



## Weather Radios Midland WR120 Recommendation (updated Oct 2020)



### What is a weather radio and why might I want one?

- The NOAA Weather Radio system is the sole government-operated radio system that provides people with direct warnings of natural disasters and warnings for all hazardous conditions that pose a threat to life and safety, both at a local and national level.
- All Hazards Public Alert Weather radios are equipped with a tone alarm, or a special alerting feature which can be programmed to let you know immediately when the National Weather Service issues a warning for your specific area.
- Notifications like this allows you to seek safety and protect yourself and those around you. (This alert technology is called SAME and it is not available on regular radios even if they receive regular audio weather channel forecasts.)

Fire Safe Occidental (FSO) has been studying, testing and recommending NOAA Weather Radio All Hazards Public Alert radios since early 2019. Our recommended Weather Radio that is inexpensive and easy to configure and use is the Midland WR120.

**Before you buy a radio** you should check with a close-by neighbors that has one to make sure you have adequate Weather Radio reception in your area as some small areas do not because of hills blocking the signal. If you cannot receive the SAME alert signals there is no point to buying the radio.

If you need help, please contact FSO to help you find out by sending an email to [info@FireSafeOccidental.org](mailto:info@FireSafeOccidental.org).

## **The Midland WR120 was selected for a number of reasons:**

1. NOAA tests the alert system on Wednesday around 11am PT by issuing an alert tone and a short test message. The WR120 will issue a warning “beep” if it has not received that test within the last 10 days. This provides the value of the weekly testing alert without having the user to configure it on, then off... and it continues to check for the weekly alert forever. We consider this a valuable feature. The WR120 receives only Weather Radio channels, not AM/FM radio this is important because it keeps battery usage low.
2. The WR120 is an AC line powered radio with three (3) AA batteries for backup reception if the power goes off. Battery life for the WR120 is quite good; the three “copper-top” Duracell alkaline AA batteries in our test units still measure good voltage after a year. It is important to always remember to test and replace backup batteries if you want a working radio when the power goes off; we recommend checking them at least twice a year, preferably just before the fire season in July, and after, in January. There is a battery low symbol on the display to help do this.
3. The WR120 is also easier to configure than other radios as it comes to you in an easy to configure mode; just follow the instructions on the first page of the manual. Reception seems to be similar to all other radios tested, using the same telescoping pull-out type of antenna that other radios have.
4. The cost of the WR120 is low: Buy it at Occidental Hardware for \$39.99, or slightly less online. If you can, support our local businesses; Occidental Hardware is a great store! [Note that the WR120 is labeled as a WR120B on the box and in ads, but the radio’s ID plate on the back will say it is a WR-120EZ. Do not worry, they are the same radio we call WR120.]

## Configuring the Midland WR120

When you do get a radio, follow the instructions on the first page of the WR120 Owner's Manual under "Quick Start Instructions" to configure the Weather Radio.

Be sure you **SET CHANNEL** on your radio by scrolling up or down until the display reads "**4 162.475**" as this is the weather channel with the best reception in the greater Occidental area. Also, make sure you have **SET LOCATION** to read **SINGLE** and then select USA, CALIFORNIA, SONOMA so that the display reads "**01 SONOMA-CA**".

When done following the instruction on the first page the time is displayed and you can push the big wide button labeled WEATHER/SNOOZE to turn on the weather channel selected; push again to turn off. (If you want help right from the start, ask FSO to help you configure and test your WR120 by sending an email to [info@FireSafeOccidental.org](mailto:info@FireSafeOccidental.org)).

### Other things to remember:

- A. Make sure that you use high-quality AA batteries such as Duracell "copper tops" Alkaline or Energizer Ultimate Lithium, and that you check them twice a year, preferably just before the fire season in July, and after, in January. There is a battery low symbol on the display to help do this.
- B. Remember, there is no substitute for being alert and staying aware of what is going on. Staying connected with FSO and your neighborhood increases the number of eyes and ears keeping you safe! Also make sure you sign up for NIXLE and SoCoALERT (see FSO website: [firesafeoccidental.org](http://firesafeoccidental.org)).

Please feel free to contact us with any questions at:  
[info@FireSafeOccidental.org](mailto:info@FireSafeOccidental.org)