

Backfill

Satellite Radio Setup

by Peter Lovejoy

Like many tradesmen, I find it easier to get through the day if there's music playing in the background. I used to listen to FM radio, but the commercials drove me nuts. When I heard about satellite radio, I signed up immediately and now get more than 60 commercial-free music channels plus news, sports, and talk. The reception is crystal-clear and I can listen to any music genre I want.

Many newer cars and trucks come equipped with satellite-capable stereo, but I drive an older box truck. For less than \$200, I outfitted it with a satellite-capable stereo, antenna, and receiver. Since I work out of the back of the truck box, I installed the radio there, which makes it easy to change channels or adjust the volume when I'm unloading tools or material.

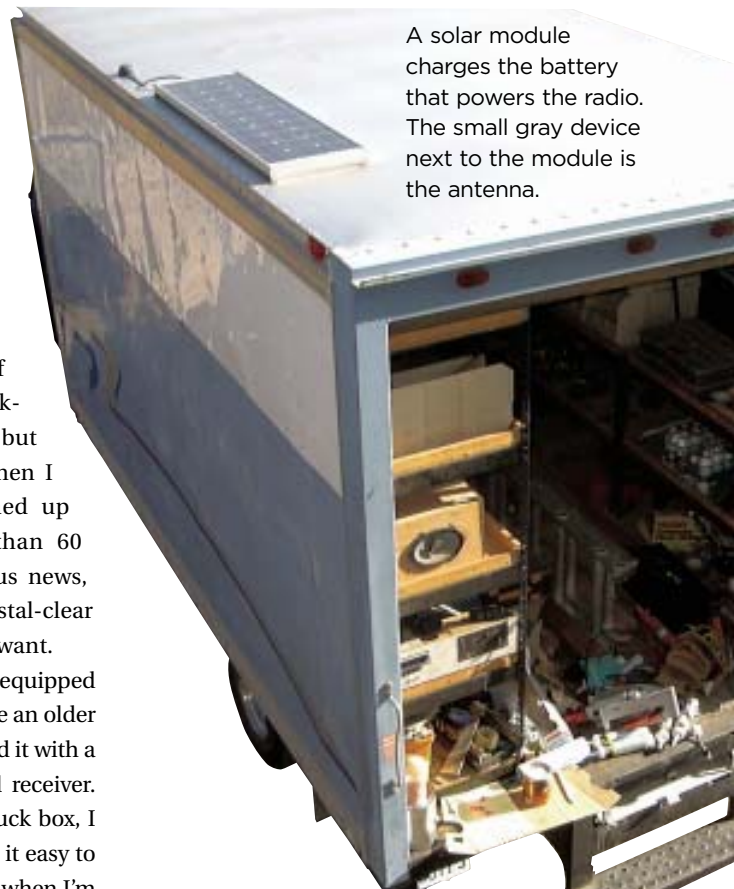
The stereo — which is mounted in a plywood panel on a shelf — is linked to a satellite receiver, which is connected to an antenna on top of the truck. The receiver is about the size of a car stereo, and the antenna is the size and shape of a computer mouse.

There are speakers near the back of the box, so if I'm working outside I can listen to the radio by opening the door and backing the truck up to the work area. The speakers are wired through a toggle switch, which allows me to turn off the truck speakers and plug in some remote speakers when I'm working indoors. Since the remote speakers are on a 100-foot wire, I can take them indoors or bring them up on the roof.

A solar module charges the battery that powers the radio. The small gray device next to the module is the antenna.



The author's system is controlled by a satellite-capable stereo mounted in a plywood panel in the back of his truck (top). To the right of the stereo is a charge controller for a battery tied to a photovoltaic module. The black box in the center of the photo above is a satellite receiver. The blue box beside it is an inverter that converts battery power to 110-volt AC.



Currently, there are two satellite-radio vendors in the U.S.: Sirius and XM. I've been using Sirius for about two and a half years. Both companies require a satellite radio-capable stereo, a receiver, an antenna, and a paid subscription that runs \$10 to \$13 per month.

My setup is somewhat more complicated than most because it includes a photovoltaic (solar) module, a charge controller, an inverter, and a deep-cycle battery. The solar module is on top of the truck and is connected to the battery through a charge controller. Sunlight charges the battery, which in turn powers the radio and lights inside the box. This prevents me from running down the truck battery while I'm working. The battery is also connected to an inverter that converts stored energy to 110-volt power. At the end of the day, I can plug my battery chargers into it and charge my tool batteries on the way home.

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