



RFI Solutions from KHz to GHz

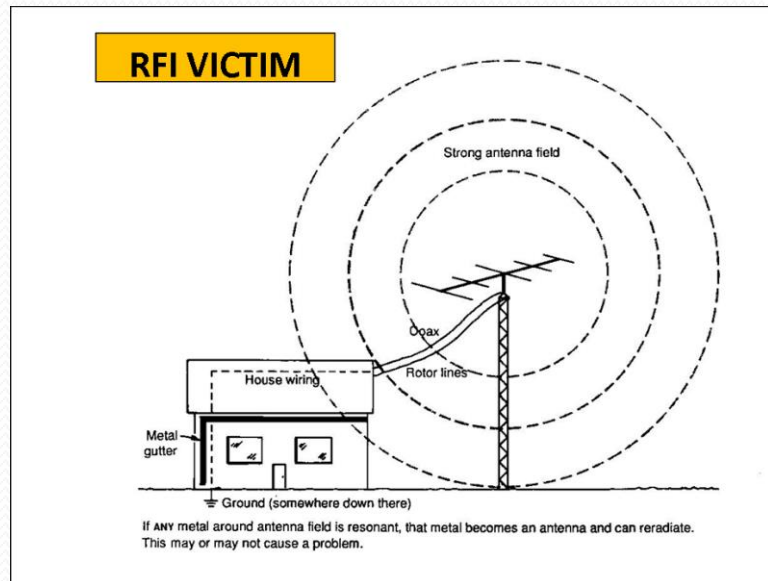
## Quick & Easy RFI Solutions



Bob Brehm, AK6R  
Chief Engineer  
[Palomar-Engineers.com](http://Palomar-Engineers.com)

YUMA Hamfest – February 2020  
This presentation available on website  
Copyright 2013-2020 Palomar Engineers, Inc.

# Are you the **SOURCE** of RFI?



**IT'S ALL YOUR FAULT WITH THAT BIG ANTENNA!**

Maybe you got an award?



RFI Solutions from KHz to GHz

## WORKED ALL NEIGHBORS

AWARDED TO

Amateur Radio Station \_\_\_\_\_

Who has caused persistent Radio Frequency Interference (RFI)  
to neighbors adjacent to the radio station

Awarded this \_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_

RFI Case Endorsements:

5

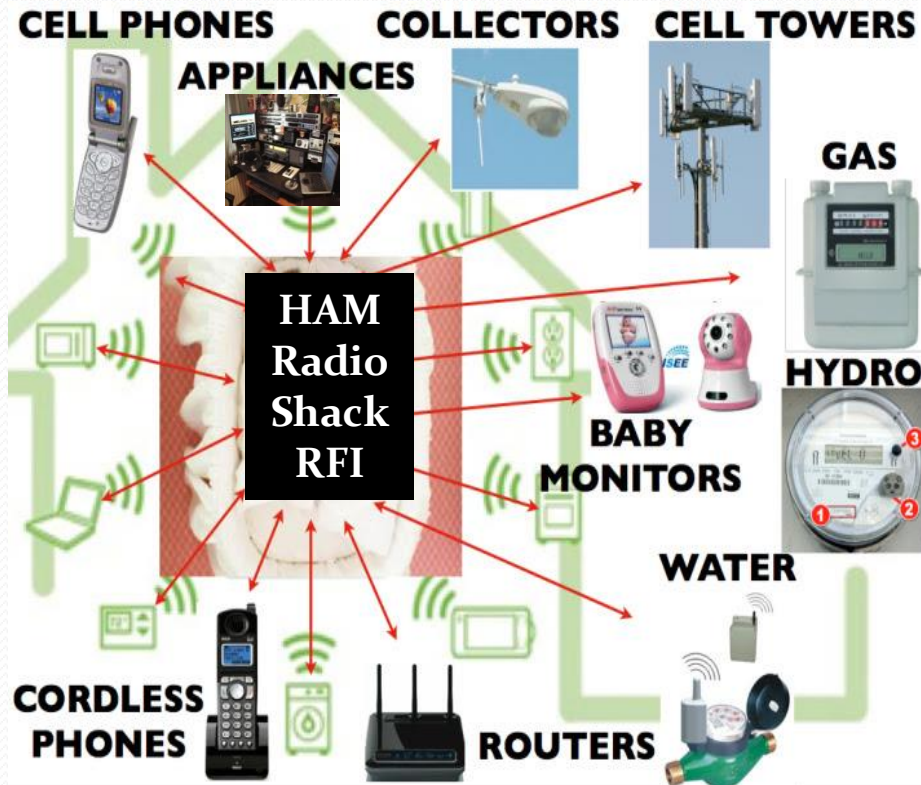
10

25

50

\_\_\_\_\_  
Bob Brehm, AK6R  
Chief Engineer

# Are you a **VICTIM** of local RFI?



## RFI Sources

- Ham Antenna
- Radiating Coax
- Electronic Devices
- Solar Systems
- Grow Lights
- HVAC motor
- Plasma TV
- DSL/Routers
- Switching power Supplies
- Washer/Dryer or other appliances

QRN - High Noise Floor – Weak Signals – NO DX – No fun!

# What is RFI?

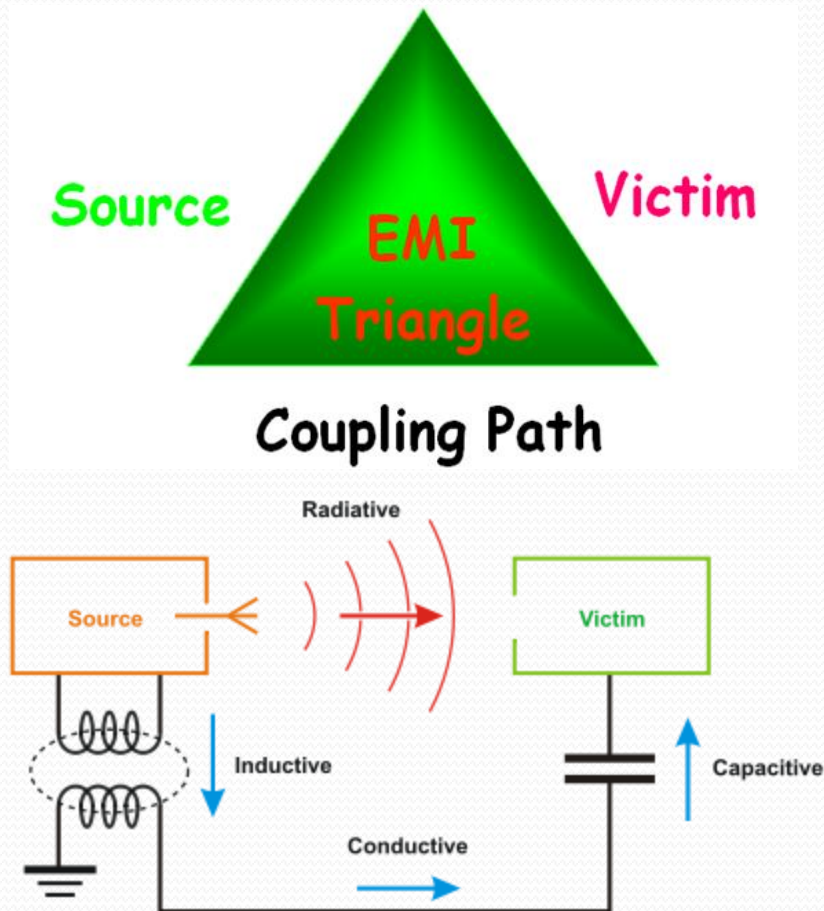
- *A radio frequency (>100 KHz) disturbance that causes an electrical circuit to function improperly*

## Common Sources

- Sunspots, Cosmic noise, Lightning, atmospheric static, AC power lines (**no fix**)
- “Transmitters” -Ham, CB, AM/FM, electronic devices, speed controllers, inverters, switching power supplies, computer electronics, Cable/DSL/Ethernet (**can use filters to fix**)
- Common Victims
  - Any electronic device that malfunctions by acting as an unintended “receiver” of RFI

How do you get RFI?

# How RFI is Transferred



**Source** (antenna) and **Victim** (antenna) coupled via **Path** (all must be present to have RFI)

**Multiple paths are very common:**


1. Radiative - air
2. Conductive – wire(s)
3. Inductive - wire
4. Capacitive - wire



How to find the source & path



# Typical RFI in your shack/home

- **TX Symptoms** – caused by your transmitter or antenna
    - Hot microphone – RF lip burns, distorted audio
    - Antennas don't tune correctly, high SWR, radiating coax
    - Your voice/transmission causes interference with consumer electronic devices acting as ham radio frequency “receivers” (e.g. computers, TV/audio system, security system, garage door opener, telephone, sprinkler systems, lights, etc.)
    - Spouse Alarm goes off! 
  - **RX Symptoms** – caused by sources outside your radio
    - High receive noise level not due to atmospheric conditions
    - Birdies, chirps, buzzes, clicks, broadband noise on receiver
    - Distorted receiver audio
- “Antennas” & paths

# Typical RFI receiving “antennas”

- **AM broadcast, 160-80-60-40-30 meter RFI** – look for long “antennas” - AC power lines, telephone/DSL lines, satellite/cable coax, long Ethernet cables, antenna feed line coax shield, antenna control/rotor cables, 2<sup>nd</sup> story ground wires (avoid  $\frac{1}{4}$  wavelength ground wires)
- **FM broadcast, 20 meter to 450 MHz RFI**,– look for short “antennas” - speaker wires, device interconnect cables, mic cables, short Ethernet cables
- “Antennas” pick up radiated or conducted RFI which induces a common mode current on ALL unshielded “antenna” conductors from an RFI SOURCE

So how do we reduce this current?



# Stop RFI = Minimize Current

$$I \text{ (RFI Current)} = E \text{ (TX voltage)} / R \text{ (Choking resistance)}$$

- Shut down the SOURCE (Set E to zero)
- Choke the PATH (minimize E, increase R)
- Protect the VICTIM (Set R very high)



**Objective: Minimize RFI current, I**

Trivia Q: Why is current abbreviated with I and not C?

Using ferrites to cure RFI



# Ferrite Fundamentals

How to:

Select - Buy - Configure  
and Apply



# Ferrite Topologies (Shapes)



Slip On Bead



Snap On Bead



Toroid or Ring



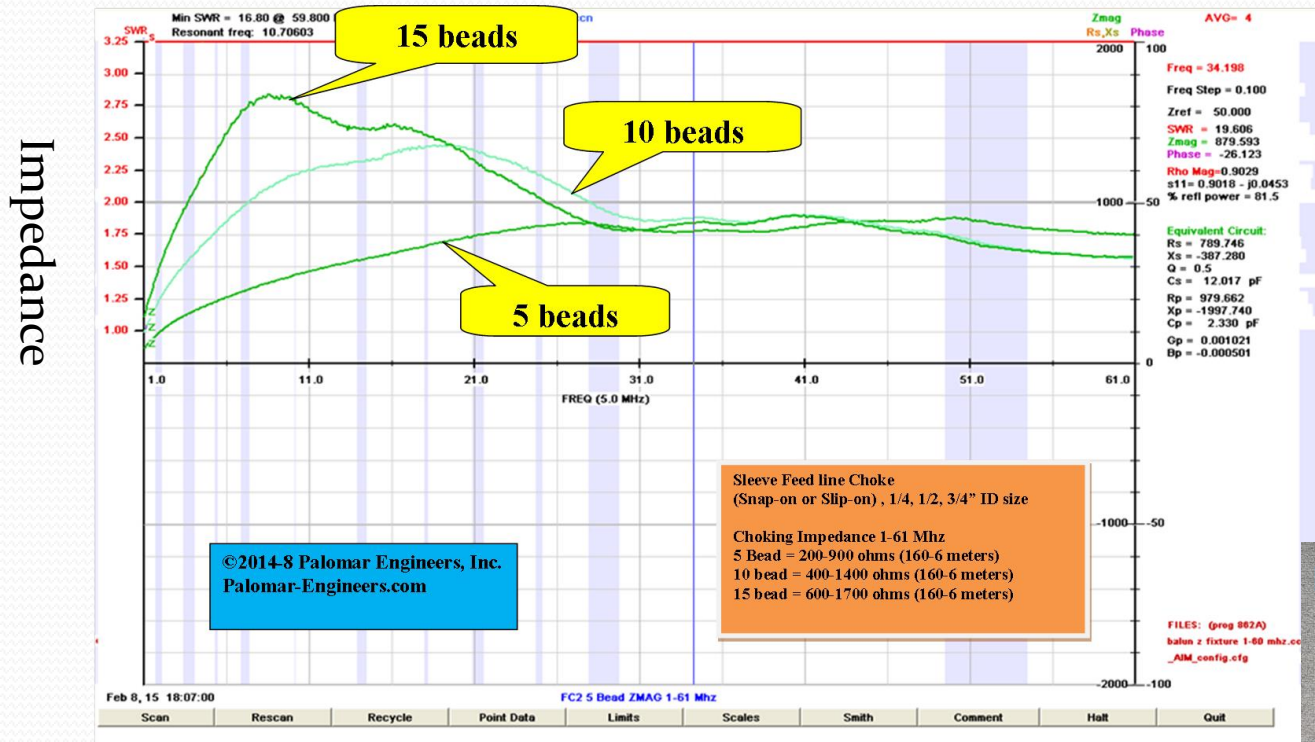
Fuzzy Ferret – not!

## CHARACTERISTICS

- Cheap, easy to install, suppress RFI from 100 KHz - 2 GHz
- Work on all conductive paths (antenna feed line, AC/DC, I/O cables)
- Lots of options in size, shape to suppress most RFI path currents
- Are effective if you understand how ferrites work, how to choose the correct ferrite and where to install the ferrite for a particular RFI problem

**Ferrite characteristics can be used to reduce RFI common mode current**

# Ferrites act like resistors ( $\Delta F$ )



Frequency →

beads in series =

higher choking R  
(up to 30 MHz)

At 7 MHz:  
5 beads = 400Ω

10 bead = 1000Ω

15 beads = 1600Ω



Impedance (Z) = Resistance +/- Reactance

# Ferrite resistors increase as (turns)<sup>2</sup>

- If 1 turn =  $R$ , 2 turns =  $4 \times R$ , 3 turns =  $9 \times R$
- More  $R$  = less RFI wire current = less RFI radiated from wire or induced into wire. ( $I=E/R$ )
- **General rule: choking  $R > 10X$  line impedance**
- (e.g.  $> 500 \Omega$  for  $50 \Omega$  cable but  $5000 \Omega$  is 10x better)



1 Turn

7 MHz:  $100\Omega$



3 Turn

$900\Omega$

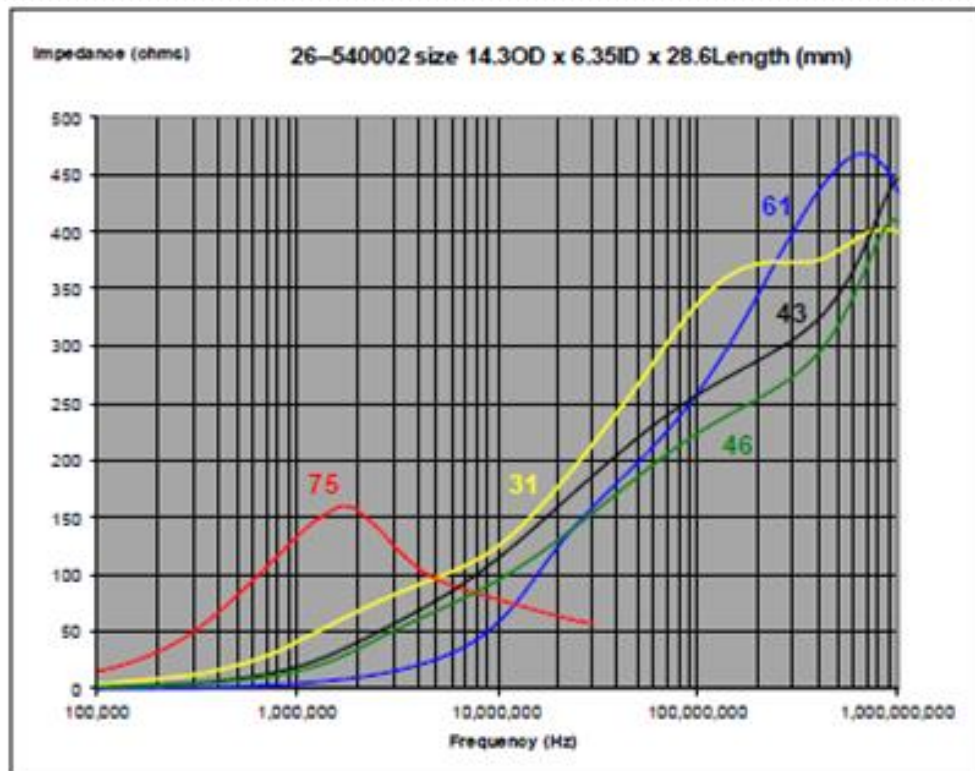


7 Turn

$2500\Omega$

Question: How do we choose the correct ferrite for the RFI frequency?

# Ferrite “Mix” determines effective frequency range



**Mix** = chemical formula of the iron oxide with manganese-zinc (31, 75) or nickel-zinc (43, 61)

**Select mix for max R at RFI fundamental frequency NOT frequency of receiver.**

**Example:**

for .1-10 MHz use mix 75

for 1-300 MHz use mix 31

for 20-250 MHz use mix 43

for 200-2000 MHz use mix 61

**Most popular ham frequency mixes are 31, 43, 61, 75.**

Wrong or unknown mix will probably not work so.....

Know how to buy



# How NOT to buy ferrites!



=

**DON'T  
BUY!!!**

- NO Mix Designation
- NO Resistance/Impedance Range
- NO Frequency Range = No No No!

**Buying unknown ferrites is like buying a box of rocks - a waste of time and money!**

Another Alternative?

# How to buy Ferrites the **right** way!



**Ferrite Split Bead**  
**10 Pack -1/2" ID – Mix 31**  
RFI Range: 1-300 MHz  
Part#: FSB31-1/2-10

Single turn, each bead provides:

MHz	5	10	25	100	250
$\Omega$	71	100	156	260	260

(2 turns=4X $\Omega$ , 3 turns =9X $\Omega$ , 4 turns = 16X $\Omega$ )

AC/DC/Coax/Audio-Video/Data Cables  
Use multiple turns for best results

=

**BUY With  
CONFIDENCE!!**

Product Labeling (Mix, Frequency, Impedance) + Known Vendor = Winner!

So let's recap RFI 101

# Ferrite Use Recap

- Determine RFI interfering frequency & suspected Path
- Choose proper mix (31, 43, 61, 75) to suppress RFI fundamental frequency
- Choose Topology(slip, snap, ring) to fit the Path “Antenna”
  - Install ferrites – retest for RFI suppression
  - Consider additional ferrites or Paths if RFI persists

Most popular Mix for HF is MIX 31 (1-300 MHz)  
(Mix 75 for .1-10 MHz, Mix 61 for 200-2000 MHz)

How and where do you put the ferrite band aid for transmitter RFI?

# GOAL: **STOP** TRANSMIT RFI

**Tip # 1: RFI Kits for HF Transceivers and Linear Amps**

**Tip # 2: Minimize coax cable radiation (HF or VHF)**

**Tip # 3: Install Solution Specific RFI Kits for VICTIMS**



# Tip #1 - Install Transceiver, Linear Amp RFI Filters

Goal: Minimize SOURCE RFI from radio and amplifier “antennas”



# RFI Filters for Transmitters/Amps

- Transmitter – Amplifier - Antenna RFI suppression
  - Choke all cables into/out of radios, amplifier, antenna tuners
  - Includes
    - ALL Coax RF feed lines or common line of coax switch
    - Rotor/Antenna Control lines
    - AC/DC power Lines including wall warts!
    - Computer – all radio interconnects, AC power
    - Examples on next slides
- Recommendation: Filter ALL power cables to equipment and buy Palomar transceiver, amplifier and computer RFI kits with mix, sizes, instructions already pre-determined.

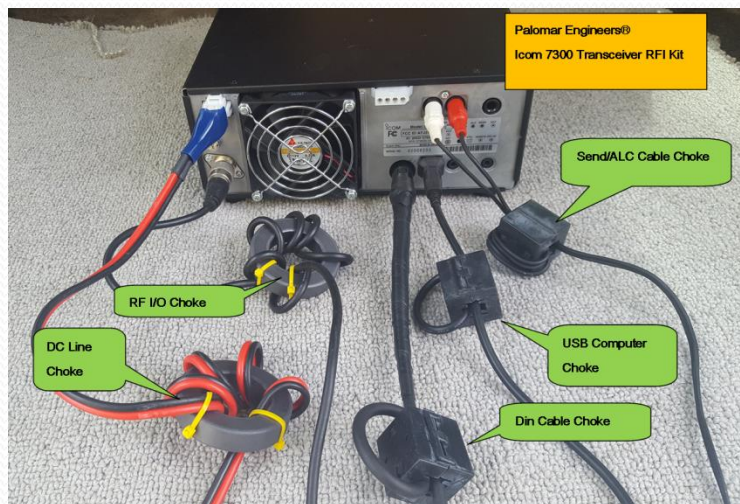
Transceiver/Amp Examples



# Transceiver/Amp RFI Kits

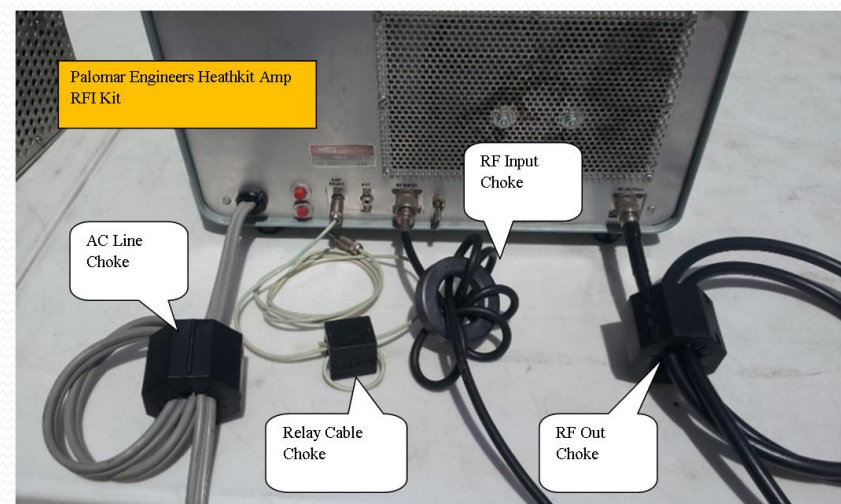
Palomar has RFI kits for all brands of transceivers and amplifiers

## Transceiver RFI Kit



ICOM 7300

## Linear Amplifier RFI Kit



HEATHKIT SB220

Clean up the RFI **SOURCE** first – your radio and amp

# Tip #2. Stop Transmit RFI current on coax braid



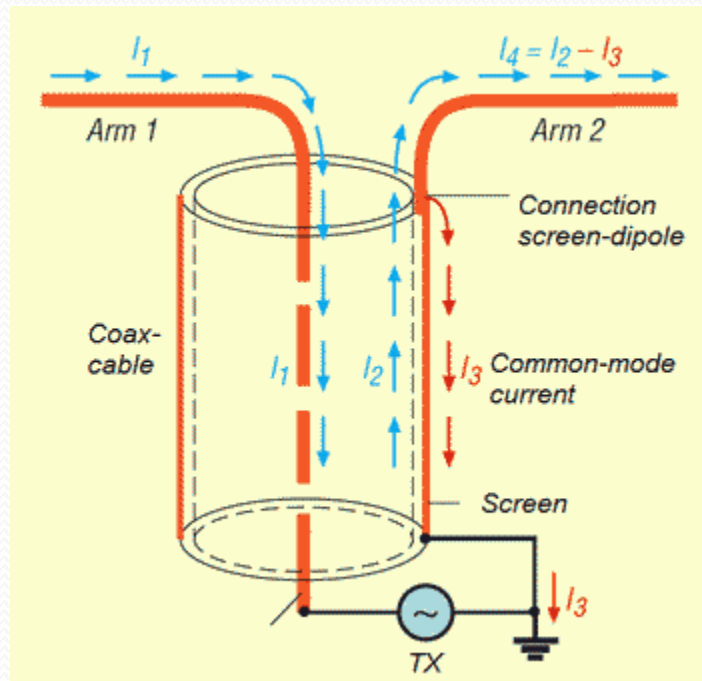
ALL coax fed antennas need a feed line  
choke at the antenna feed point!!!!

OR

Your dipole will become a tripole or  
Your unipole (vertical) will become a dipole  
and your coax will radiate causing local RFI!

# Is your Dipole a Tripole?

- Coax outside of braid acts as extension of transmitting antenna and extra receive antenna



## Coax cable has 3 conductors!

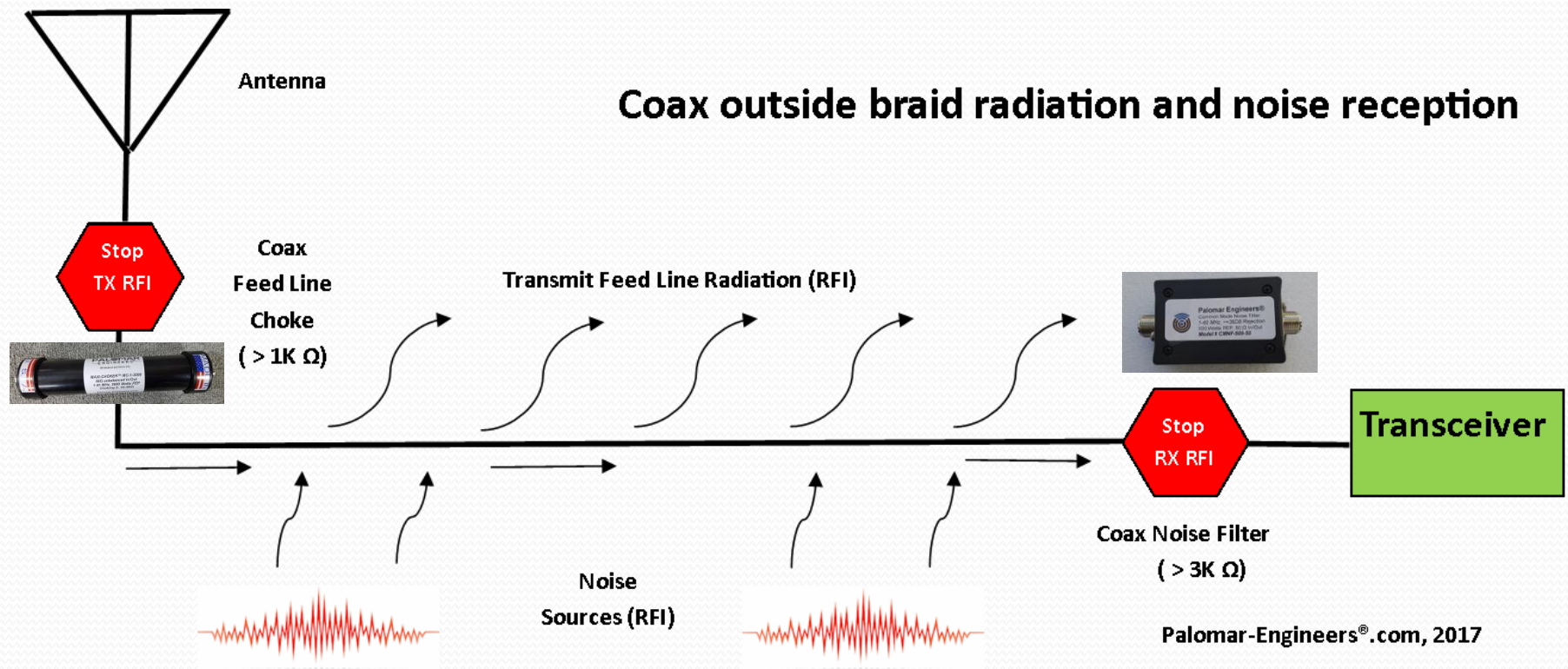
Coax braid is actually 2 conductors :  
1 on the inside (normal RF signal), and  
1 on the outside (common mode current)  
that turns a dipole into tripole on transmit  
or a second antenna on receive!

Goal is to reduce common mode current  
with a feed line choke to keep all transmit  
RF on antenna and use a coax noise filter to  
minimize noise into receiver.

FYI: 1% common mode braid current = 2.75 watt radiation at 1500 watts input,  
or 1.6 watts at 500 watts input or .7 watts at 100 watts input

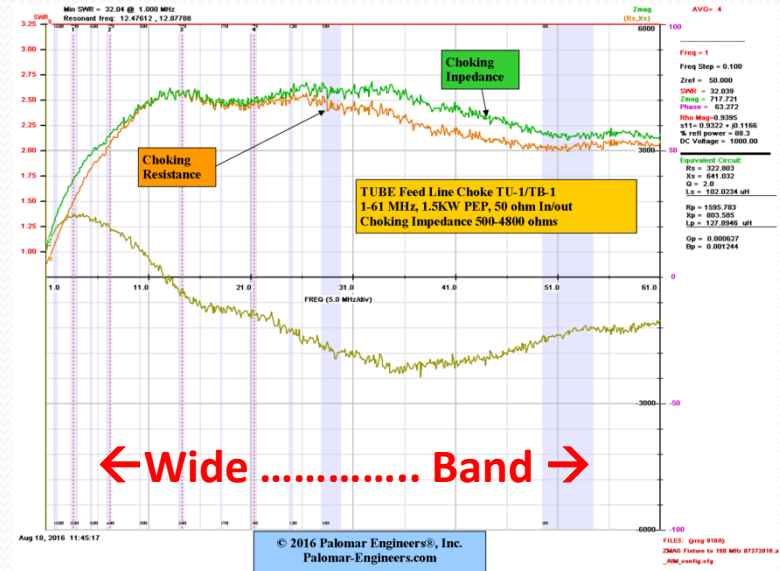
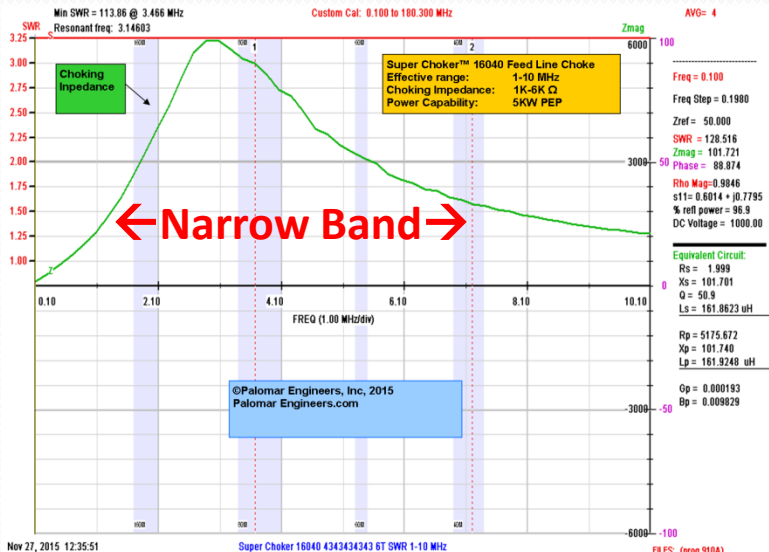
Typical Coax Antenna

# Typical Coax Fed Antenna System



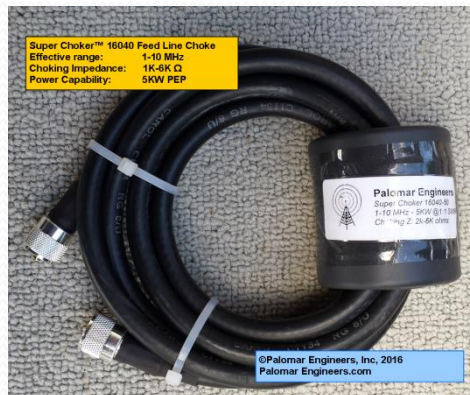
Technical requirements for feed line choke selection

# Choose choking resistance > 500Ω over frequency range used



## Super Choker

1-10 MHz >2K  
5KW PEP  
1K-6K Z  
3 pounds  
Verticals  
AM/RTTY  
Contesting



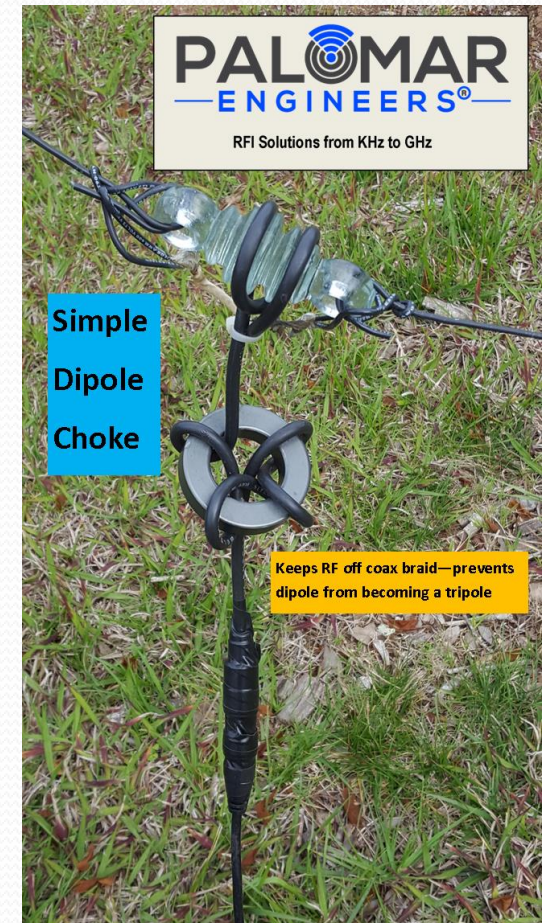
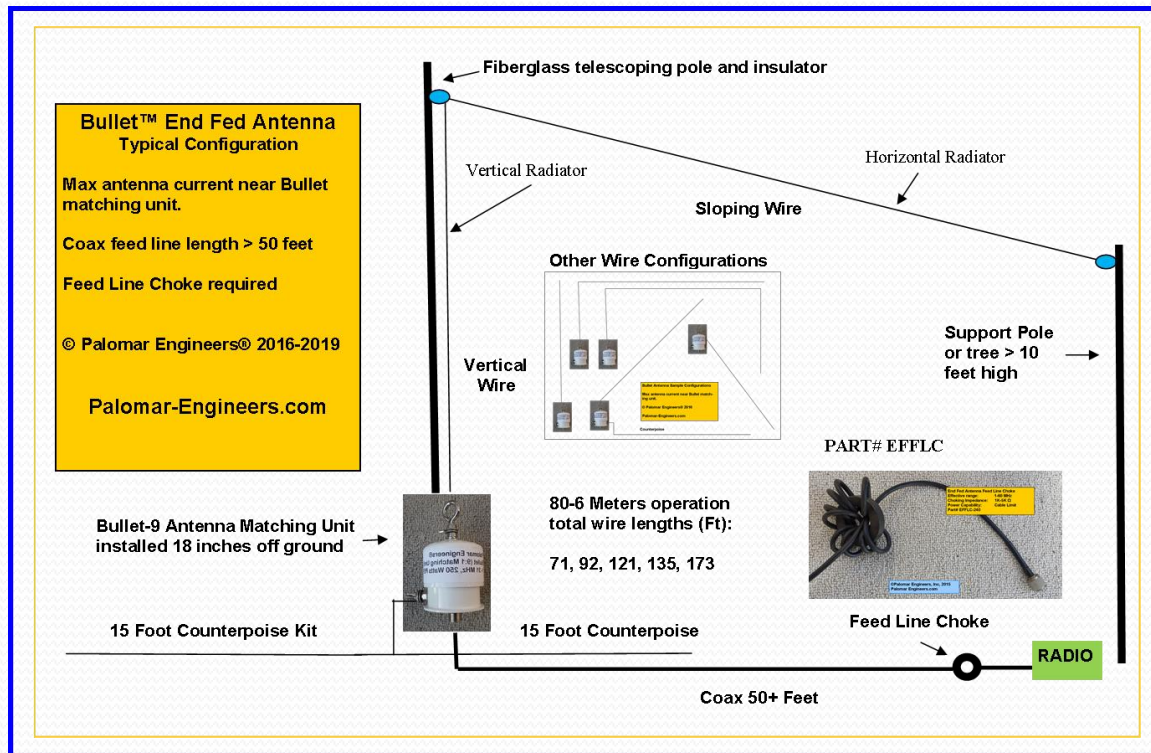
## Line isolator

1-61 MHz >2K, 3KW PEP, 1K-6K ZΩ, 1 pound. All coax lines, Optional ground, static bleeder, up to 38db suppression!

DO NOT BUY CHOKES with NO SPECS!



# Simple DIY Feed Line Chokes



Use 1.4" ID Ring with multiple turns

Let's Recap



# Tip #3. Install Solution Specific Victim RFI Kits

Our Goal: Minimize Transmit RFI to Home Electronics and Home  
Electronics RFI to receiver

Garage Door Opener RFI Kit

Washer/Dryer/Refrigerator RFI Kits

Home Alarm RFI Kit

Computer Desktop, laptop, DSL/Router RFI Kits

Home Theater A/V Systems, Satellite Boxes

Sprinkler Systems



# Transmit RFI Solutions

## MY HOME or NEIGHBOR'S HOME



**ALARM SYSTEM RFI**



**HOME THEATER RFI**



**COMPUTER RFI**



**MISCELLANEOUS RFI**



**GARAGE DOOR**



**TELEPHONE/DSL RFI**

Recommendation: Use RFI kits for specific problems, have neighbor purchase and install – do not make mods to neighbors equipment! MOST problems are RFI picked up by AC power/phone lines so ferrite filters work well.

RX Solutions

# GOAL: **SUPPRESS** RECEIVE RFI

Tip # 4: Install Coax Noise Filters

Tip # 5: Identify & Suppress Local RFI/Noise Sources

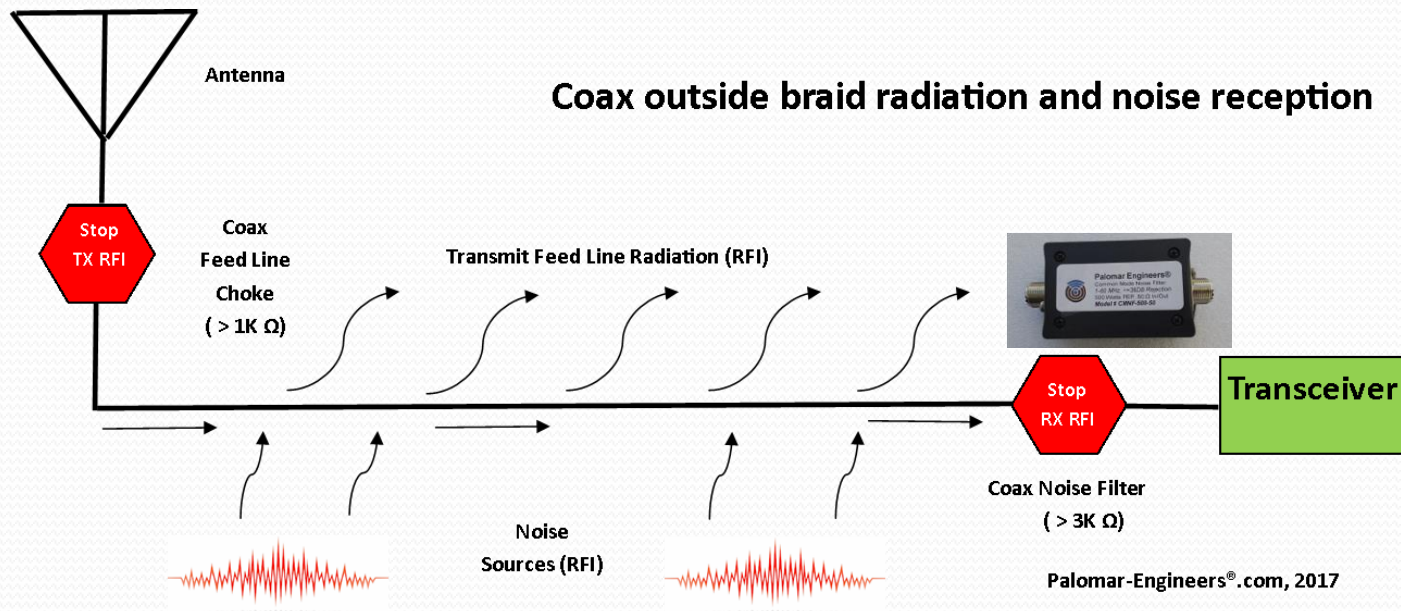


# Receive RFI Problem

- Symptoms: High noise levels, spurs, buzzes, periodic signals across bands

Coax braid acts as  
2<sup>nd</sup> receive antenna!

Typical Receive Chain Connections



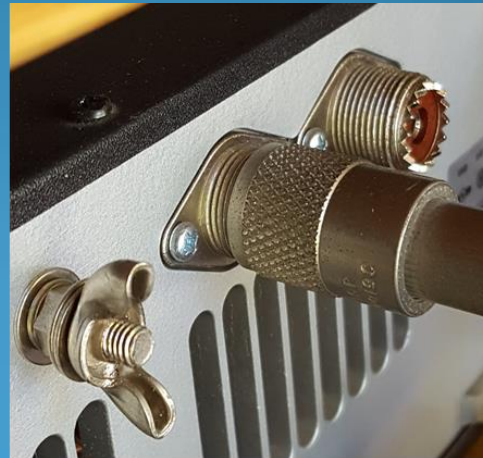
# Tip #4. Install Coax Noise Filter to Suppress RX RFI

Less common mode noise current (RFI) = More DX!  
How to select and install filters for maximum effect

Quick Test  
for Common  
Mode RFI



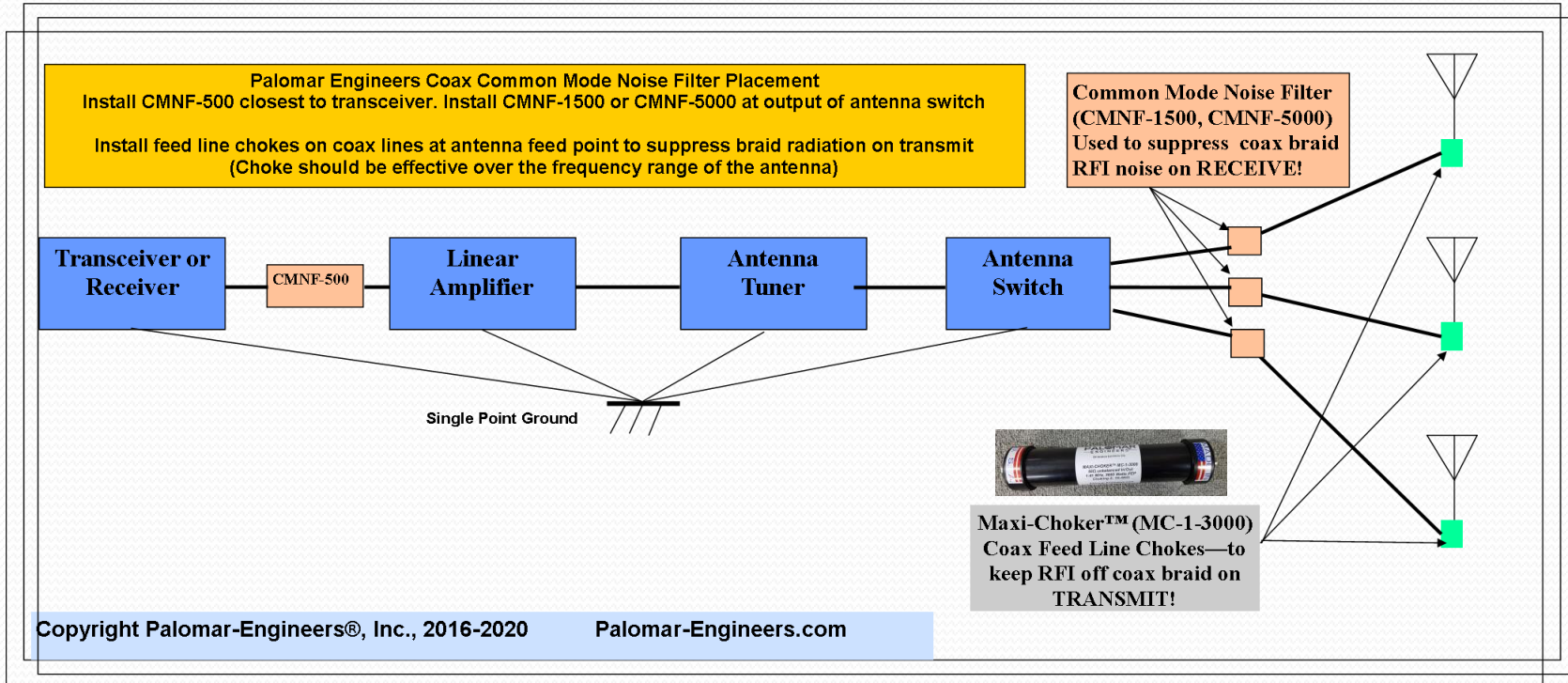
Coax Center Conductor Only—measure noise level



Coax Center Conductor and outer shield — measure noise level. If higher, then you have common mode noise



# Coax Noise Filter Installation



## Where to Install

- Choke at antenna for TRANSMIT RFI
- Noise Filter at Antenna Switch RX RFI
- Between Transceiver and Amplifier
- Single point ground system

## Antenna Switch Problem



Coax Noise Filter Comparisons→



# Coax Noise Filter Comparison

**OK**



Snap On Choke  
500-1000 $\Omega$   
1-2 "S" Units

**Better**



Ring Choke  
1K-2K $\Omega$   
2-4 "S" Units

**Best**



Noise Filter  
2K-6K $\Omega$   
3-6 "S" Units

## Criteria to Consider

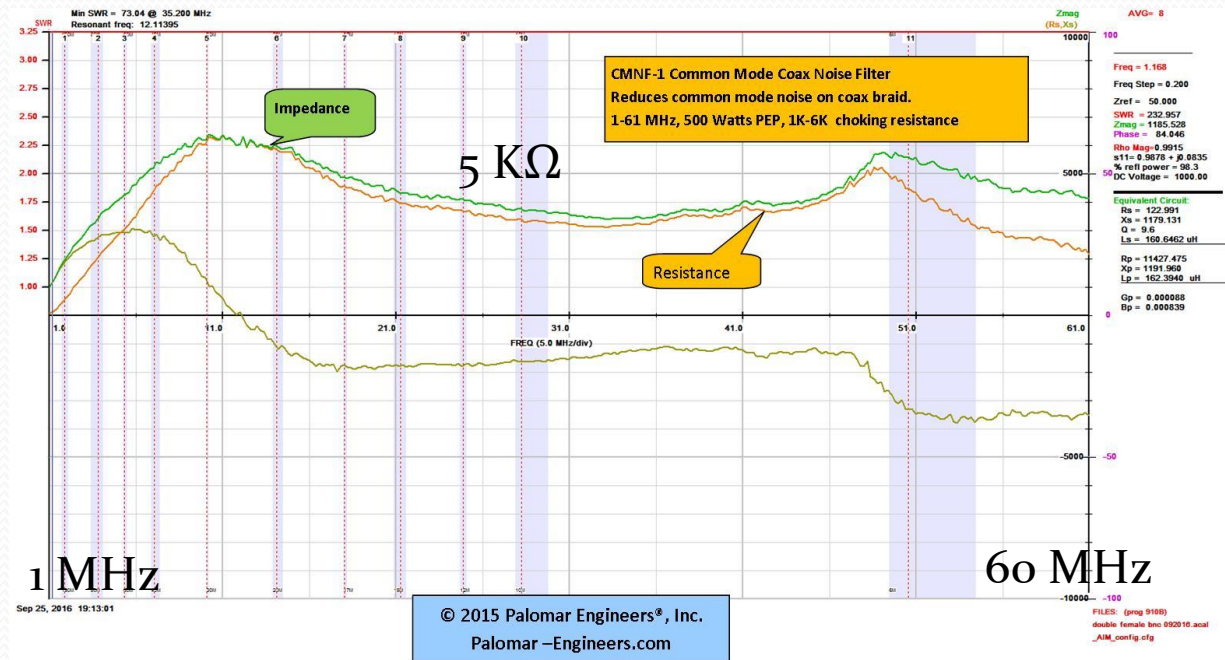
- Adequate Choking Impedance ( $Z$ ) > 500  $\Omega$
- Effective Frequency Range where  $Z > 500 \Omega$
- Sufficient Power Rating (PEP, Digital)
- Physical Size/Weight/Coax Diameter

Coax Noise Filters

# Coax Noise Filter Specs

**TOP SECRET**

>>> One of the best kept secrets in ham radio!!! <<<



Placed at RADIO END of coax feed line to suppress common mode current on coax braid between antenna feed point choke and radio

Now AC/DC Filters

# Tip #5. Install AC/DC Noise Filters

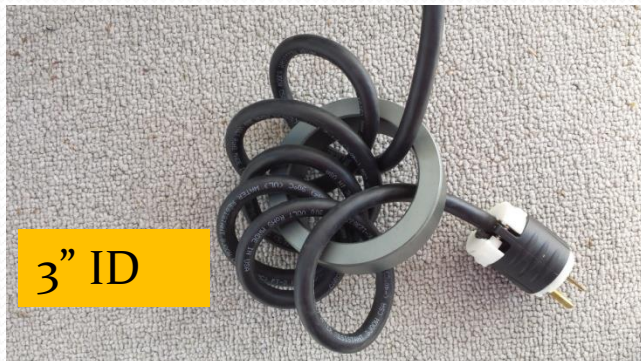
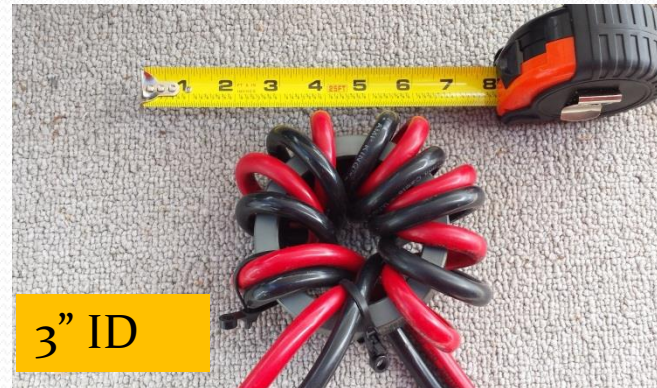
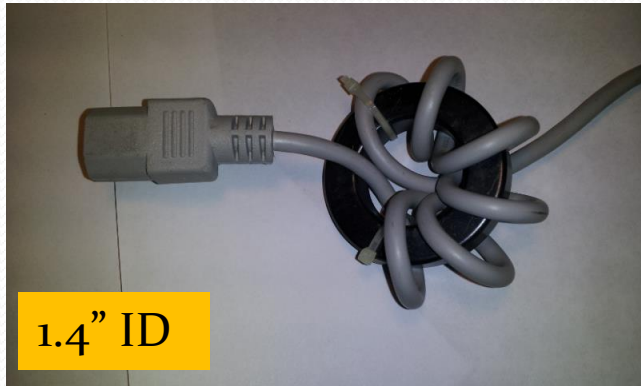
Lower Noise Floor = Higher SNR = More DX!

How to select and install filters for maximum effect

Goal is to reduce common mode RFI current from power supply



# RFI – AC/DC Line Chokes



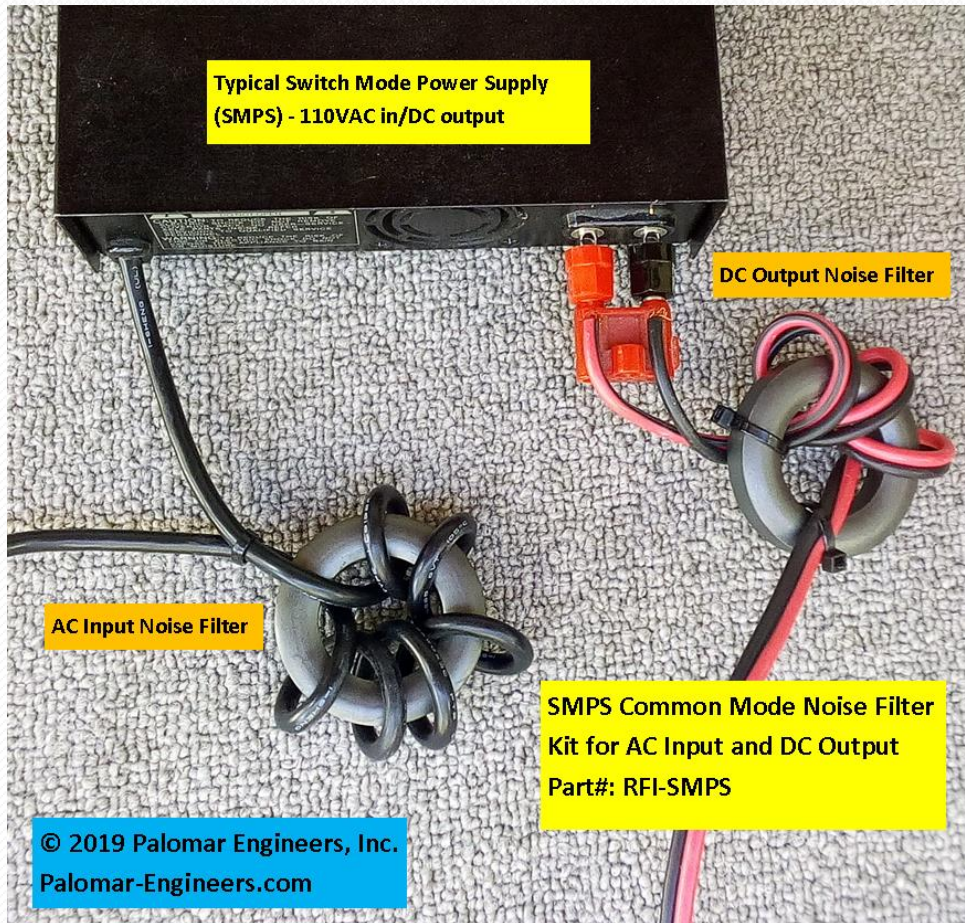
Choose mix frequency range and size to fit cable – use multiple turns

Touch Lamps use 2 F240-75 Rings – 12 Turns each

Wall Warts



# Switch Mode Power Supply Filters



SMPS acts as RFI transmitter and uses DC cable and AC power line as its “antennas” – so filter both lines

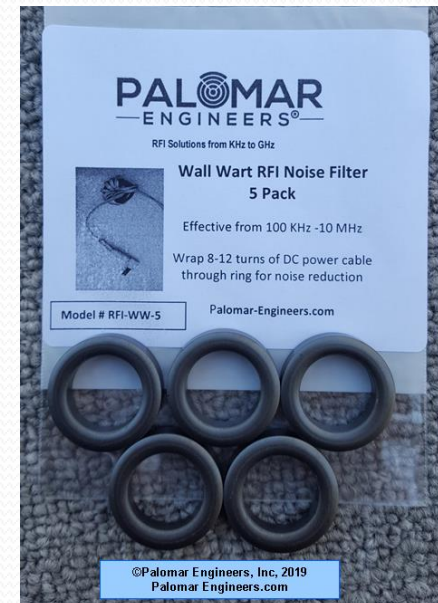
# Wall Wart RFI Noise Reduction Kit

Wall Wart switching DC power supplies that plug into the AC power line plug and provide DC power to laptops, routers, battery chargers, cell phone chargers, etc are a known source of broadband RFI

A simple ferrite ring filter on the DC power line can help suppress the RFI noise affecting the device or keep the DC power cord from acting as an antenna and radiating RFI from the powered device.



RFI Filter on DC Cord



Economy 5 or 10 ring kit



Receive RFI Solution

Transmit RFI Solution

# Tip #6. Use Ferrite Combo RFI Kits for Newbies

Ferrite Combo Kits for Troubleshooting Multiple RFI Issues include multiple ferrite shapes and sizes

or

$\frac{1}{2}$ " ID snap-ons and 1.4" ID rings are the most popular sizes and can be used to solve most ham radio HF RFI problems



Buy 9  
Get 1  
FREE!



Test Time – Win A Prize

# Prize Question #1

- What are the 2 best ways to increase the choking resistance of a ferrite filter?
- A) Use high resistance wire and multiple turns on bead
  - B) Use multiple turns and double shield coax
  - C) Use multiple beads in series with multiple turns
  - D) Use mix 31 and mix 75 beads in series with a single turn

# Prize Question #2

Mix 75 is used in which frequency range to suppress RFI common mode current?

- A) 1-300 MHz
- B) 200-2000 MHz
- C) .15-10 MHz
- D) 1-2000 MHz
- E) CB Band Only

# Prize Question #3

**TOP SECRET**

- What is one of the best kept secrets in ham radio?
  - a) Ladder line has more loss than coax
  - b) A coax wound choke can cover all frequencies from 160-6 meters if the coax is long enough
  - c) All ferrites work on all frequencies, so buy the cheapest
  - d) Coax noise filters reduce common mode noise level in your receiver so you can hear more stations
  - e) All extra class hams go to heaven

**BONUS Question**

# Bonus Prize Question #4

- Which company is your best source for RFI solutions?



**RFI Solutions from KHz to GHz**

- Website: [www.Palomar-Engineers.com](http://www.Palomar-Engineers.com)
- Email: [Sales@Palomar-Engineers.com](mailto:Sales@Palomar-Engineers.com)
- Phone: 760-747-3343
- Bob Brehm, AK6R – Chief Engineer
- This presentation available on the website.