



Theory of Operation:

Many tape recorders generate a very low power radio-frequency signal as part of their recording process (known as the bias oscillator signal). Small amounts of this signal radiate from the tape recorder's circuit boards and tape heads to the area surrounding the tape recorder. This signal can be detected with a radio receiver tuned to the signal's frequency; a pocket tape recorder detector.

Pocket tape recorder detectors are sometimes packaged with bug detectors (see our All You Need To Know About Pocket Bug Detectors fact sheet). They are pocket-sized, as the name implies, and include an antenna which is approximately 3" x 1" x .25" in size. The antenna is connected to the detector by a 3 to 4 foot cable. This allows covert placement of the detector in a breast-pocket, and attachment of the antenna to the forearm or wrist. Once the detector is turned on, the arm can be used to nonchalantly maneuver the antenna close to where a recorder might be hiding. This may be awkward if you suspect the recorder is being carried by another person.

Pros:

- Simple to operate.
- Inexpensive.
- Small.

Cons:

- Not all tape recorders generate a bias oscillator signal. New *tapeless* digital recorders do not either.
- Range of detection? 0 to 18 inches from the antenna, depending upon the recorder.
- The bias oscillator signal is generated only when the tape recorder is in the record position.
- Subject to false positive readings. Potentially embarrassing.

Cost: \$700 - \$1200

Recommendation:

At this point in time we are not recommending any tape recorder detectors to our clients. They are not effective enough to provide a reasonable degree of assurance. The new *tapeless* recorders are immune to this detection technology. No reliable detector is being marketed at this time.

The devices which are being sold can give the user a false sense of security. A healthy sense of caution is still the better choice.

