

# Radios cut downtime loss

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**T**he personal pager that Arva volunteer fireman Pete McClary carries with him at all times gets him to the scene of a fire in five minutes flat. He liked the idea so much, he installed a two-way radio system on his 80-cow dairy-cash crop farm north of London.

"It's hard to put a dollar value on it," says McClary of his two-way radio. "But once you get them, you never go without them."

Before he installed the radios in 1981, there was "too much downtime" when equipment broke down somewhere on the 3,300 (700 owned) acres of corn, soy and wheat he and his brother farm.

He also likes the safety factor. A radio in the tractor cab kept McClary in constant contact when his 15-year-old son was out working the land last year.

He can radio his dad at home base to fetch more parts, and McClary can call in to his wife if he'll be late for dinner.

At harvest, he calls in when the truck is loaded.

## Used model

McClary picked up a used system for a good price.

But a new mobile unit from CGE, a major manufacturer, sells for \$1,000 installed, including receiver, handset and aerial. A VHF base sells for \$2,000. There's also a yearly licence fee for each mobile unit levied by the federal Department of Communications.

For the first year of using a mobile, an issuance fee is charged ranging from \$15 to \$51. The yearly fee for subsequent years is \$39 a year.

For the home base, fees can range from \$42 to \$143, depending on frequency.

Penalties for not having a licence are up to \$5,000 or 12 months in jail.

McClary's base is in the workshop. He has remote sets in every building including both family farmhouses, where the radio signal might not reach. McClary has mobile units for his combines, tractors and trucks.

## Home base

Every system requires a base for incoming calls, picked up by an antenna. The remotes in each building are hooked up by phone lines to the base.

Someone in the farmhouse can take telephone messages for McClary and relay them to him via the remote.

His range from the base is 40 miles, with a 20-mile range from mobile to mobile.

Under proper radio procedure, the caller picks up the handset, presses the button, gives a call number, and asks

for the address of the radio he is trying to reach.

There is a choice of three radio bands, low, high and ultra-high. The higher the band, the less the likelihood of interference from other users.

If he hadn't invested in two-way radio, McClary says he would give cellular phone serious consideration because it has unlimited range.

Cellular phones can cost from \$400 for the no-frills models to \$5,000 for pocket models.

But every call costs money. A typical cellular call fee is 35 cents per minute. Long distance calls are marked up 15 per cent.

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McClary: two-way radio saves downtime