

PETCOCK TOOL

BY DICK RAY

For years I have struggled with the cooling system drain petcock used on M9 cars because it sits almost directly above the front axle. I use antifreeze mixture in the winter in case I want to run the car somewhere when it is cold. In the spring I drain and keep the -15 F mixture for use during the next winter. The mixture also provides some protection against rust, I think.

The petcock has been found to be troublesome because the handle comes loose from the shaft after a few years. The one in the photo is the fourth one and is in my repair parts box in anticipation of needing it in a few years. Not a common item at Home Depot, Lowes, or auto parts stores.

Anyway, there is not much room in there for a hand to turn the petcock handle. In addition, the handle can be very hard to turn and requires a tool. I have used pliers but they do not work very well. I should mention that I do this task with the car on the trailer and there is an impediment below the petcock leaving only eight inches to work below the axle.

But now the problem is solved!

A sheet metal spark plug socket with two notches cut into it becomes the tool.

See the picture of the petcock and socket next to it. A couple of minutes with a hack saw results in the finished tool. A small screwdriver or piece of rod provides the leverage to turn the corroded handle.

I used the 3/4 inch end of the double ended socket but could have used the 13/16 inch end as well. Since it is infrequently used, I store it with the TDC finder tool (2011 May-June SETOFF) on a shelf. **LEASH YOUR**



NARCOA'S "NARROW BAND" RADIO ISSUE

BY FRANK N. HUBLEY

Many people in NARCOA are excited about the 2013 Narrow Band FCC Regulation. While it is true that NARCOA radio operations should be compliant by January, 2013, I would suggest that members should not attempt to "Narrow Band" their equipment on the three NARCOA Channels until December, 2012.

Reason: Operation of equipment that is "Mixed" (some Narrow, some Wide) will result in some missed communication - This is a potential Safety Issue!) Radios that are currently programmed for "Wide Channel" operation will be received distorted on a receiver that is programmed for Narrow. Alternately, a transmitter that is programmed for Narrow will be received with very weak audio on a receiver that is programmed for Wide. This "problem" can be noted when two radios with different programming are operating in a "quiet environment". With the high acoustic noise present in the railcar environment, this problem is much worse than experienced in a quiet "field test" without engine and rail noise.

Many of the existing, older mobiles that are currently in use in railcars can be reprogrammed so that they will have lower Transmit Deviation. There is, however, no economical "fix" for the Wide Band receivers in these older radios - they will always have lower receive audio in the Narrow Mode.

Note: Only Class 1 and 2 Railroads and large Passenger/Transit RR's have moved a significant amount of their operations to Narrow Band. (They have a large amount of operational interface / equipment interchange with other RR's). Most Shortline and Tourist RR's are still trying to put a plan together to meet the January 2013 requirements.

BTW - the only reason one would program a railcar radio for NARROW MODE operation before the end of the 2012 Operating Season would be to intercommunicate with some Shortline / Tourist RR that has already converted to NARROW operation. Only Excursion Coordinators (with Host RR permission) should transmit on Host RR frequencies !

(The Author has 40 years of direct employment in the Engineering Department of a major manufacturer of mobile radio equipment).