

104 Bonsal Avenue
Glendolen, PA 19036

Scanning Philadelphia's Constitutional Celebration



On September 17th, 1987, the President, members of Congress and other dignitaries will converge on Philadelphia to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the Constitution. Philadelphia is the fifth largest city in the country, with an estimated population of 1.6 million. The surrounding population is about four million. Imagine scanning the action when more than five million people decide to have a party!

When monitoring a national event, the fun, excitement and extraordinary amount of radio traffic can be overwhelming. A scanner in the hands of a novice will miss more than half the action. Here's how to monitor a major event with professional results.

Begin by asking yourself the following questions. "Who is visiting?" If it is the President, then Secret Service frequencies will be needed. Next, ask yourself, "When and where will the event take place?" Is it in center city? At the water front? In a state park? The frequency coverage will differ with each location.

Lastly, ask, "What if?" What if an unidentified subject appears on a roof top? Rapid response team, SWAT and hospital frequencies may be needed. In brief, when the action gets hectic, there won't be time to research frequencies!

Thinking Ahead

Obtaining information on scheduled events can be simplified by a visit to the area's visitor information center. A wide variety of maps and pamphlets will be provided free for the asking. If a toll-free number is available, check the phone information against published listings for any last-minute changes.

Many activities will be scheduled before and after the feature attraction; neglecting these "smaller" gatherings will prevent you from hearing all the action. For example, if a balloon race is scheduled, call the sponsoring club and ask for specific frequencies that can be monitored. As a last resort, search the frequencies between 151 and 152 MHz for balloon traffic.

Fireworks that are near a large airport cause concern for air traffic. If the fireworks are held over a river, the Coast Guard and Marine Police will be needed to stop river traffic. Should a fire start, both fire boats and land equipment will become active.

Parades and crowd control in a large city are usually handled by a special task force that operates on its own separate frequency. In Philadelphia, this operation is code-named "M band." It operates on 453.55 MHz.

During a recent visit by Vice President Bush to Philadelphia, the "M band" was occupied by SWAT, FBI, Secret Service and Rapid Response Teams. If your area has designated channels for emergency use, check them out!

Public transportation will be operating at full capacity. Any type of equipment breakdown or schedule change will produce unwanted delays that have the potential to quickly grow into monumental problems. Have the security frequencies for trains and buses on hand.

Philadelphia has the unique advantage of being located within a 50-mile radius of two other coastal states: Delaware and New Jersey; this region is often referred to as the "Tri-State Area." It is recommended that scanner enthusiasts in similar regions have the emergency medical frequencies for adjoining states. In an emergency, many hospitals within a "tri-state area" may come into service.

News media coverage of major events can also provide plenty of scanning action. Look for the technical crew frequencies. These crews will be providing "live" coverage of important news stories. When prime locations for filming are limited, film crews will often ignore both police and air traffic boundaries. It is not uncommon to hear a news chopper pilot being "chewed out" by an air traffic controller!

Major highways in the Philadelphia area are patrolled by the state police whose coordination with city police can be monitored on 154.755 MHz. Pennsylvania state police helicopters and aircraft also operate on this frequency.

Other related areas that may also be of interest include traffic reporters, institutes, museums, colleges and universities, hotels, and inns. By now, you're probably saying, "How can I listen to all of this at one time?" How? By training your ear to listen to at least three or four scanners at one time! At first, this may seem confusing; however, it's simply a matter of ignoring what isn't important.

One method that works is to adjust each radio's volume in relation to priority. If the President is landing at the airport, then the volume on that particular scanner should be raised slightly above the others. You can still hear the city police, airport security and hospital frequencies. Unless your ear detects something unusual, keep your attention focused on the President. Working the traffic in this manner allows for maximum coverage.

Use your scanner's features to your advantage. Don't program the delay feature into all the channels. This is

especially true if you are using multiple scanners. Having the scan delay on every busy channel will slow things down unnecessarily. Without the delay, a large amount of routine traffic can be quickly sampled. If the action starts to get hot, simply stop the scan or add the delay function to those channels that are beginning to perk.

The priority channel feature should also be given careful consideration. If the channel isn't truly one that must be heard above all others, then don't use the priority mode! Unnecessary priority channels can actually make you miss more action than you will hear!

Generally, a quick, random sampling of 160 channels on four scanners will provide plenty of action. If this sounds hectic, you're right; it is! But that's the way it should be.

To fully enjoy the thrill of scanning a major event, don't sit down at the dials with a beer and sandwich. When the action starts, you should be busier than an air traffic controller! Notes and frequency lists will need constant attention. As the action shifts, frequency banks will need to be added or subtracted. You may even want to have a fifth radio searching for new frequencies!

If there is an all-news AM station in your area, have it on, too! If you hear the action before the radio station broadcasts it as a "news flash," congratulations! That's professional scanning!

Scanning a major event such as Philadelphia's 200th Constitutional Celebration can be informative, exciting and intriguing. Do your homework, use a little common sense and don't forget to make a tape of the action. It will become a permanent souvenir of your efforts. ■

PHILADELPHIA POLICE			
A Band	453.350	Q Band	Not in use
B Band	453.650	R Band	Not in use
C Band	453.150	S Band	Not in use
D Band	453.2	T Band	453.250
E Band	453.3	U Band	453.6
F Band	453.950	V-Z Bands	Not in use
G Band	453.800		
H Band	453.4	Surveillance	154.770
I Band	Not in use		154.890
J Band	453.750		154.650
K Band	Not in use		155.250
L Band	Not in use	City Ops	453.725
M Band	453.55	Phila Airport Police	453.450
N Band	Not in use	Airport Ops	453.850
O Band	Not in use		
P Band	453.5		
PHILA FIRE DEPT			
F-1	154.235		
F-2	153.950		
F-3	154.145		
F-4	153.830		
F-5	153.935		
F-6	154.965		
TRI-STATE AREA MEDICAL			
Philadelphia:			
Rescue	170.150		
Paramedics to hospitals	463.00		
	47.54		
	155.34		
New Jersey:			
Mutual aid	154.265		
	156.210		
Med Dispatch	154.430		
Medevac	155.220		
Delaware:			
Ambulance	155.2050		
PA STATE POLICE (Phila. area)			
Chan B	155.670		
Air & Radar	154.755		
Phila SP base & mobiles	155.580		
MARINE TRAFFIC			
Phila Naval Yard			
Marine Police	160.3750		
Coast Guard	157.1		
Distress Calls	156.8		
INDEPENDENCE NATL PARK			
Park rangers	164.725		
City police	453.150		
PUBLIC TRANSIT SECURITY			
SEPTA Security			
	502.6875		
	502.7625		
	502.7125		
Emergencies	502.7375		
SECRET SERVICE (As monitored in Phila)			
164.65	166.640	167.025	
165.375	166.510	169.625	
165.785	166.610	169.925	
166.4625	166.7		
PHILA INTERNATIONAL			
Tower	118.5		
Approach Ctrl	119.0		
	125.4		
	126.6		
Departure	124.35		
	119.75		
Ground Traffic	121.9		
Emergency	121.5		