

Use of VHF on Lake Nockamixon

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Why use VHF on Lake Nockamixon?

Not required for vessel sizes found on Lake Nockamixon (>65.5 feet) but VHF recommend in order to get:

- Weather information.
- Communicate with other boats.
- Way to get help in an emergency.
- Way to know if someone else needs assistance.
- Cheap entertainment tool. It's fun.

What is range of VHF

- VHF range depends mostly on line of site.
- Higher the antenna the greater the coverage.
- Handhelds 2-4 miles if not obstructed by hills.
May have trouble communicating with handheld if at extreme ends of Lake.
- Fixed Systems 10 miles typical if antenna at top of mast.
- Use 3 dB antenna at top of mast for best range on sailboats.

Important Information about VHF on Lake Nockamixon

- Park office monitors channel 16 and 22 Marine Emergency Stations on Saturday and Sunday from 8:00 AM – 4:00 PM.
- By law if your VHF radio is on board you must monitor channel 16. Normally you can hail vessels on channel 16 or 9 (recreational calling station) but the Park has requested that the NSC not communicate a lot on channel 16 unless there is an emergency. Almost no one monitors channel 9 on the Lake including the park. If you hail a vessel on channel 16 be sure to immediately switch to a working station or the park will tell you to get off.
- The NSC has designated that working stations are 68 for racers and 69 for cruisers.
- Most VHF radios can monitor multiple stations. We suggest you monitor channel 16 (monitor only), 9, and channel 68 if you are a racer and/or 69 if you are a cruiser.

How to hail another vessel?

- I suggest you hail vessels on channel 16 unless you know they are a member of the NSC and on either 68 or 69. It is fine to hail on 68 or 69 if you know the other vessel is a NSC member and monitoring these channels.
- Once you hail a vessel on channel 16 immediately switch to either channel 68 or 69 depending on whether you are a racer (68) or a cruiser (69) or some other working channel that is open.
- Working channels in PA are Ch. 68, 69, 71, 72, 78. Don't use channels other than these as working channels.
- If on channel 16, keep initial hailing call clear and short and then immediately switch to a working channel.

Correct Hailing Procedure

- On channel 16, 68, or 69 state one to three times the vessel you are calling, followed by once or twice the name of your vessel, and then over.
- Example: Seanile, Seanile, Seanile, this is Superna, over.
- If you are on channel 16, once Seanile replies immediately switch to working channel, 68 or 69 or some other channel.
- If no response, try again in 15-20 seconds.
- If no response after three tries, try again later. Don't hail vessels endlessly since it ties up channel. Especially important on channel 16.

Over and Out

- Always say “over” when you finish saying anything.
- Only one vessel can be heard at a time.
- Say “out” when you are finished communicating with other vessel and switch back to monitoring channel 9, 16 (monitor only) and 68 and/or 69.

Example Hailing

- If on channel 16, say, “Seanile, Seanile, Seanile. This is Superna, over.”
- “Superna, this is Seanile, over.”
- “Seanile, switch to channel six eight, over.”
- On channel 68 say, “Seanile, Bla, Bla, Bla, over.”
- When finished say ,”Superna or Seanile out.”

Radio Checks

- On navigable bodies of water VHF channels are very busy and radio checks are discouraged.
- Channels on Lake Nockamixon are not busy. In order to increase use of VHF on Lake Nockamixon we wish to encourage radio checks to give people an excuse to communicate ship to ship.
- We suggest you do a radio check on 68 or 69 as soon as you have raised your sails in order to identify other NSC members on the Lake. Do not do radio checks on channel 16.

Example Radio Check

- This is Seanile. Request radio check. Over.
- This is Superna. You are loud and clear. Over.
Superna out.
- Seanile, out.

How to get Help on Lake Nockamixon

- Contact Park Office on Marine Emergency Stations 16 on Saturday or Sunday from 8:00 AM – 4:00 PM. Available weekends only. Once you reach park they will have you switch to channel 22 as the emergency working station so channel 16 stays clear. When park office closed, more likely to get help from other boaters on channel 16, 68, or 69.
- Also can call 911 and County will call Rangers who send help. Calling 911 is still the best and most reliable way to get help unless it is the weekend and you can reach the park office.

Types of Distress Calls

- Mayday- used if life threatening situation or if vessel in peril. Examples: Someone on board has had a heart attach or your vessel is sinking or your vessel is on fire.
- PanPan- (pronounced Pahnn-Pahnn) used if you need assistance but it is not a life threatening situation. Examples: Your motor is not working or a passenger is hurt but not in danger of death.

Not used on Lake Nockamixon

- Lake Nockamixon is not navigable water so the coast guard does not monitor transmissions on the Lake.
- No need to use Securite or understand use of Selance Mayday, etc.

Sending a Distress Call

- Always use channel 16 for distress calls.
- Repeat word “Mayday” or “Pan Pan” three times.
“Mayday, Mayday, Mayday” or “Pan Pan, Pan Pan, Pan Pan”
- This is (name of vessel) three times.
- Describe your vessel size, type, and number aboard.
- Describe position to any well known landmarks.
- Indicate type of assistance required.
- Say over.
- Repeat every two minutes until answered.

Hearing a Distress Call

- Maritime law says you must help any vessel in distress unless it would endanger your vessel or your crew.
- First give law enforcement chance to respond.
- If no response get details of emergency and how you can help.
- If you cannot help stay off channel or try to relay call to someone who can help.

Weather Information

- If your VHF is equipped to receive weather stations, can get up to date weather reports from NOAA (National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration) weather radio, located in Allentown and covering Bucks County on weather channel 2.

Summary of Channels

- Channel 16-National hailing channel for ship-to-ship and ship-to-coast and safety and distress channel.
- Channel 9-Hailing frequency for recreational boaters. Used in areas where channel 16 is very busy. Not used much on Lake.
- Channel 68-For use by racers.
- Channel 69-For use by cruisers.
- Channels 71, 72, 78-Semiprivate working channels.

Other

- Make sure someone else on your vessel knows how to use VHF radio in case you are incapacitated.
- Always listen to make sure channel is free so you do not walk over someone else's conversation.
- Remember to press button when you speak and release it when you finish.

Other

- Turn down the power on your VHF if you are close to a vessel as a courtesy.
- No Land to Land use of VHF. OK for Ship to Ship and Ship to Land and vice versa.
- No License required for use of VHF for boaters so no call signs required.

What handheld VHF to Purchase?

- Handhelds
 - Most have 5 and 1 watt transmit power for high and low.
 - Battery life should be enough for a full day of operation. Lithium ion batteries last up to 15 hours.
 - Water proof.
 - Size of display.
 - Size of transmit button.
 - Ability to scan multiple channels.
 - Weather channels.