



The RIGrunner

Let's say you have a single 12-V dc power supply and it features one, maybe two, output connectors. Looking around your station you see that you have a number of 12-V devices to connect. You can bundle the separate cables and bring them to the power supply, twisting and braiding until they all fit onto the available connectors. This may work, after a fashion, but you run the risk of a poor connection, or possibly even a short circuit. Worst of all, the convoluted mess is an unholy hassle to untangle when you need to remove a device or add a new one.

The West Mountain Radio solution to this unsightly and inconvenient situation is the RIGrunner power strip. A RIGrunner expands your power-connection options from one or two ports to as many as 12 depending on which model you buy.

Hook 'em Up

One cable connects the RIGrunner to the power source (battery, generator, power supply, etc). The RIGrunner, in turn, distributes power to your equipment using a bank of Anderson PowerPole sockets and their mating plugs.

The PowerPole plugs are easy to install on your dc power leads using some care and a common crimping tool. (Once I had the knack, it took about two minutes per plug.) West Mountain Radio has some very helpful information about this on their Web site. If you're an ARES or RACES member, you may see PowerPole connectors in frequent use. By standardizing on a single power connector, operators can rapidly switch different radios between many different power sources.

The PowerPole connectors simply push onto the RIGrunner jacks. The plugs are color-coded and "polarized," which is to say that you can't insert them the wrong way. Although they don't lock into place, the connectors fit quite firmly. If you wrap your foot in a wire and take a determined step, you will probably yank the cable out of the RIGrunner socket. On the other hand, if you are entangled in a power cord and about to kiss the carpet, you have more serious things to worry about.

Three Flavors

RIGrunners come in three models depending on how many outlets you need: 12, 8 or 5. Every model is rated at 40 A. The 12- and 8-outlet RIGrunners (models 4012 and 4008, respectively) feature LEDs that indicate the status of each socket and an audible over- or under-voltage alert system. The 5-socket model 4005 is primarily designed for mobile use and lacks the LED and audible indicators.

For this review I tested the model 4012. I found the LED indicators to be particularly convenient, but the audio alarm is a nice touch in applications where the power strip is out of sight. Each outlet is fused with ATC/ATO automobile fuses. Not only are they easy to replace, the blown-fuse LED indicator flags the location of the problem fuse instantly. Fuses are available in 10 values from 1 to 40 A, so you can choose the appropriate fuse for the hardware in question.

Impressions

The RIGrunner is a deluxe solution for a common problem. In my station I power five devices from one supply. By



extending my power-supply ports with the RIGrunner, I could quickly remove and replace whatever happened to be attached to the 12-V bus—including my transceiver, digital wattmeter, sound card interface and more. When I want to move the radio from the house to the car, the process of detaching the power cable from the RIGrunner required about 5 seconds' worth of effort—a vast improvement.

I found the RIGrunner to be attractively designed and rugged. West Mountain took the extra step of incorporating RF suppression into each RIGrunner as well. With the RIGrunner in place I have no RF-induced problems (and my antenna is close to my operating position). RIGrunners are ideal station accessories for the sake of convenience and for public-service applications where time is precious and reliability is paramount.

Manufacturer: West Mountain Radio, 18 Sheehan Ave, Norwalk, CT 06854, tel 203-853-8080; www.westmountainradio.com. Model 4012 with 12 PowerPole connector pairs and a 6-foot power supply cable; \$109.95. Model 4012 without connectors or cable; \$99.95. Model 4008 with 12 PowerPole connector pairs and a 6-foot power supply cable; \$89.95. Model 4008 without connectors or cable; \$79.95. Model 4005; \$49.95.

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STRAYS

ATTENTION MARS OPERATORS AND USERS

◇ A project for the US Marine Corps Historical Division is seeking written and oral histories of service and civilian personnel who participated as operators in the MARS (Military Affiliated Radio System) program. Although the main focus is Navy/Marine Corps MARS during the Vietnam Era, contributions from all services and all eras are welcome and encouraged. In addition, if you used the MARS systems to communicate with your families or others, using either phone patches (Over!) or MARSGRAMS, please contact us. We are also seeking artifacts for the exhibit (at MCRD San Diego), MARSGRAMS, pictures of stations and personnel, orders (DNC-8), etc.

Please submit your MARS service dates, stories, etc, to: (e-mail) MARS@borgmangroup.com; or via postal mail to Borgman Group, Ltd, 3342 S Sandhill Rd, Ste 9-326, Las Vegas, NV 89121.
—Dr Daniel L. Borgman