

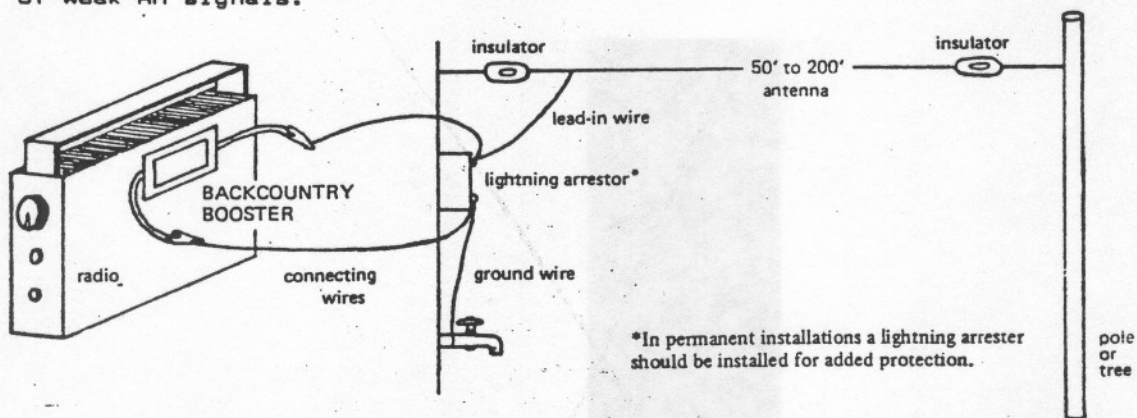
Product Review: The Backcountry Booster

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reviewed by Bruce Portzer

The Backcountry Booster is a small gadget which can be used to couple a portable radio to a longwire antenna, thereby improving reception of weak AM stations. It consists of a coil of wire sealed inside a small plastic case (about 1"x2"x1/4") with a clip lead at each end. One clip lead connects to a longwire antenna, the other end is connected to ground. The booster is positioned against the radio for maximum signal pickup, and presumably secured to the radio with tape or whatever else is available.

The booster is not an amplifier, but a passive coupling device. It operates on the principle that longwires pick up more signal than the ferrite loopsticks in portable radios. The coil in the booster will then transfer enough of this signal into the radio to improve reception of weak AM signals.



I recently tested a Booster and found it to work quite well with my 50 foot inverted "L" antenna. The ground connection was very important, making the difference between a slight boost (with no ground connected) to a big one (with a ground). I tried it out on my Realistic TRF and my GE Superradio during the day. In both cases, KONA-610 (at 200 miles) and KSGO-1520 (150 miles) went from barely audible to very listenable. At night, the Booster provided a noticeable boost in signal levels all across the dial.

I should point out that you can get the same results by wrapping several turns of wire around the radio, although you'll then have to deal with a bunch of loose wires. In addition, the booster won't allow you to use the radio's loop to null out noise or interfering stations. It works only on the AM broadcast band, not shortwave or FM.

The Booster is inexpensive and comes with a well written instruction sheet. It can be obtained for \$10 postpaid from Backcountry Booster, c/o Michael Busby, PO Box 85, McCall, ID 83638.

The BACKCOUNTRY BOOSTER improves radio listening during daylight hours with broadcast-band AM radios containing internal "ferrite-rod" antennas.

