**" or a brief report of who is on course. The person calling the stop should then identify themselves and give a *short* brief on the situation that caused the stop. For example: "**Referee, racer YY fell at gate 9, Racer OK, but skis in the course and gate 9 needs to be replaced**".

Once the situation is resolved, report to the CoR that the course is clear; "**Chief, Referee, course clear**". The CoR will acknowledge and then clear the Start Referee to re-commence the race; "**Chief roger, Start Referee clear continue**". The Start referee will then send the next racer out through the start gate. "**Start roger, racer ZZ on course**", and the race continues normally.

Tips, do's and don'ts

TIPs

- Keep transmissions to a minimum.
- Hold the microphone about 5-7cm from your lips.
- Think before you speak.
- Speak in a normal voice, and at a normal speed.

DO

- In cold weather, keep the radio and spare battery warm, maybe inside your jacket when not transmitting. Batteries do not like the cold, it reduces their life.
- Turn off the radio when not in use.

DON'T

- Drop the radio or battery.
- Carry or lift the unit by its aerial; always hold the radio by the body.
- Put the unit down on the snow.

Summary

Radios are a very useful tool for the organisation and safety of a ski race. These notes should help you to achieve a good and a safe race.