FORTUNE FAVORS THE PREPARED · COMMS ONE-PAGER

POC Radios and Your PACE Plan

A walkie-talkie on the cell network: a great Alternate, never your only plan.

1. Who needs to reach whom?
2. How far apart will you be?
3. What if the cell network is down?
4. What do you switch to next?

1 What is a POC radio?

POC means **push-to-talk over cellular** (also sold as "LTE" or "nationwide" radios). It looks and works like a walkie-talkie: press the button, talk, everyone in your group hears you. But it doesn't send radio-to-radio. Your voice goes as data over the cell network to the provider's server, which passes it on:

Your radio	→	Cell tower	→	Provider's server	→	Cell tower	→	Their radio
Press to talk		Its own SIM card		Sends it to your group		Wherever they are		Across town or the country

Range is **wherever both radios have coverage**. It isn't ham or GMRS: different rules, and it can't talk to those radios.

2 The good and the bad, for a family

Advantages

Easy to use. One button, comes set up. No channels or frequencies to learn.

A yearly fee, not monthly. Many family plans are about **$40–60 a year per radio**; the first year is often included.

Encrypted. Most services encrypt your voice on its way to their server. (Ham and GMRS don't allow encryption.)

No home internet needed. It runs on the cell data in its own SIM. No Wi-Fi, router or phone plan.

One carrier down? Still works – with a **multi-carrier SIM**, it moves to another network.

No license. No FCC license or exam – you're buying a service, not using radio spectrum.

Kids can use them. No phone, no apps, no social media – just push and talk to the family group.

Not recorded by most family services. Check the privacy policy – business plans can record.

Groups you control. Add other families or your group. Most let you choose which of your radios can talk to which group.

Wi-Fi on some models. Connect through your home router or Starlink when the cell signal is weak.

Disadvantages

All cell service down = no POC. Towers without power, a regional disaster or a grid-down event takes it out along with your phones.

It depends on the provider. Every call goes through the company's servers. If their system goes down, the company folds or you don't renew, the radios go quiet. Encryption is usually to their server, not end to end.

Busy networks. It uses little data, but it gets no priority when everyone's on the network after a disaster.

Its own world. Talks only to radios on the same service – not to GMRS, ham, or another brand. Dead zones are still dead zones.

Bottom line: great for everyday family check-ins, school runs and road trips. Just plan for the day the network is gone.

3 Where it fits: usually your A

P	**Primary** Cell phone	Call, then **text** – a text often gets through when calls won't.
A	**Alternate** POC radio	One per driver and teen, all in the "Harpers" group. Covers a dead phone, a jammed call or one carrier down.
C	**Contingency** GMRS / FRS handhelds	No network at all: radio to radio, a base at home, a radio in each car. Agree a channel.
E	**Emergency** Meet & leave a note	Go to the rally point (the library on Main St) and leave a written note at 123 Main St. A ham-licensed member can reach out of state.

Why A and not C? POC uses the same cell network as your phones. It covers you when *part* of the network fails, not when it's gone – so your C must need **no network at all**. Agree when to move down: e.g. no answer after two tries or 15 minutes. (The Harpers are an example family.)

Read more: Communications P.A.C.E. · COM-01 PACE (free course) · Comms Plan

4 What to look for when buying

- ☐ **Multi-carrier SIM** – ask which carriers, and check them at home, work and school.
- ☐ **The renewal price** per radio, per year – and what happens if you don't renew.
- ☐ **Encryption:** to the server, or end to end?
- ☐ **Privacy policy:** are calls or locations recorded or stored? For how long?
- ☐ **Group controls:** talk groups and an app or web dashboard you manage.
- ☐ **Wi-Fi** for a home router or Starlink.
- ☐ **Battery** for a full day, USB-C charging, a spare battery.
- ☐ **Tough enough** for a kid's backpack: drop- and water-resistant.
- ☐ **A return window** long enough to test coverage where you live.

Pair it with GMRS or FRS for when the cell network is down. FRS needs no license; a GMRS license is $35 for 10 years and covers your immediate family.

Read more: Radio over LTE (cellular) · What Radio Should I Get? · Comms

5 Start here

1 Plan	2 Check	3 Buy & test	4 Set groups	5 Add the C	6 Practice
Write your family PACE: P, A, C and E.	Which carriers work at home, work and school?	Inside the return window, from your real places.	Family first; add friends or your group after.	GMRS or FRS handhelds that need no network.	A weekly check-in, kids included.

Write it down – a plan in one person's head fails when that person is out of reach. **Keep it:** Ready Ledger holds your family plan with PACE contacts and message drops, and prints your comms plan. Ready Ledger

How POC radios work, in full

fortunefavorsthepreprepared.com/poc-radios/

The QR code opens *Radio over LTE (cellular)*. No brands endorsed. Prices and features checked November 2026; they vary by provider.

Remember, Fortune Favors the Prepared

Semper Paratus, Semper Gumby