

How To Build Your Own Sputnik from the BBC

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The BBC News web site's Magazine includes an article titled, optimistically enough, ``How To Build Your Own Sputnik": http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/magazine/7049002.stm

While the discussion of what goes into a Sputnik box is interesting and includes details which will not inspire me to actually build my own, there is one line of exposition which intrigues me:

[Sputnik] sent its famous ``beep beep" radio signals to earth, altering the transmission to indicate changes in temperature or a sudden drop in pressure caused by a puncture in the satellite's case. And that's about it.

I don't remember hearing of Sputnik being intended to signal any kind of data like temperature or pressure except by the way that changes in those conditions might alter the electrical properties of the equipment inside. It seems like that would have frustrated the attempts of (United States) people to project its orbit by the Doppler effect on its transmission as well, but I could easily have forgotten or missed descriptions of that complication in the past.

Did Sputnik have this bit of data transmission or did author Paul Rubens get details jumbled?

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Joseph Nebus
