

Central Division News & Views

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FCC Responds To ARRL License Restructuring Petition

As most of you already know, the FCC wants to drop the 5 WPM Morse code element as a requirement to obtain an Amateur Radio license of any class. The Commission included the provision in a July 19 Notice of Proposed Rule Making and Order (NPRM&O) in WT Docket 05-235. It looks like the FCC's response to the ARRL's License Restructuring petition is to simply eliminate the Morse code license requirement. This NPRM&O does not address the various legacy issues of the two types of Technician Class licenses (with & without code) now in existence, and the possible grandfathering of Advanced Class licensees. You may remember the Technician Class license in the ARRL restructuring petition would be remodeled to make it a true entry level license designed to entice operating activity and license advancement. It looks like the FCC does not believe these issues are an impediment to the Amateur Radio Service. If you believe the ARRL's licensing proposals have merit, please file comments urging the Commission to include these features in this NPRM&O.

ARRL Regulation By Bandwidth Proposal

However, the Commission's NPRM&O on Morse code is generating another round of comments and suggestions to ARRL staff, officers and directors about its proposal to regulate HF sub-bands by bandwidth. The FCC's proposal to eliminate the remaining Morse code licensing requirement has no effect, one way or the other, on our band-width proposal unless the Commission were to prohibit the use of Morse code - a very unlikely prospect. But this has not kept people from making absurd statements about the future of Morse code use under the ARRL's regulation by bandwidth proposal. What follows is my response to email messages and the two hard copy letters I have received since the July ARRL board meeting.

After three years of hashing, thrashing, and public comments, the ARRL Board of Directors approved a repeatedly amended draft of a proposal to regulate HF sub-bands by bandwidth at its July, 2005 meeting. The ARRL Executive Committee is charged with making a final review for editorial, and typographical errors before it is submitted to the FCC. This is not - as alleged on at least one Internet email reflector - a hurried, "smoke-filled room" proposal. There will always be people who do not keep themselves current on proposals, have an ax to grind, or both, in Amateur Radio. When they finally believe their ox is about to be gored, they get very emotional.

In view of the FCC's proposal to drop the remaining Morse Code licensing requirement, I have to wonder if our "regulation by bandwidth" petition will make it through the FCC intact and how long it will take. I have received many email comments and inquiries based on various Amateur Radio reflector comments on issues before the FCC. I find it rather strange that intelligent, supposedly educated, people are able to read things into the ARRL bandwidth proposal that are simply not there.

As a matter of principle, narrow bandwidth signals are not proposed to be "compressed" into smaller sub-band segments. The segment where they are protected from wider bandwidth signals might be reduced. But 200 Hz (or less) bandwidth signals can be transmitted anywhere on each Amateur Radio Service HF allocation where they are not specifically prohibited. There is no prohibition anywhere in the current FCC regulations or the ARRL proposal. This is not the case for the wider signals. They cannot operate everywhere. This is the same principle now used by our mode-based FCC Regulations.

But the problem is that regulation by "mode" is being overrun by technology. I understand we are starting to have digital operating modes that use band-widths wider than 200 Hz legally (under the present FCC rules) impinging on the 200 Hz and narrower modes. Hopefully, regulation by bandwidth would make this legally impossible.

The occupied 3 KHz bandwidth for SSB would be slightly expanded to the necessary bandwidth of 3.5 KHz. The terms "occupied" and "necessary" are current FCC technical definitions of bandwidth. 6 KHz AM signals would still be allowed unchanged by virtue of special notes similar to the existing ones. In other words, there would be very little displacement of incumbent modes if the ARRL bandwidth regulation proposal were to be approved intact.

I am not particularly thrilled with automatic or semi-automatic transmissions on the HF bands because of their capability of interfering with human-originated transmissions that are not heard at the originating point of the automated transmission. However, this situation exists under today's regulations and will continue to exist in the future unless automatic and semi-automatic HF Amateur Radio communications were to be prohibited.

Therefore, the "sky is falling" attitude of some people is not a valid argument for delaying, again re-writing, or killing the ARRL regulation by bandwidth proposal. There is something in it for almost everybody but nobody gets a blank check. This means there will be various groups - both wide and narrow band users - who are not totally satisfied. This is to be expected. Everybody is entitled to their opinions. But I am not happy with those, on both sides of a given issue, who refuse, for one reason or another, to try to speak the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. All this does is muddy the water.

Central Division Hams Win ARRL National Awards

I was as surprised as most of my fellow directors when we were asked, at our July board meeting, to approve four ARRL national awards with three of them going to Central Division members.

- The *2005 Philip J. McGan Memorial Silver Antenna Award* for outstanding public relations and information work was given to Jerome Martin, KC9BDA, of Libertyville, IL.
- The *2004 Herb S. Brier Instructor Of The Year Award* was given to Richard Davidson, K9RD, of Lake Forrest, IL for teaching at least three license classes per year since 1994.
- The *2004 Professional Educator Of The Year Award* was given to Neil Rapp, WB9VPG, of Bloomington, IN who has continuously woven Amateur Radio into his high school science classes for the past 11 years.

Congratulations and a heartfelt thank you to all three recipients for jobs very well done!

Hamfest Visits & Meetings

Here is my 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.

Sep 16-17	W9XCC Convention	Elk Grove Village, IL
Sep 18	Radio Expo	Grays Lake, IL
Oct 22	ARRL Executive Committee	TBA
Nov 19-20	Indiana State ARRL Convention	Fort Wayne, IN (Saturday only)

I hope to see many of you at these events. 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