

Two-Way Radio Batteries and Accessories: Li-ion vs NiMH, Speaker Mics and Chargers

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Published by Bravosatcom · Two-Way Radio Series

A radio that dies halfway through a shift is a radio nobody trusts. Most battery problems in two-way radio fleets are not faults at all. They come from worn batteries that should have been replaced, heat damage, mismatched chargers, or cheap replacements that never delivered the capacity on the label.

This guide covers the batteries and accessories that keep a fleet working: battery chemistry, how runtime is rated, when to replace, and how to choose chargers and speaker microphones.

The short answer. Li-ion is the usual choice for current radios. Replace a battery when runtime has clearly dropped, not when it fails. Keep batteries out of heat, charge them in the charger made for them, and buy genuine or reputable replacements.

Li-ion vs NiMH vs NiCd

Chemistry	Strengths	Weaknesses
Li-ion	Lightest for its capacity, no memory effect, low self-discharge	Sensitive to heat and physical damage, so it relies on a protection circuit
NiMH	Good capacity, tolerant of rougher use	Heavier than Li-ion and loses charge faster when idle

NiCd	Durable, an older proven design	Memory effect, lower capacity for its weight, contains cadmium, and has largely been replaced
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Which chemistry you can use is set by the radio and its battery model, so always match the replacement to the exact radio. The same applies to the [Motorola batteries](#) range: check the part number against your radio model.

How Battery Life Is Rated

Manufacturers commonly rate runtime on a 5/5/90 duty cycle: 5% of the time transmitting, 5% receiving and 90% on standby. That is a light pattern. A busy dispatcher or security guard who talks constantly, uses high power or runs GPS and a bright display will see noticeably less than the rated figure.

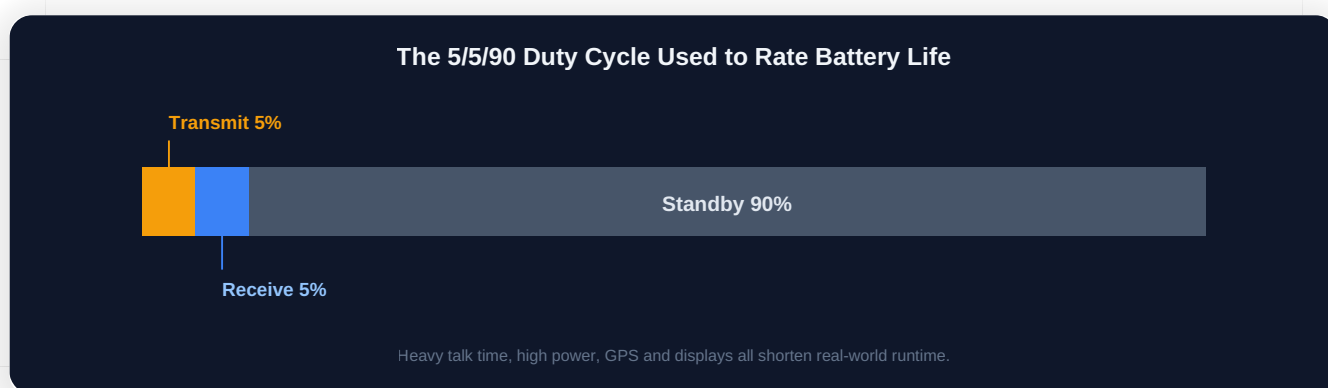


Figure 1 — Rated battery life assumes mostly standby. Real use is usually harder.

When to Replace a Battery

- **Runtime has clearly dropped.** If a battery no longer lasts a full shift, it has lost capacity. A common guideline is to replace at around 80% of original capacity.
- **Physical damage or swelling.** Stop using the battery immediately and replace it.
- **Unusual heat while charging or in use.** Remove it and have it checked.
- **Poor contact.** Worn or dirty contacts can mimic a weak battery, so clean them before you condemn the cell.

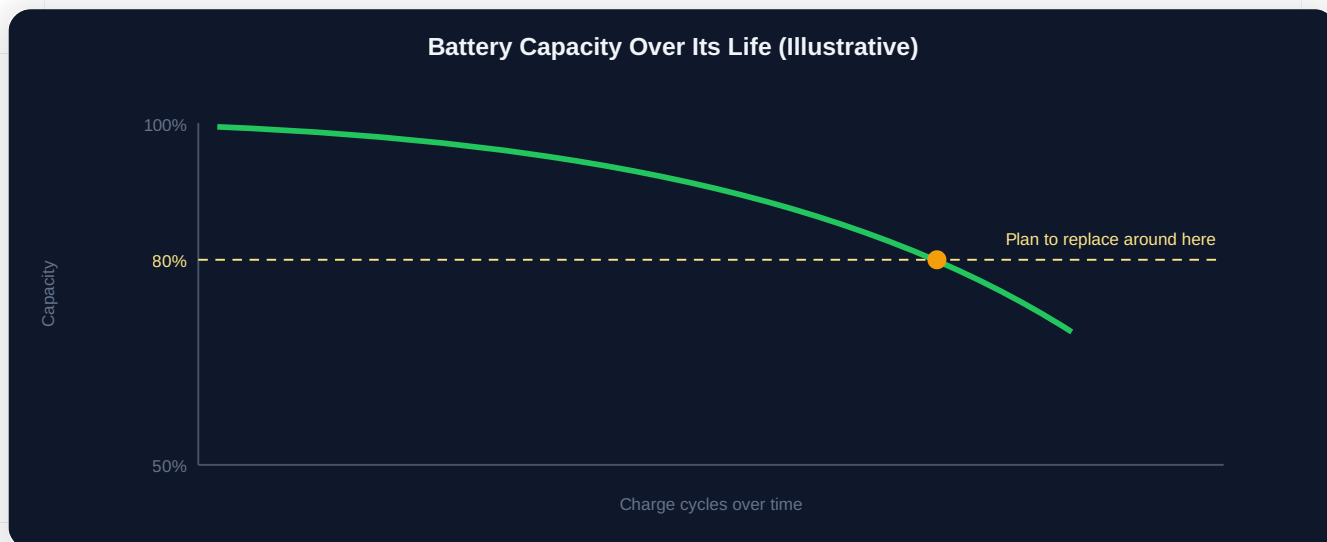


Figure 2 — Illustrative only. Capacity fades gradually and then faster. The curve shows the pattern, not measured data for any specific battery.

Heat: The Biggest Battery Killer in the UAE

High temperature shortens battery life faster than almost anything else. Do not leave radios on a dashboard or in a parked vehicle, do not charge them in direct sun, and if you store spare batteries for a long period, keep them partly charged in a cool place.

Chargers

- **Use the charger made for your battery.** Charging rate, cut-off and chemistry differ between models.
- **Single-unit chargers** suit individual users and desks. **Multi-unit banks** suit fleets, so a whole shift can start charged.
- **Give chargers ventilation** and keep them away from heat sources.
- **Check contacts regularly.** Dirt or corrosion on either side leads to slow or failed charging.

Speaker Microphones

A remote speaker microphone clips to the collar or shoulder and carries the push-to-talk button, speaker and microphone, so the radio can stay on the belt. It is useful for security, hospitality, facilities and field staff who need quick access without handling the radio, and it cuts wear on the radio itself. Many models add a socket for an earpiece, which helps in noisy plants or where audio needs to stay private.

Speaker microphones are specific to the radio model, so check compatibility before buying. Browse the [Motorola speaker microphones](#) and see the [portable radio range](#).

Genuine vs Generic Batteries

Generic batteries can look identical and cost much less, but quality varies widely. The common problems are lower real capacity than the label claims, a weak or missing protection circuit, poor fit and contact, and chargers that do not recognise the pack. With Li-ion, a poor protection circuit is also a safety risk. For a fleet that has to work every shift, buy genuine batteries or a reputable supplier's equivalent, and avoid unbranded packs with no model number.

If you are still choosing radios, read our [analog vs digital DMR comparison](#), since digital radios can also improve battery life, and the [Motorola vs Kenwood vs ICOM guide](#) for brand advice.

Frequently Asked Questions

+ How long does a two-way radio battery last?

It depends on the chemistry, how heavily the radio is used and how hot it gets. Batteries are usually good for a few hundred charge cycles, but the real test is runtime. When a battery no longer lasts a shift, replace it.

+ Can I leave a radio in its charger overnight?

With the charger made for that radio and battery, generally yes. Chargers designed for the battery stop or reduce charging when it is full. Avoid unmatched chargers, and keep the charger ventilated.

+ Are generic radio batteries safe?

Quality varies a lot. Cheap, unbranded packs may have less capacity than labelled and a weak protection circuit. Buy from a reliable supplier, and stop using any battery that swells, overheats or leaks.

+ Does a digital radio use less battery than analog?

Typically yes, because DMR radios transmit in only one of two timeslots. See our [analog vs digital comparison](#) for the details.

+ Do I need a speaker microphone?

No, but it is a worthwhile accessory for staff who use their radio all day. It keeps the radio on the belt, gives a louder speaker, and reduces wear on the radio's own controls and antenna.

Radio Batteries and Accessories

Bravosatcom supplies Motorola, ICOM and Kenwood two-way radios and the accessories to keep them running.

[Browse batteries →](#) · [Speaker microphones →](#)