

Central Division News & Views

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BPL Not The Only Dumb FCC Proposal

FCC Proposes Using “Interference Temperature Metric” For Spectrum Management

By now, the majority of you should know that BPL is an FCC-sponsored brain-dead proposal being foisted on the public as an enhancement of *Homeland Security* (it's the opposite), and as a means of providing cheap, high-speed, broadband Internet service in our rural areas (it's not). But there is another, even worse, nightmare idea also under consideration by the FCC.

Notice of Inquiry and Notice of Proposed Rule Making - Establishment of an Interference Noise Metric to Quantify and Manage Interference and to Expand Available Unlicensed Operation in Certain Fixed, Mobile and Satellite Frequency Bands (ET Docket No. 03-237) is now under consideration by the five commissioners, who appear to be taking their marching orders from the White House. President George W. Bush has already publicly supported BPL and I'm betting he will soon do the same thing for “Interference Temperature” - if has not already done so.

This appears to be another in a series of moves in a plan to throw away decades of real-world experience in how to regulate the RF spectrum for the greatest number of uses and users without them interfering with each other. The basic idea is to add additional unlicensed wireless uses to spectrum now requiring a license. If put into general practice, this process would eventually turn large blocks of the RF spectrum into a poisonous stew of interfering signals. This is utter nonsense!

The FCC's rationale for this proposal is that a measurement system or process can be developed that would hold this “interference temperature” to an acceptable minimum. The fallacy in this idea is that any measurement can not be consistent because all the inputs are constantly variable. RF signals are not constant. Their characteristics vary with frequency, power, topography, modulation, antenna type, antenna height, transmit duration, signal mixing, atmospheric conditions, and the sunspot cycle. What can be acceptable at one moment in time, is totally unacceptable when one or more of these factors change.

Perhaps future technology will produce transmitters and receivers that will truly be able to constantly self-adjust for these twelve, and possibly additional, factors. But to do so would be like having the ability to converse, unaided, with somebody in the far end of a hall filled with 2000 or more persons all attempting to do the same thing at the same time. I doubt if this is going to happen in my lifetime or yours.

The deadline for filing comments on this docket was April 5th. The ARRL filed comments opposing this idea on the grounds that “noise temperature” is not a practical measurement tool. However, like BPL, it appears the FCC is going to codify this concept in some manner and congress is then going to have step in and restore some sanity to our regulation of the RF spectrum. And it will probably require a change in the White House in order to stop this reoccurring insanity. You should keep this “noise temperature” issue in mind when you contact your congressional representatives.

Grass Roots Initiative

You are starting to hear of a “Grassroots Initiative” being developed by the ARRL. This will be a combination of tools and people organized to provide an effective means of getting large numbers of people to contact their Congressmen and Senators on issues of importance to the Amateur Radio Service. Those of you attend the *Dayton Hamvention* later this month, have the opportunity to attend the first ARRL forum addressing this process.

The topic at the ARRL Great Lakes Division Forum in Room #1 at Noon on Friday, May 14th, will be “*How Grassroots Action Gets Lawmakers’ Reaction.*” ARRL General Counsel Chris Imlay, W3KD and ARRL President Jim Haynie, W5JBP are among the featured speakers.

If you want to talk to me about this initiative, or anything else relating to amateur radio, I will be in and out of the ARRL booth all day Friday, Saturday, and Sunday morning. Please stop by and say hello.

Hamfest & Meeting Attendance Criteria

In a perfect world, with a calendar having 104 weekends a year, I might be able to attend most of the hamfests and radio club meetings in the Central Division. However, there are limitations that force me to use a set of criteria to determine which events I can attend.

1. There are only 52 weekends in a year. About 80% of the Central Division hamfests are held from April through September.
2. There are about 6 weekends each year that have 2 or more hamfests scheduled. This year, at least 2 weekends have 3 events scheduled.
3. Required ARRL meetings outside of the division use a minimum of 4 weekends each year. I used 7 weekends in 2003.
4. I participate in HF contests; not as many as before I became an ARRL director, but I still spend a few weekends in this activity.
5. A lot of our extended family and all of our grandchildren live nearby. This consumes parts of some weekends each year.
6. We like to travel and this usually takes 3 to 5 weekends per year.

Over the past three years as your director, I have developed the following attendance criteria.

1. Minimum club meeting attendance for an appearance is 60 people and an overnight trip should be avoided unless this visit is combined with other appearances on a multi-day trip.
2. Minimum hamfest attendance is 600 people. If an overnight trip is required, a larger minimum attendance is expected.
3. Criteria #1 and #2 can be reduced a bit when they are combined in a multi-day trip.
4. I will work with ham radio organizations that coordinate their event dates and setup joint meetings to try and meet my attendance criteria for a multi-day trip.

I know this does not sit well with the smaller radio clubs and their smaller hamfests. But my time is limited, I do not enjoy driving more than two hours late at night (I turned 65 in March), and I cannot justify spending ARRL travel funds for small group appearances. Sometimes I can get around the extended driving requirement by flying in a light aircraft. But this is the exception rather than the rule due to weather and aircraft availability.

Keep Those Newsletters Coming

Since my club newsletter request in the last newsletter, the number of newsletters I'm now receiving has almost doubled. Virtually all of them are sent as attached PDF files, or the URL where I can download these files is sent to me each month. I truly appreciate the response. These newsletters help to keep me informed about all the ham radio activities in our division. In a couple of instances, I have been able to help resolve a problem that was being discussed. Thanks for sending them to me.

Hamfest Visits & Meetings

Here is my confirmed ARRL travel schedule for the next three months. It is subject to change if required ARRL meeting dates are changed or there are last minute transportation problems.

May 13-16	Dayton Hamvention	Dayton, OH
Jun 5	Sangamon Valley RC Hamfest	Springfield, IL
Jun 6	Starved Rock RC Hamfest	Princeton, IL
Jun 13	Six Meter Club Hamfest	Wheaton, IL
Jul 4	Kankakee ARS Hamfest	Peotone, IL
Jul 10	Indianapolis Hamfest	Indianapolis, IN
Jul 11	Fox River Radio League Hamfest	Aurora, IL
Jul 14-18	ARRL Board Meeting	Hartford, CT

I hope to see many of you at these hamfests. In addition to shopping for new and used equipment, they are a great way to renew and develop friendships and to meet some of the voices you have heard on your radios.

73 - George R. (Dick) Isely, W9GIG
Central Division Director