

VHF Radio Basics

What is the VHF for?

All boats, restaurants and businesses in Abaco are equipped with a VHF radio, in Abaco it's our phone. It's your best source for information, including weather, daily restaurant offerings and community announcements on the popular Cruisers Net, better known as the Coconut Telegraph, every morning at 8:15 on channel 68. It's also used for making dinner reservations, and calling your new friends you met last night at dinner. However, it is not a toy.

How to Use the VHF

You'll find the VHF set to channel 16 at all times. Channel 16 is for hailing and distress purposes only, so make your initial hailing call clear and short.

The correct hailing procedure is to state two to three times, in succession, the name of the boat, home or business you are calling, followed twice by the name of our home, "Blue Heaven", then "Over". Any additional words are unnecessary at this point. Once your party replies, they will instruct you to switch to a working channel and off channel 16.

If you have never operated a VHF before, don't be intimidated, just listen to channel 16 for a few minutes and follow what others do.

Wait for a break in conversation, if you talk on top of someone else, neither will be heard, just key the mic, talk slow and clear.

Example:

Blue Heaven - "Seaspray Resort, Seaspray Resort ... this is Blue Heaven, Blue Heaven, over"

Wait for a reply. If you do not get a reply within 15/20 seconds, you may try a second and third time. If no response, wait a few minutes and try again. (In most cases, if you are calling a restaurant or business, someone will be by the VHF to answer you.)

Seaspray Resort - "Blue Heaven, this is Seaspray, please go to channel 68", reply with "Six eight over" to confirm. At this point simply switch the radio to channel 68. It is usually considered safer to announce double-digit numbers one at a time. Here, instead of saying "channel sixty eight", say: "Channel six eight".

Seaspray Resort (now on Ch.68): "Blue Heaven, this is Seaspray, over"

Blue Heaven: "Seaspray this is Blue Heaven, we would like dinner reservations for 6 at 7:30, etc.... Over"

When you have completed your call:

Blue Heaven "Blue Heaven over and out, back to 16"

Remember, always listen before you start transmitting to make sure you have a clear channel. If others are talking, wait until they're finished. Everyone will appreciate your courtesy.

Before calling another vessel or home on channel 16, check to be sure in advance that you have a free working channel available to switch to.

Be sure to depress the button on the microphone before you start to speak. It's common for transmissions to be cut off at the beginning or at the end because the sender does not depress the button in sync with their speech.

Remember that the only legal channels to communicate on are: 9, 16, 68, 69, 71, 72, and 78. All other channels are designated for other uses.

IN CASE OF EMERGENCY - Hope Town Fire & Rescue is located in Hopetown, and can be hailed by simply calling "EMERGENCY HOPE TOWN FIRE AND RESCUE, HOPE TOWN FIRE AND RESCUE - Blue Heaven, Blue Heaven.

Lastly, use your common sense, proper etiquette and again remember that the VHF use is not a toy.