

RADIO COMMUNICATION SYSTEM TO BE SET UP ALONG PARKWAY ROUTE

Plans for co-ordinating the protection and operation of the 180-mile Blue Ridge Parkway by short wave radio were announced by the National Park service yesterday. Installation has been started on a communication system by which Parkway headquarters in Roanoke may be in continuous touch with eight districts or field stations and with ranger patrol cars which will cruise the mountain-top drive. The work is under the supervision of W. C. Hilgedick, park service radio engineer from San Francisco.

By the beginning of the spring forest fire season stations are expected to be in operation at Roanoke in the Shenandoah Life building, at Rocky Knob Park south of route 8 in Floyd county, Va., and at the Bluff Park near Sparta, N. C. The remaining radio stations which are to be at roughly 60-mile intervals are to be installed progressively as Parkway sections are completed and opened to the public.

Stressing the isolation from existing telephone and telegraph lines of much of the far-flung Parkway, Parkway officials explained that direct wire communications would have been prohibitively expensive and would as well have lacked the mobility of the modern short wave radio. Much of the Parkway business may be dispatched through the rarefied air atop the Blue Ridge with various uses to be made of the new radio system. Ranger car will talk direct to ranger ranger car and to headquarters, speeding help to the scene of motor accidents, and men and equipment to the scene of destructive forest fires. For large fires portable sets will be available by which the fire fighters can remain in contact with headquarters. Traffic hazards such as fog, ice and snow, which often settle with little warning over the highest Parkway peaks may be reported, and signals posted at Parkway entrances along the line. Another advantage of the radio headquarters with state police patrol in the enforcement of traffic control under concurrent jurisdiction.

Call letters assigned in Washing-

ton to the Parkway radio system are WSEL, and the frequency used will be 32077.5 kc which occurs in the medium band of the ordinary commercial radio set.

Each of the three headquarters type radio stations will use one steel vertical tower 775 feet in height for an antenna, and a small building at the base of each tower will house the radio equipment which consists of a 100 watt transmitter and crystal controlled receiver. This equipment is unattended and is operated by a small control console installed in the administration office of the particular area.

The ranger patrol cars are equipped with transmitter and receiver and use a special top loaded antenna developed by Mr. Hilgedick. This automobile antenna, or mobile antenna as it is called, has added capacity for resonating on the lower frequencies in the range of two to four megacycles in a system where line of sight transmission does not always prevail. The usual two-day radio systems are on approximately 30 to 40 megacycles, but the transmitter and receiver must be within air line sight of each other. Due to the mountainous Parkway environment, the lower frequency system was found desirable. The use of the Hilgedick mobile antenna in other National Parks, such as the Great Smokies in North Carolina and Death Valley in California, has provided day-time communication with a 10 watt transmitter in a moving automobile up to 150 miles, and at night has carried much greater distances.

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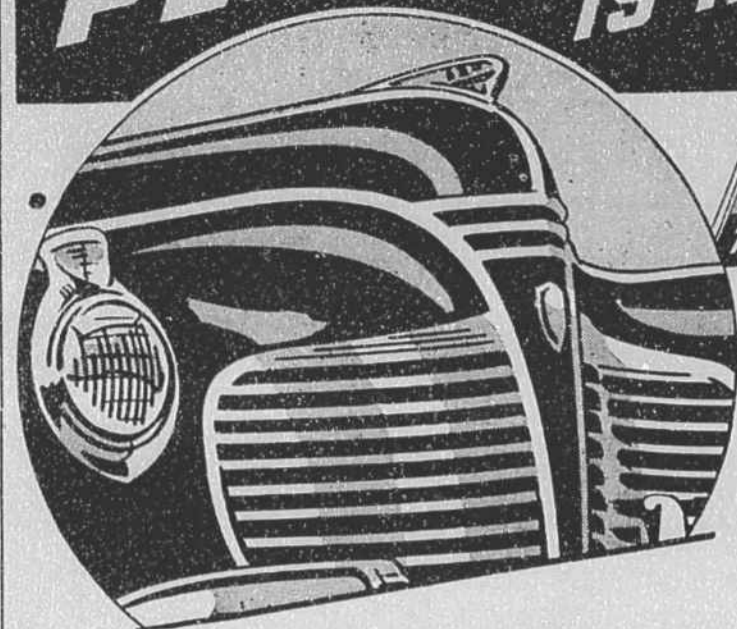
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