

### **Can you hear me? It's for your safety**

While most travellers want to escape the hustle and bustle of everyday life, being out of communication range can potentially be dangerous for safety reasons.

'What about my trusty mobile phone?' I hear you ask. While the mobile phone has been a marvellous invention, apart from major cities and some main arterial roads, most of Australia hasn't got mobile phone coverage, so don't rely on your mobile for emergencies.

There is necessary equipment you will need to get yourself out of any trouble and communication accessories to ensure your safety and peace of mind.

### **UHF CB long and short range radio**

An Ultra High Frequency, commonly known as UHF, CB Radio enables you to contact many people as you travel and is the favoured system used by farmers, truckies, caravanners, 4WDDrivers and travellers.

This system is also able to link to repeater stations, which re-broadcast your message to a larger area. Each repeater in each area is on a different channel so you'll need to do your research before you leave. While UHF is generally for short range, it can be enhanced via repeater stations. While the range isn't typically long, there are a lot of users tuned in who could assist, or relay your message.

This type of communication system can also help you familiarise yourself with a new town by contacting the many locals on the air. This is a great way to find out the best camping spots, restaurants or low cost fuel. UHF systems range from \$450 for a car fitted safety system to as little as \$50 for a simple hand held radio and up to \$650 for wider range and power in a high performance system.

The smaller hand held radios are also great for communicating back to the system installed in your car and the person who may have stayed behind when you went for a stroll around the campsite or rest stop. A hand held can also be useful to talk to the person in the vehicle when reversing a caravan or trailer so your instructions are heard.

While UHF CB Radios are generally short range there are also High Frequency (HF) long range radios available which are used by the travellers' radio network and the Royal Flying Doctors. HF provides a quicker response than a short range UHF CB Radio. This type of system is very effective and reliable and sells from around \$2,300.

Once you have been advised which communications system is best suited for you, getting it installed correctly to get maximum performance is very important. There is no point investing in your safety if the unit doesn't perform to the best of its capabilities. The type of antenna and where it is fitted to your particular vehicle will determine whether you get the best range. The bull bar is a popular option but not usually a high performance position. Talk to a specialist. **Tip:** make sure the retailer looks at the vehicle the system is to be attached to before selling you anything.

**Tip:** leave the radio scanning while you are driving along and make note of the stations which have people on them that day. Then if you do need to make a call you can use a channel you know was just in use.

## **GPS and navigation systems**

Global Positioning Systems (GPS) offer many advantages when travelling. A Global Positioning System allows you to wander off the beaten track and as you turn off the main path you can log that point in the GPS, then log any other significant way points and the GPS will number and store them for you until you are ready to go back. You can then reverse the route you just logged and it will guide you back to each point you logged in the order you logged them. You can then save the trail into the GPS, or on your computer when you get home, so you can go back again on your next trip.

You can also plot your trip before you leave by corresponding it to the coordinates on maps of the area. Why not invest in electronic maps of the area and then your GPS can also become a navigation system as well. Small hand held GPS units start from as low as \$300.

Navigation systems get you from address to address, from one side of the country to the other as well as around any city you are unfamiliar with. They don't include the little side streets in small towns, however the locals are always obliging and will give you a hand. Good basic systems will cost around \$1,400.

A navigation system allows you to type in the address of your destination and it will tell you where to turn and when, these cost around \$1,400. It is just like having the person in the passenger seat directing you but it always holds the map up the right way.

**Tip:** you will have to spend some time getting to know your system. After you have downloaded the software, take it on a few practice runs.