



Portable Power Station

Even though it weighs only 7 lbs, the model 752 Portable Power Station packs a substantial punch. A sealed 12-V 7-Ah lead-acid battery makes up most of the weight. Charge the Portable Power Station's battery from the supplied ac unit (about 8 hours), or charge it from your car (about 3 hours, while driving) and you're good to go. The Portable Power Station can potentially power a QRP transceiver or an H-T continuously for at least 24 hours, potentially even for weeks, depending on how often you transmit.

Appearances are Deceiving

The Portable Power Station is deceptively small at just $7\frac{1}{4} \times 4\frac{1}{2} \times 8$ inches. It looks like a black lunch bucket with a dc voltmeter attached. There are two slide switches: one to select 3, 6 or 9 V for the $\frac{1}{8}$ -inch in-line jack on the side of the unit, the other a power on/off switch. Below the switches are two cigarette-lighter jacks: one acting as a port for charging the Portable Power Station from your car or other 12-V source (a charging cable is supplied), and another functioning as a 12-V output.

A red LED above the master switch simply indicates whether the Power Station is on or off. Another red LED labeled **CHARGER** blinks or dims as the ac charger cycles on or off (it extinguishes when the battery is completely charged). As the battery is discharged, you'll notice that the dc voltmeter indicates a gradual drop in voltage. The **CHARGER** LED begins blinking when the Power Station is in need of a recharge. In my tests the LED began blinking when the voltage dropped below 12 V.

On the rear panel you find a door covering a small compartment. In this compartment are two 12-V screw bolts that serve as 12-V terminals. It's worth noting that these terminals are always hot, even when the front-panel master switch is in the **OFF** position. You can tap into the terminals using alligator clips or whatever, but don't attempt to loosen the nuts at the bases. These are *not* attachment nuts. If you wish to use nuts to attach your power leads to these terminals, you'll have to find your own. (They must be metric.)

In the rear compartment is a 10-A fuse. Despite the fuse location, it does not protect these terminals. The fuse protects only the front panel cigarette lighter jack and the side panel low-voltage jack. An independent fuse in the power line is a good idea if you intend to use the rear terminals.

On the Air

I spent a long Independence Day 2000 weekend putting the Portable Power Station to the test. In fact, I used it as the only power source for my ICOM IC-706MkII transceiver during that time. (Of course, I had the 706's output cranked down substantially to stay within the Power Station's current limit when transmitting.)

The Portable Power Station was as solid as a proverbial rock. I enjoyed quite a few PSK31, RTTY and CW contacts while keeping an eye on the dc voltmeter, but it barely budged with each transmission. According to the reports I received, my battery-powered signal was perfectly clean.

I deliberately left my radio in the receive mode for 5 hours just to see how long it would take to deplete the Portable Power Station. An IC-706 draws about 1.5 A continuously while receiving, so in terms of your typical QRP rig, this would be roughly the equivalent of a continuous key-down transmission. After 5 hours the voltage finally slipped below 12 V and the **CHARGER** LED began blinking. This corresponded pretty closely to the 7 Ah rating of the Power Station.



Front view of the Portable Power Station along with the mobile charging cable and home charger unit.



Rear view showing the 12-V terminals and 10-A fuse.

A Reliable Companion

The Portable Power Station would make an ideal power source for emergency operations and public service events. The fact that you can charge the Power Station from a running automobile in only 3 hours means that the unit can theoretically be used for days in areas where primary ac power has been lost. It makes sense to simply keep a Portable Power Station fully charged and ready whenever the need arises.

Beyond its serious applications, the Portable Power Station is perfect for casual portable operating. You can take it on trips, camping, hiking expeditions or wherever you'd care to operate. And when you aren't using it on the air, the Portable Power Station can power a TV, CD player, computer...

Manufacturer: The Ham Contact, PO Box 4025, Westminster, CA 92684; 714-901-0573 (information); 800-933-4264 (orders only); <http://www.hamcontact.com/>. \$59.95 plus \$10.50 shipping and handling.

