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Official Newsletter of the Parkersburg Radio Klub

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License Restructuring is Here

NEWINGTON, CT, Dec 30, 1999-- Amateur Radio will get a new look in the new millennium. The FCC today issued its long-awaited Report and Order in the 1998 Biennial Regulatory Review of Part 97 more commonly known as "license restructuring." The bottom line is that starting April 15, 2000, there will be three license classes-- Technician, General, and Amateur Extra and a single Morse code requirement 5 WPM.

"We believe that an individual's ability to demonstrate increased Morse code proficiency is not necessarily indicative of that individual's ability to contribute to the advancement of the radio art," the FCC said.

Besides drastically streamlining the Amateur Radio licensing process, the FCC said its actions would "eliminate unnecessary requirements that may discourage or limit individuals from becoming trained operators, technicians, and electronic experts."

Although no new Novice and Advanced licenses will be issued after the effective date of the Report and Order, the FCC does not plan to automatically upgrade any existing license privileges. The ARRL had proposed a one-time across-the-board upgrading of current Novice and Tech Plus licensees to General class, but the FCC declined to adopt the idea. This means that current licensees will retain their current op-

erating privileges, including access to various modes and subbands, and will be able to renew their licenses indefinitely.

Starting April 15, 2000, individuals who qualified for the Technician class license prior to March 21, 1987, will be able to upgrade to General class by providing documentary proof to a Volunteer Examiner Coordinator, paying an application fee, and completing FCC Form 605.

The FCC's decision not to automatically upgrade Novice and Tech Plus licensees means the current Novice/Tech Plus HF subbands will remain and not be "refarmed" to higher class licensees as the ARRL had proposed. The FCC said it did not refarm these subbands because there was "no consensus" within the amateur community as to what to do with them.

As it had proposed earlier, the FCC decided to lump technician and Tech Plus licensees into a single licensee database, all designated as "Technician" licensees. Those who can document having passed the 5 WPM Morse code examination will continue to have the current Tech Plus HF privileges. "If documentation is needed to verify whether a licensee has passed a telegraphy examination, we may request the documentation from that licensee or the VECs," the FCC said.

In addition to reducing the number of license classes from six to three and eliminating the 20 and 13 WPM code tests, the FCC also will reduce the number of written examination elements from five to three, authorize Advanced Class hams to prepare and administer General class examinations, and eliminate Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service (RACES) station licenses. RACES will remain, however. "After review of the record, we conclude that we should eliminate RACES station licenses because RACES station licenses are unnecessary for amateur stations and amateur service licenses to provide emergency communications," the FCC said.

Under the new licensing scheme, there will be four examination elements. Element 1 will be the 5 WPM Morse code exam. Element 2 will be a 35-question written test to obtain a Technician license; Element 3 will be a 35-question written test to obtain a Technician license; Element 3 will be a 35-question written test to obtain a General license, and Element 4 will be a 50-question written test for the Amateur Extra license. The FCC has left it in the hands of the National Conference of VECs Question Pool Committee to determine the specific mix and makeup of written

examination questions. Current Amateur Radio study materials remain valid at least until the new rules become effective in April.

The FCC's new licensing plan means someone will be able to become a ham by passing a single 35-question written examination. The plan also simplifies and shortens the upgrade path from the ground floor through Amateur Extra especially since amateurs will only have to pass one Morse code test.

Elimination of the 13 and 20 WPM Morse requirements also means an end to physician certification waivers for applicants claiming an inability to pass the Morse code examination due to physical handicap.

The effective date provides a window of upgrade opportunity for current Advanced licensees. Between now and April 15, current Advanced holders may take the existing Element 4B, a 40-question test, giving them credit for having passed the current Extra written examination. Likewise, holders of a Certificate of Successful Completion of Examination (CSCE) for Elements 3B or 4B dated on or after April 17, 1999, will be able to qualify for General or Amateur Extra respectively when the new rules go into effect on April 15, 2000.

The FCC disagreed with the League's suggestion that it undertake a restructuring of operating privileges along with licensing restructuring. "We believe that in light of ongoing discussions concerning implementation of new and more modern communications technologies within the amateur service community, we should accord the amateur service community an opportunity to complete such discussions and possibly reach a consensus regarding implementation of new technologies before we

undertake a comprehensive restructuring of the amateur service operating privileges and frequencies," the FCC said in its Report and Order.

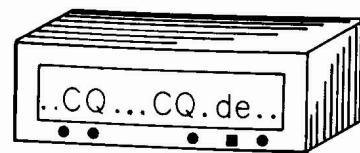
In its amendments to Part 97, the FCC's Report and Order refers to a "Club Station Call Sign Administrator," something that does not exist under the current rules and which was not explained in the R&O itself. An FCC spokesperson said the Commission plans to issue a Public Notice soon to explain the program and to solicit qualified entities to serve as call sign administrators for club station applications.

A copy of the entire Report and Order (FCC 99-412) is available on the ARRL Web site in Adobe PDF format or from the FCC Web site in plain text.

Thanks to Ted, W8KVK for this information.

Long-distance Rescue via Morse Code:

Long-distance rescue via Morse code: Gene Nailon, K5DLE, reports a ham in the Rockies has a fellow amateur in Oklahoma and the Morse code to thank for helping after he fell ill during a QSO December 17. Larry Watson, W5EIU, in Oklahoma City answered a CQ on 3710 kHz from the Wyoming ham. They had been talking for about 15 minutes when the Wyoming op told Watson: "I think I'm having a heart attack, and I can't get to the phone." After that, his transmission broke off, and Watson was unable to raise him further. About the same time, Jim Caldwell, WJ0C, of Waterloo, Iowa, broke in. WJ0C was able to look up the full name and location of the Wyoming ham and relay the information to Watson, who called the police in the Wyoming town to alert them to a potential medical emergency. It turned out they were right. The Wyoming ham whose name and location were unavailable was hospitalized, and the prognosis was said to be good. Watson, first licensed at age 13 in 1954, says this was a first for him. (By the way, both Watson and Nailon belong to Central Oklahoma Chapter 63 QCWA.) Gene Nailon, K5DLE



New DXCC for All

Here's a DXCC for everyone. To qualify, work 100 or more current DXCC entities during the calendar year (UTC), any combination of bands or modes is allowed. Here's the best part: You don't have to submit any QSL cards! Applicants must certify to the authenticity of log extracts submitted, however. The DXCC 2000 Millennium Award period began 0000 UTC on January 1, 2000, and continues through 2359 UTC on December 31, 2000.

The DXCC 2000 Millennium Award is separate and apart from the traditional DXCC awards program. Qualifying for this award does not give credit for traditional DXCC awards, but DXCC rules still apply. The DXCC 2000 Millennium Award certificate is available to ARRL members and nonmembers.

Official application forms may be downloaded at <http://www2.arrl.org/awards/dxcc>. Forms also are available for an SASE (or an SASE plus one IRC for hams outside the US). Send requests to DXCC 2000 Millennium Application, ARRL, 225 Main St, Newington, CT 06111. Completed applications must be received at ARRL HQ within

one year of the close of the DXCC 2000 millennium Award period. Applications should be accompanied by \$10 (US funds) to cover the costs of printing, postage, and handling.

For additional information on these new programs, see "New DXCC Awards for the New Millennium" in December 1999 QST, page 47, or visit <http://www2.arrl.org/awards/dxcc/00rules.html>.

If you have questions about any of these new awards, contact DXCC Manager Bill Moore, NC1L, bmoore@arrl.org.

QUESTION POOL COMMITTEE EYES FEBRUARY 1 RELEASE DATE

A revised Amateur Radio question pool that reflects the April 15, 2000, restructuring rules could be out by February 1. Chairman Ray Adams, W4CPA, of the National Conference of Volunteer Examiner Coordinators' Question Pool Committee says the QPC is in "band aid" mode right now and will try to get "something usable into public domain for all three of the new written pools by February 1 or very shortly thereafter."

Adams says that a technician class syllabus already has been drafted and approved. The various QPC members have been keeping in touch by telephone



and e-mail since the FCC announced the restructuring rules December 30.

"We will go back over the newly configured pools, refining them and updating in a methodical manner with the order to be decided by the NCVEC when next in session," Adams said this week. He said the revised question pools will follow the established format.

After April 15, 2000, the FCC will only issue technician General, and Amateur Extra class licenses. Novice and Advanced licensees will retain current operating privileges and may renew indefinitely. Applicants desiring HF privileges will only have to pass a 5 WPM Morse code test. Current Amateur Radio study materials remain valid at least until the new rules become effective in April.

The new licensing regime has four examination elements: Element 1, the 5 WPM Morse code test; Element 2, a 35-question Technician test; Element 3, a 35-question General test, and Element 4, a 50-question Amateur Extra test.

Frequently Asked Questions on restructuring are available at <http://www2.arrl.org/news/restructuring/faq.html/>. A copy of the entire Report and Order (FCC 99-412) is available at <http://www2>.

arrl.org/announce/regulatory/wt9-8-143ro.pdf or at http://www.fcc.gov/Daily_Releases/Daily_Business/1999/db99123-0/fcc99412.txt.

MISSISSIPPI TELEPHONE RFI CASE TABLED

A Mississippi ham arrested for interfering with his neighbors' telephones is breathing a bit more easily today. ARRL member Bennie Stewart, KJ6TY, of Meridian, was arrested and charged September 10 after a neighbor filed a complaint with the Lauderdale County Justice Court. At the request of Lauderdale County Attorney Robert Compton, the court has ordered the case to be placed in its "inactive files."

Stewart's attorney, Felicia Perkins of Jackson, says the action essentially ends the case against her client. "For all practical purposes, it's in a box somewhere, and it's going to sit there unless Congress changes the laws," she said.

If he'd been convicted, the 61-year-old Stewart who's confined to a wheelchair and says he has limited physical abilities faced a fine of up to \$500, six months in jail, or both.

Perkins had requested, on Stewart's behalf, that the Justice Court throw out the complaint on the grounds that only the FCC had jurisdiction. The court had been considering the motion since last fall. The December 28, 1999, Order sending the criminal action to the inactive files maintained that the Justice Court "does have jurisdiction over the subject criminal matters, but that the state court's jurisdiction has been preempted by federal law". Perkins said the order means the Justice Court cannot exercise any jurisdiction it may have had. "There are no other proceedings against my client," she said.

A ham for 12 years, Stewart had appeared in court October 26 to respond to the complaint, brought under a Mississippi law that makes it illegal to "intentionally obstruct, injure, break or destroy, or in any manner interrupt any telegraph or telephone line or communication thereon between any two points."

Perkins said the Mississippi Justice Court provides a legal forum for resolving disputes, something like small claims court. Justice Court judges do not have to be attorneys, she explained. An appeal to a higher court could have been "very, very expensive" for Stewart, she said. "Sometimes it's best to put things to an end especially when the law is so clear at the Justice Court level."

The case attracted the attention of the Amateur Radio community and has been the subject of Internet news group discussions. Stewart said that before his arrest in the telephone interference case he never was in any kind of legal trouble. A retired photographer, Stewart says he's suffered from muscular dystrophy since he was a teenager. The Mississippi native had moved to California after his retirement, but moved back to Mississippi in 1993.

ENHANCED AMATEUR ENFORCEMENT ENTERS A NEW YEAR

As the new year gets under way, FCC Special Counsel for Amateur Radio Enforcement Riley Hollingsworth hinted he might have to break bad on hard-core offenders this year. He explained that poor or lax FCC enforcement in the past led him to be more forgiving of rulebreakers during his first full calendar year in the enforcement chair. Now, those who persist in operating outside of the stated basis and purpose of Amateur Radio "are beginning to try our patience," he said. "I can't say we're going to be as compassionate this year."

Hollingsworth said he expected to continue his focus on incursions into the 10-meter band by unlicensed operators, especially as propagation gets better, and on equipment certification issues. "We're very concerned about the illegal equipment we see for sale at hamfests," he explained.

Overall, however, malicious interference remains "the basic problem," as he put it. "We're going to use the High-Frequency Direction Finding Center at Laurel [Maryland] more this year" to track down rulebreakers, he said. In addition, Hollingsworth now has enhanced monitoring tools at his Gettysburg office, allowing him access to the HFDF Center's 14 antenna fields plus VHF-UHF "pods" that can be

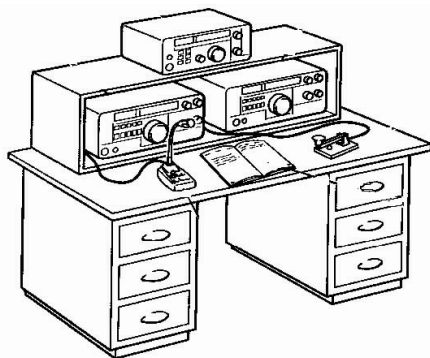
moved around as necessary. "We have dial-in capabilities to all of our antenna fields and to the pods, so we can cover HF, UHF, and VHF anywhere in the country, right here from the Gettysburg office," he explained. "It's a force multiplier, so to speak," Hollingsworth said of the new capabilities.

Hollingsworth also says he's upbeat about the future of ham radio and the FCC's Amateur Radio restructuring plan announced December 30. "I'm really optimistic about it," he said this week. "I think that it's a good idea to simplify things a little bit as far as the number of license classes," he added, referring to the new three-tiered system.

Hollingsworth said he believes Amateur Radio needs more young blood to keep it going in the future, and he thinks the new licensing system that becomes effective April 15 might help in that regard. He declined, however, to comment further on the specific policies and rules the FCC's Wireless Telecommunications Bureau laid down in its Report and Order, saying it would not be appropriate.

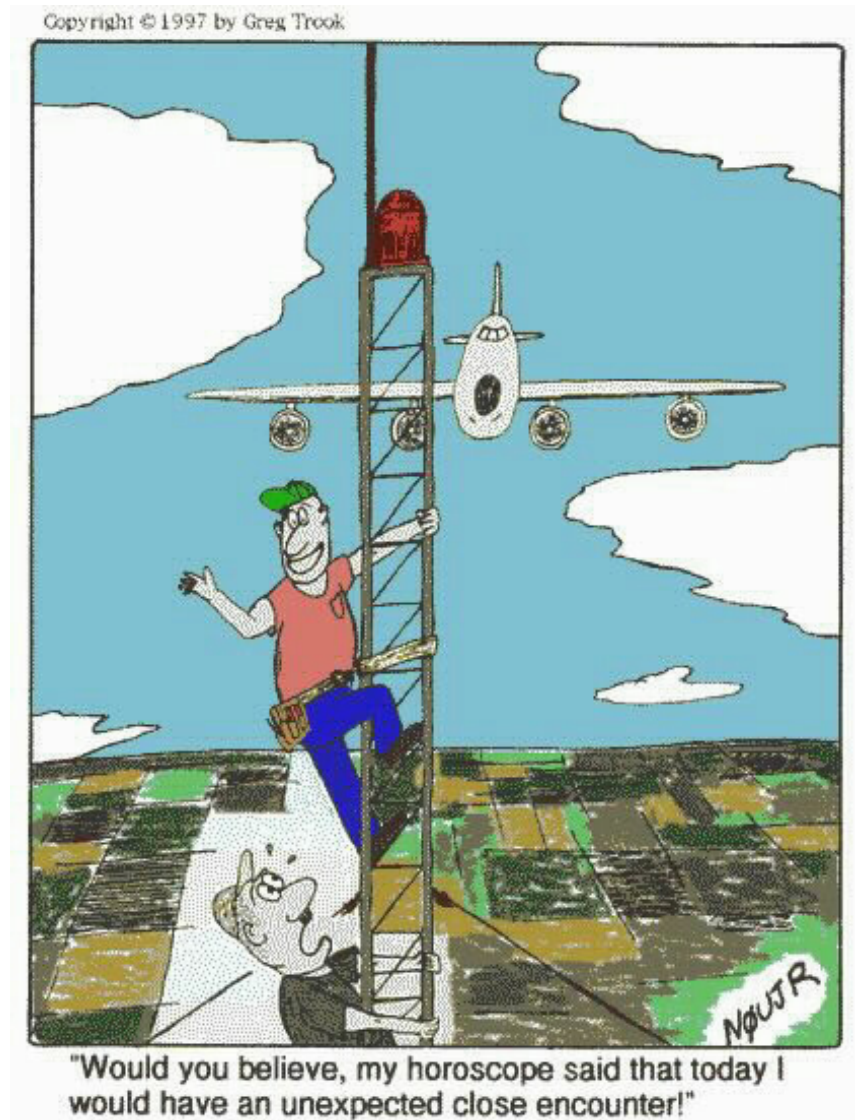
More QSL's

1999 outgoing QSL stats reflect increased activity: In 1999, the ARRL Outgoing QSL Service shipped more than 1.8 million cards to DX stations, up from nearly 1.6 million in 1998. The final tally was 1,853,870, according to Martin Cook, N1FOC, who manages the



Service at ARRL HQ. He says that works out to approximately 5.8 tons of cards. The Service serves approximately 260 DXCC countries, including nearly every active country. Cards are forwarded from the ARRL Outgoing Service to a counterpart bureau in each of the respective countries. ARRL members can ship cards to DX bureaus for \$6 a pound (or \$1 for 10 or fewer cards; \$2 for 11 to 20 cards; \$3 for 21 to 30 cards). For more information on the ARRL Outgoing QSL Service, contact Cook at n1foc@arrl.org.

All articles via ARRL



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