

## Choosing a Signal Meter

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Probably the most valuable tool a professional satellite installer should have is a high quality signal meter. With satellite providers continuing to expand their services and introduce new technology a high quality signal meter is more essential than ever.

Scott Haywood of Applied Instruments stated that at a minimum a high end meter should provide "the ability to get positive ID on the satellite, obtain a calibrated signal level in dBm and a signal quality value consistent with the Receiver or Carrier to Noise for each transponder on each satellite.

So what should you look for when considering which meter to buy? Here are just some of the features that you may want to consider.

- The ability to measure voltage and current supplied by the receiver.
- Capable of working with several different providers. The more capabilities your meter has the more opportunities you can take advantage of. Besides Echostar and DIRECTV there are opportunities in V-Sat, Broadband, FTA, MDU, commercial and more that you might wish to take advantage of.
- The meter can be updated using the latest software (uploaded from a PC). With platform providers adding new services and constantly changing active transponders this is a very beneficial feature as it may alleviate the need to buy a new meter to stay current with technology.
- Easy to operate and view, remember you will frequently be on a ladder. If it is heavy or cumbersome to operate it will make your job more difficult rather than easier.
- Heavy duty weather resistant case. It is not uncommon for satellite installations to take place in inclement weather. Dirt, water and cold temperatures can potentially damage any high end electronics. In addition this product may be dropped or bang around in a truck so make sure it is protected.
- Ability to view individual transponders. This will come in very handy when troubleshooting. High Definition local signal are being launched using spot beam technology therefore it is critical that you ensure that the proper transponders are functioning.
- Long lasting battery to accommodate multi-LNB systems which have a higher current draw. Some meters can be used while being charged which is another time savings.
- Capable of positively identifying the satellites. As more services are launched satellites are becoming bunched closer together, sometimes as little as 2 degrees apart therefore it is critical that your dish is pointed accurately or you will not receive all of the services desired.
- Field replaceable F-connectors. You do not want to have to send you most valuable tool back for service.
- If you are doing commercial installations or service consider a meter that displays frequency spectrum.

When someone asked me at a recent meeting which meter I would recommend I told them to get the best one they can afford. A high end meter will save you time on every installation and service call. In addition you will be able to tackle more complex work and thus generate more revenue for you and your business. To find the best meter to fit your needs do some research and speak to a number of people to see what they recommend. Your distributor and other installation technicians are both great resources and will be able to steer you in the right direction.

One final note, once you have your new meter spend some time learning all of its features. The more comfortable you are with using the product the more value you will get out of it.

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