

Beware the dodgy two-way radio

Two-way radios—also known as walkie talkies—are common and easily bought online. But sometimes these products can be dodgy. So, while your radio may seem to operate properly, it could be stopping a critical service from doing its job.

Dodgy radios are often cheap and typically sold from overseas with a package of pre-programmed frequencies. In many cases, the supplier hasn't determined whether you're allowed to operate on these frequencies in Australia.

Take, for example, the Baofeng BF-888S and Boefeng BF-888S Plus models. Through spectrum monitoring activities, our field officers have found a number of Baofeng two-way radios operating in the harmonised government spectrum (HGS). HGS is primarily used by state and territory government for law enforcement, emergency services and public safety communications.



How can I avoid buying a dodgy two-way radio?

If you're planning on buying a two-way radio, here are some tips to avoid interfering with critical services:

1. Buy from a reputable supplier, preferably based in Australia

Before an Australian supplier can sell a two-way radio, that company or individual must meet a range of compliance requirements, including record-keeping, labelling and ensuring the device complies with ACMA-mandated technical standards.

2. Make sure you have the right radiocommunications licence

You can't operate a two-way radio without an appropriate licence, so check you understand and meet your radiocommunications licensing requirements.

3. Hire through a short- or long-term rental company

Companies all over Australia hire two-way radios. This can be quicker and easier because the company does the leg work to ensure the device can be lawfully operated in Australia, and they can also take care of any radiocommunications licensing requirements.

4. Buy a Citizen Band (CB) radio

Depending on your communications needs, you could buy a CB radio—a short-distance device that can be used by anyone in Australia. However, because the frequencies programmed into a CB radio are shared by other users, it may not suit those wanting commercial or private frequencies. Always check you meet the conditions of the *Radiocommunications (Citizen Band Radio Stations) Class Licence 2015* first.

What happens if I'm caught?

The consequences can be serious if you're caught operating an unlicensed two-way radio. Under the *Radiocommunications Act 1992*, individuals found guilty of this offence may face jail terms of up to two years; body corporates may receive a penalty of up to \$300,000 (1,500 penalty units). Other penalties may apply, such as the interference offence provisions in Part 4.2 of the Act.

Where can I find more information?

- > Find out more about land two-way radios at <http://www.acma.gov.au/theACMA/land-mobile-two-way-radios>.
- > Read more about renting or buying two-way radios that Australian companies have pre-programmed with frequencies at www.acma.gov.au/twowayradiouser.
- > For advice on product safety, see the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission's Product Safety website www.productsafety.gov.au.
- > Information on electrical safety matters is available from state and territory energy regulators.
- > If you have any further questions about the ACMA's regulatory arrangements or radiocommunications licensing, contact the ACMA's Customer Service Centre on 1300 850 115 or info@acma.gov.au.

Please note: The ACMA regulates radiocommunications products supplied in Australia to ensure they operate on the correct frequencies, meet electromagnetic energy (EME) emission limits for public health safety, and meet the electromagnetic capability (EMC) requirements so that other devices are not interfered with. The ACMA does not regulate product safety (injury, illness and death caused by unsafe goods).

This page is intended as a guide only and should not be relied on as legal advice or regarded as a substitute for legal advice in individual cases.