



## UHF RADIO USE - BASICS

**Ken Wilson from the 'TRUCK FRIENDLY' caravan road safety program explains how to use your UHF radio while on the highway for your own safety and the safety of other road users!**

### COMMUNICATION

One of the easiest ways to help other road users is by communication; talking with the truck drivers and others via a UHF radio, and by them talking back to you.

Purchasing a good quality UHF radio for your tow vehicle or RV is highly recommended. You will also find it a great investment in an emergency when you are out of mobile phone range.

With 80 channels on the UHF band it can be confusing to first time caravanners or RV drivers.

This article is designed to help explain the basics and I recommend further UHF education once you are familiar with the basics.

*I have included a list of the UHF channels available at the end of this article.*

### Channel 40.

The accepted '**Highway Channel**' used by most truck drivers throughout Australia is Channel 40.

**However**, if travelling on the Pacific Highway and Pacific Motorway in northern NSW and southern Queensland you may find channel 29 is used more frequently by truck drivers and others travelling in that area.

There is also some valuable information passed on via Channel 40 like road conditions, animals on the road, car accidents, **wide loads ahead**, roadblocks to avoid up ahead, speed camera locations and other things of interest.

***You will not make any friends by clogging up Channel 40 with a long conversation or swapping recipes and will often be asked, (not always politely) to change to another channel for a chat.***

***Keep it brief and to the point is the rule on Channel 40.***

Many companies also have their preferred, quieter channel for their business communications.

## Channel 18

Traditionally caravanners use Channel 18 to talk amongst themselves and use this channel for convoy communication. Some clubs however may choose another channel for that particular convoy chatter however, it is recommended that contact still be maintained to listen to channel 40 for other safety information being passed on.

## Caravan and RV radio use.

The Truck Friendly Caravan Road safety program recommends that all caravans and RV's listen to channel 40 while on the road, however, change to channel 18 or other agreed channel when having a chat. Keep it brief on channel 40.

## Why do we recommend Channel 40?

Channel 40 is the accepted highway safety channel Australia wide. *(apart from the use of 29 is the areas previously mentioned)*. If you are on other radio channels on the highway you may miss other important safety information.

Other drivers may want to warn you of dangers ahead, a problem with your vehicle and the **wide loads also use channel 40** to advise your you pull over so they can pass.

*"I have had drivers advise me that I was approaching a narrow bridge around the next corner towing my van, and that there were two cyclists riding two abreast over the bridge. It could have been a serious accident if I could not overtake them with 100 kph traffic coming in the other direction." Ken*

Always keep an eye on your rear vision mirrors and be aware of who is coming up behind you and immediately tune the UHF to Channel 40 so you can hear any truck drivers trying to talk to you.

If you are going to make any sudden changes up ahead like braking or turning off the road, let the driver behind know early so they can be ready to brake if needed. They may be preparing to overtake and starting to accelerate while you intend to turn right or are pulling off the road.

**Give plenty of warning and remember a semi-trailer or B-Double take a long distance to stop...otherwise you may find their bull bar in your caravan's bed.**

Depending on which Channel you normally have the radio set on, it is always a good idea to have your name or nickname and UHF Channel 40 and /or 18 in large print (200mm) on the back and front of your caravan or RV. That way a driver behind or oncoming will know you have a radio (hopefully) **'turned on'** and which channel you are listening to so they can call you up easily and identify they are talking to the right vehicle. They may simply want to tell you your push bike has come loose off the back of your van, you are leaking water, some other safety issue or that they are going to overtake.

***A friend reported that trucks and other drivers were trying to contact the driver of one pop top van rig to tell him his van top was unclipped and flapping in the wind. When they finally caught him, this driver did not have his radio turned on and nearly had many hundreds of dollars avoidable damaged to his van. He had gone to the effort of***

**spending a few hundred dollars having a radio installed but then didn't even have it turned on.**

*"Personally, I stay on Channel 40, however as the language used by some people on this highway channel can be a bit rough sometimes, some caravanners or family groups may prefer to stay on channel 18 which is quieter. In general, the professional truck drivers on the highway are great, happy to help and very courteous. There can be a few drivers around, in all vehicle types and people on home radios, especially near the cities who may use colourful language, but they are very much in the minority." Ken*

Choose which is the best Channel for you and advertise it on the front and rear of your van, **keep it turned on and volume up so you can hear someone trying to contact you.** After all that's why you had it installed in the first place.

**Remember;**  
***Be polite, keep it short, and acknowledge that you have heard and understood the message. Talk clearly and not too fast.***

Stay **Truck Friendly** and follow up with a friendly 'thank you', 'Have a safe trip', or 'stay safe' as you may meet them at the next stop down the road.

## **How do you use your UHF radio?**

The UHF radios may vary in style, power and features but most are basically the same.

### **Ken's tips for clear communication.**

1. Press the transmit button and wait a sec or two before talking to allow the unit to activate. You may miss sending your first word or two otherwise.
2. When you finish talking make sure you leave a second or so before releasing the button, so you don't cut off your last words.
3. Talk across the face of the mic and not directly into it for a clearer transmission.
4. Talk at normal volume and don't blow into the mic when talking.
5. Talk clearly and not too fast. If someone is receiving you with a weak signal they may need to hear very clear speech to be able to understand you.
6. Ensure you have your aerial set up in the best place on your vehicle and spend extra on a good quality aerial and powerful unit.
7. Check with industry experts on the best set ups for your individual situation. Mates and campfire experts may have the best of intentions but some may lack specific knowledge.
8. Learn the radio language. For example, you will often hear, "Copy in the caravan" or "Copy (*nickname*) caravan" etc. when someone is trying to contact you. Get into the habit of saying "Over" or make it clear when you have finished talking.
9. Remember only one radio will be heard at one time so wait till the air ways are clear before trying to talk.

10. **DO NOT USE Channel 5 or 35 for general chatter.** These are for emergency use only and heavy fine apply for misuse.
11. Have your UHF professionally installed for best performance and help ensure it is compatible with other items in your vehicle. I.e.:- *“My electronic brake control and UHF radio should not be mounted too close to each other to avoid interference.” Ken*

### What are the different UHF Channels used for?

<b>TRUCK FRIENDLY Caravan Road Safety Program UHF RADIO CHANNELS IN AUSTRALIA</b>	
<b>CHANNEL</b>	<b>THIS CHANNEL IS USED FOR :-</b>
1 - 4	Duplex channels - output
5	Duplex Channel output - EMERGENCY USE ONLY
6 - 8	Duplex channels - output
9	General use - chat
10	4WD clubs for convoys and used in National Parks
11	Initial call channel - then change to another channel to chat
12 - 17	General use - chat
18	Caravan and caravan convoy chat channel
19 - 21	General use - chat
22 - 23	Telemetry / Telecommand - used for automated data transmission only
24 - 28	General use - chat
29	Highway channel - Pacific Highway, Pacific motorway Qld & NSW
30	General use - chat
31 - 34	Duplex channels input
35	Duplex channel input - EMERGENCY USE ONLY
36 - 38	Duplex channels input
39	General use - chat
40	Highway / road safety channel
41 - 48	Duplex channels - output
49 - 60	General use - chat
61 - 63	Reserved for future use - restricted
64 - 70	General use - chat
71 - 78	Duplex channels - input
79 - 80	General use - chat
<b>LEGEND</b>	<p>General use channels</p> <p>Duplex channels are used to relay the signal in remote areas.</p> <p>Channels traditionally designated for certain uses.</p> <p>Restricted use channels - fines may apply for misuse. Emergency use only</p>
<a href="http://WWW.TRUCKFRIENDLY.COM.AU">WWW.TRUCKFRIENDLY.COM.AU</a>	

**For more information on the Truck Friendly caravan road safety program please head to the web site. [www.truckfriendly.com.au](http://www.truckfriendly.com.au)**

**Stay up to date & follow us on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/truckfriendly.com.au>**

Stay safe

Ken Wilson

Truck Friendly

admin@truckfriendly.com.au