



ETON FR-300: It's Not Just For Emergencies!

By Ken Reitz

Several years ago the Grundig Corporation found themselves with a great hit on their hands in the FR-200 (*MT* October 2002). It featured AM, FM and two shortwave bands. Now the Eton Corporation, the American distributor of Grundig radio products and maker of its own line of radios, has released the FR-300 just in time for the big finale to the hurricane season.

❖ Feature Packed Portable

Similarities between the two radios abound. Both use a similar housing and knob arrangement; the case is 6.5" high, 6.5" wide and just 2" deep. With only its internal batteries the radio weighs just 1-1/4 pounds. Like the FR-200, the FR-300 covers the AM and FM bands, but instead of shortwave the FR-300 covers the VHF-TV and Weather bands.

The greatest thing about this radio is, of course, the hand cranked dynamo power source, called "recycle power," which allows cranking by either lefties or righties and features a bright red LED to indicate it's charging via the dynamo.

Among the usual features are conventional battery power (three AA batteries, not included), an external 5 volt power input (power supply optional), earphone jack and a 26" telescoping, fold-away antenna. Analog tuning is done using a two-speed thumb wheel. Band switching is via a five-position slide switch, and the weather band is tuned using a seven-channel rotating selector switch to click into all seven WX radio frequencies used in the U.S. and Canada.

The FR-300 features a number of very useful changes, including much more powerful LEDs in the emergency light, a red emergency strobe, a cell phone charger and a piercing, warbling siren.

❖ Tuning in on the Details

Even if you don't anticipate being in an emergency, this multi-purpose radio will find its way into your hands. Take it with you on outings, fishing, hiking, picnics, and keep a radio eye on the weather; never miss a pitch of your favorite Major League Baseball team or a down of your local college football team.

Out in the middle of nowhere and your cell phone batteries are dead? Don't

worry, charge 'em up and keep yakking! There are enough adaptors to allow charging all Nokia models, all Siemens models and most Sony, Motorola and Samsung models.

How well does this radio play? The AM and FM bands were no better (and no worse) than you'd expect from a small, cheap, analog tuned portable. I found the WX radio band was as sensitive as my Radio Shack scanner. The FM radio was able to pick up my tiny FM transmitter from over 100 feet away (better than most portables I tested). The TV band tuning was adequate for receiving my local VHF-TV stations, the nearest of which is 50 miles away. There was considerable ingress of nearby FM radio signals in the VHF-TV band. The audio from the tiny 2" speaker was crisp and capable of being clearly heard throughout a sizable room. Even at full volume it was distortion free.

With the coming of digital TV and FM radio, won't this radio be obsolete shortly? No. There will continue to be analog TV and FM signals for the next 5 to 10 years. And, there is virtually no chance that the NOAA WX radio system will be replaced by a digital service within that same period.

Can this radio receive SAME WX warnings? No. But, in the "alarm" mode, it can receive the general alerts sent out by any WX radio transmitter. Set the volume to an audible level and the "alarm" switch to alarm. But, before you do so, make sure it has enough power to stay on during the emergency. I found I could get roughly an hour and a quarter

listening with five minutes on the crank. To test emergency reception, many WX radio transmitters send the emergency signal between 11 a.m. and noon on Wednesdays.

For the money (typically \$49.95 retail) and the features, this is one radio which could actually pay for itself in cost of batteries (roughly two eight packs of AA's). The FR-300 comes with a sturdy, nylon lined, black canvas carrying case, attached shoulder strap, three exterior pockets and magnetic closers on the pouch flap.

❖ Emergency Prepared

Anyone who has ever been in a weather related emergency, or even thinks they will, needs this radio. Before, during and after a storm this little radio will continue to earn its keep. Long after the last of your batteries have gone dead you can continue to monitor the local news and weather conditions on the radio that just doesn't quit.

If you've ever spent several days (and nights) without power, you'll also appreciate the built-in reading light/flashlight. You can find the latest news (which roads are closed, which gas stations are open, where the power's being restored) and enjoy listening to your favorite AM and FM stations. You won't have to hoard the power with the FR-300. As long as you can crank, you can use this radio. The FR-300 is sold through most consumer electronics stores and many *MT* advertisers.

Eton FR-300 Specifications

Size: 6.5"W x 6.5"H x 2"D
 Weight: 1.25 pounds
 Tunes:
 AM (525-1710 kHz)
 FM (88-108 MHz)
 VHF-TV channels 2-13
 WX Radio (seven channels)
 Power:
 Built-in hand-cranked Ni-MH replaceable battery pack
 5 volt DC jack for external power adaptor (not included)
 3 AA batteries (not included)
 Antenna:
 26" telescoping whip for FM, WX and TV bands
 Built-in ferrite rod for AM
 This product is made in China.



Note: Need some help with your Grundig/Eton radio?
<http://www.grundigradio.com/US/support>