

Bridge The Gap On Jobsite Communication

The recent coronavirus situation has forced us all to rethink not only the way we do business, but also the way we interact with each other. We can no longer take for granted those large team meetings or even small group huddles to discuss our project plans. “Social Distancing” has worked its way into our daily vocabulary. We’ve learned to communicate through other channels when a face-to-face is not possible. While we face additional challenges with jobsite communication, let’s take a look at how two-way radios can play a role.

Two-Way Radios Beat Smart Phones On The Jobsite

Don’t get me wrong, smartphones are amazing devices with hundreds of killer apps that can increase productivity, but they still don’t beat a well-made two-way radio for construction. While most workers may have personal smart phones, and construction companies do use them onsite, there are many reasons why a two-way radio is better on the jobsite.

Cost can be a big factor in selecting two-way radios over smart phones. They simply cost less than smart phones and once purchased, there are no monthly charges or service fees.



Smart phones aren’t known for standing up to abuse. Even protected with a case, the technology and delicate screens of a smart phone are no match for the durability of a two-way radio. Additionally, in case of some sort of disaster or emergency, cell service could fail, whereas two-way radios will continue to operate as long as the battery is charged.

Finally, two-way radios don’t require phone numbers, therefore, there is no need to remember or scroll through contacts to find individual numbers to call workers. This increases efficiency and saves time, as you most likely need to communicate with the same co-workers multiple times a day.



Benefits of Use

There are no limits to the benefits of using a two-way radio on a construction site. As workers are constantly on the move, portable two-way radios become another essential tool. Two-ways allow workers to keep in contact with the foremen as well as each other. Supervisors can communicate with the whole crew in one message or speak directly one-on-one when necessary.

Imagine one of your guys is high up in a lift and needs to communicate with the guys on the ground to order up more materials or resources. They most likely cannot see each other, so voice commands won't work. The two-way becomes an obvious, indispensable tool.

It's not just the ones swinging the hammers who need two-way radios. Everyone on the jobsite - from the foreman, supervisors and subs, to the people back at the office trailer — need the capability to communicate quickly and easily. Two-way radios provide instant, clear communication across the job.



An Important Tool in the Toolbox

The *two* in two-way radio means that a radio signal can be transmitted and received, rather than just sent in one direction. This enables the parties communicating to be able to interact directly with one another. Two-way radios are indispensable for employees of sectors such as first response, law enforcement, school administration, and the construction industry. Even in a world of smart phones, two-way radios are vital on the jobsite and have become one of the most important tools on any construction worker's tool belt.

Not Your Father's Walkie-Talkie

Two-way radios have come a long way from when you used to talk to your buddy on a walkie-talkie in your backyard. They are now a useful and indispensable tool for any construction worker. They allow workers to communicate with each other quickly and easily across the jobsite, increasing productivity, improving safety, and saving time.

Workers on a construction site might be spread out or separated by floors; some may be inside and others outside; some may be operating heavy equipment or working in the office. Regardless of location, everyone needs to communicate and two-way radios allow for everyone to be in touch easily.



How They Work

Two-way radios provide instantaneous communication via the Push to Talk (PTT) button. They are simple to use: The user pushes down to talk, and after letting up on the button, can hear the speaker on the other end. Most two-way radios have from 2-watt to 5-watt options. The wattage needed for the job depends upon jobsite size and the distance needed to cover. A 2-watt radio is a fairly standard size and works well on most jobsites. Very large jobsites will need to get up to the 4-watt and 5-watt size radios.

Durability and Clarity

Jobsite conditions can be unpredictable. Today's two-way radios are ultra-durable and many are created to meet military specifications. They are less likely to crack or break when dropped (and they will get dropped) and most are resistant to dust and water. Even with a durable outer case, they are still lightweight and easy to carry. Some are even coated with an antimicrobial surface to prevent the growth of mold. Two-way radios also have a long battery life to last a full day's work and might even get you through an overtime shift.

Having a clear signal for jobsite communication is essential. Two-way radios offer multiple channels for communication options. Two-ways function well in areas of high noise and harsh conditions - both of which come standard on jobsites.

There are two frequency ranges that work with two-way radios - Very High Frequency (VHF) and Ultra High Frequency (UHF) - both are effective, although UHF may be slightly more effective on a jobsite as its frequency maneuvers around structures and obstacles better than VHF, which travels better across long distances.



Essential Accessories

Hand-held two-way radio units clip securely onto a tool belt, back pocket, or overalls. Many workers clip the radio unit onto their belts, then use a remote speaker microphone that attaches to the shirt, collar, or overall bib. They can easily speak and listen using the microphone rather than pull out the two-way radio. This can be helpful if working on a ladder or scaffolding or while working with tools in hand. With the remote microphone, the whole system essentially becomes hands-free and adds another element of convenience and safety to jobsite communication.

Very large jobsites, may need repeater capability for the two-way radio system. Repeaters transmit more wattage and extend the coverage area that two-ways can reach. They would be necessary when working in multiple high-rise towers or if the jobsite trailer is far from the site.

When working on a jobsite, two-way radios are normally left overnight to recharge. Most multi-unit chargers charge up to six chargers at once ensuring they are ready the next morning to be put to use another day.

Additional features that two-way radios can offer include:

- Special coating on the outside to prevent mold and germs from growing
- Weather channel alerts
- Extended batteries
- Wi-Fi connection
- Lone worker or emergency alerts
- Text messaging capability

Identifying the features needed for your job and your workers will help you select the right system.

Important factors to consider when selecting the best two-way radio for your job are:

- Durability
- Clarity
- Cost
- Wattage
- Battery life
- Size and weight
- Available accessories and special features