

Child Safety & 'Licence-Free' Radio

The following was prepared using publicly available information from the Australian Communications & Media Authority (ACMA). It is intended as a guide only and should not be relied on as legal advice or regarded as a substitute for legal advice in individual cases.

Many parents will have seen the “licence-free” UHF radios now sold by many retailers. These are sometimes called “Communicators”, “UHF Personal Radio” or simply “Licence-Free UHF”. Some parents buy these for their children, to use when playing to chat to friends, or possible to call home while playing.

CB Radio

Although not usually promoted as CB, **ALL** of the “licence-free UHF” sets sold with multiple channels (usually 40 or 80) are, in fact, UHF CB Radio (Citizens Band Radio). This means that **ANYONE** close by who also has a UHF CB in their car, truck, 4WD or house can not only listen to what your children are saying, they can also talk to your children and engage them in conversation!

Privacy Tones or “Kid Zones”

Some of these sets include a feature sometimes called “Privacy Tones” (e.g. 38 privacy tones). This feature does **NOT** prevent any other CB user from listening to your children or, if the other user has the same feature (most CB sets do), even talking to the children. All these tones do is stop your children from hearing anyone who does not have their radio set to the same tone, although it is not difficult for someone to find the tone used and bypass this feature.

Even with privacy tones turned on, other people can still hear what your children are saying.

Licence-Free

Although you don't have to obtain an individual licence to use these radio units, they are not in reality “licence-free”. The use of all CB equipment in Australia is governed by a “Class Licence” (see *Fact Sheet 1 “Licence Free UHF Radio”*), which sets out how they may be used, as well as what channels must not be used for normal conversations. For example, channels **5 AND 35** are reserved for emergencies, channel **11** is for calling, and truck drivers and highway travellers use channel 40. Channels 22 and 23 are reserved for data only (see *Fact Sheet 7 “CB Channels”*)

Teach your Kids

Before allowing your children to use UHF radio equipment, you should teach them how to use them safely. In particular, we suggest you instruct them in the following matters:

- That these radios are not private and that anyone with a CB can listen to their conversations. They should, therefore, exercise “stranger danger” and make sure they don't give out details such as last name, address, telephone number, meeting location, etc.
- That there are channels they must avoid, being:
 - The Emergency Channels **5 AND 35**
 - The call channel **11**

- The data channels **22 and 23** (most sets will lock these out)
- The Road Channel **40**
- The repeater (range extender) input channels **31-38 and 71-78**
- **That the authorities can track and locate these radios in the case of illegal operation, especially involving the emergency channels.**

Penalties

The Class Licence and federal legislation provides for some serious penalties for the misuse of the band. In the case of a child, these penalties would be the responsibility of the parent(s).

The maximum penalties for the misuse of the CB bands are:

- For minor cases (under s46 or s47 of the Act), an on-the-spot fine of **\$626***; or
- For individuals, up to **2 years imprisonment**; or
- For others (e.g. businesses), up to **\$469,500*** court-imposed fine.

If an emergency call is interfered with, the penalties increase to:

- For individuals, up to **5 years imprisonment** or
- For others, up to **\$1,565,000* fine**.

** Penalty values are current as of 1st July 2023.*

More Information

More information on the CBRS Class Licence and the legally designated channels can be found at:

- RREC Website: <http://www.radiorescue.org.au>
- Email us: info@radiorescue.org.au
- Phone us: **0448 402 359**
- ACMA** Website: <http://www.acma.gov.au>
- Phone ACMA**: **1300 850 115**

*** ACMA is the Australian Communications and Media Authority, the federal regulator that enforces radiocommunications laws.*