



Di-Dah-Dit

Official Newsletter of the Parkersburg Radio Klub
P. O. Box 2112, Parkersburg, WV 26101

FCC REORGANIZATION COULD MEAN BETTER HAM ENFORCEMENT

Congressional oversight committees this week approved funding to create two new FCC bureaus--Enforcement and Public Information, and Legal Adviser for Enforcement Riley Hollingsworth, K4ZDH, says Amateur Radio enforcement could improve under the new regime.

Earlier this year, FCC Chairman William Kennard proposed the creation of the new bureaus as part of his "A New FCC for the 21st Century" initiative. Kennard told an audience at Georgetown University Law Center October 5 that the two new bureaus "will go into operation in the very near future."

Amateur Radio enforcement--now under Hollingsworth in the Compliance and Information Bureau--will be consolidated under the new Enforcement Bureau. Heading the Enforcement Bureau will be FCC Deputy General Counsel David Solomon. Hollingsworth will get a new title out of the deal. Once the new bureau is established--probably by month's end--he'll become Special Counsel for Amateur Radio Enforcement. Current Compliance and Information Bureau Chief Richard Lee has been tapped to head the new Public Information Bureau.

Hollingsworth reiterated that he anticipates no changes in either the direction or momentum of amateur enforcement under the new Enforcement Bureau regime. "If anything, it will enhance it," he said Wednesday, adding that he hopes to up the percentage of time he's able to devote to amateur enforcement

as a result of the reorganization. Hollingsworth's current duties also include Land Mobile Service enforcement.

Hollingsworth also says he hopes to soon hand off management of the FCC National Call Center. In July, Hollingsworth was designated to temporarily take over the Call Center (888-CALL FCC) at the Commission's Gettysburg office while NCC Director Cynthia Jeffries was detailed to other duties involving the Y2K issue. ARRL LETTER

RICKY TO THE RESCUE!

Ricky Rothbart, KF6VSH, with his H-T and ARRL commendation. [George Rothbart, KF6VSG]

A 10-year-old California ham recently used ham radio to help save the life of an injured fellow amateur. As a result, Ricky Rothbart, KF6VSH, of San Rafael, California--who only got his Technician ticket in April--received a Public Service commendation from the ARRL. He also gained a new appreciation of Amateur Radio's emergency service potential.

On August 28, Ricky was in the family car heading home from a trip to LA. "Ricky was in the back seat absorbed in monitoring his favorite frequencies on his H-T," his dad, George Rothbart, KF6VSG, relates. "At about 6:10 PM, he suddenly said, 'Hey Dad, there's a guy on the radio who is bleeding all over the place and needs help!'"

It turned out the other ham had sliced his arm with plate glass and was bleeding profusely and asking on-the-air for medical help. The injured ham--Mike Lewis, KF6YDN--apparently was mobile in a remote area of Pittsburg, California, at the time and his cell phone was not working.

Ricky immediately replied, identifying himself and requesting the man's location and additional details. George Rothbart got on his cell phone, contacted a family member as Lewis had requested, then dialed 911. With Ricky working the emergency on his H-T--the Rothbarts were able to give the 911 dispatcher all the necessary information.

"By the time the emergency was over, three other hams had joined us on the frequency," George Rothbart said, "but it was Ricky that got the vital information to relay it to me in the front seat with the cell phone."

The Rothbarts never got to meet Lewis face-to-face. Attempts to contact Lewis by telephone were unsuccessful.

George Rothbart says that when he and his son were studying for their exams earlier this year, he'd told Ricky that someday he might be able to use his new skills to save property or life. While he hardly thought it possible then, he's now a firm believer. "I found that ham radio still works great, and through ham radio a 10-year old can make a difference," he said. Both George and Ricky Rothbart are ARRL members. ARRL LETTER

TV ROLE

Ham radio may have TV role: Amateur Radio may play a role in NBC's new show Third Watch, which premiered September 23 (the show's regular time slot will be on Sundays at 8 PM Eastern). Several months ago, ARRL Media Relations Manager Jennifer Hagy, N1TDY, was contacted by a production company staff member who wanted information on ham radio. At the time, she said that one of the main Third Watch characters would also be an Amateur Radio operator. No word on how large a role ham radio might have.

HEADINGS

Handy beam headings from the Web: Sometimes it's difficult and time consuming to calculate beam headings when working stations in the Continental US and Caribbean. Mark Downing, WM7D, offers a service on his WM7D.net site at <http://www.wm7d.net/azproj.shtml> that, when you enter your coordinates, will draw a map centered on your QTH and superimpose a compass rose on it. Print the map on any printer--a color printer is best--and you're all set. The ARRL Letter

Spectrum Bill

Spectrum bill tops 100 cosponsors: ARRL Legislative and Public Affairs Manager Steve Mansfield, N1MZA, reports that more than 100 Members of Congress have agreed to be cosponsors for HR-783, the Amateur Radio Spectrum Protection Act. Four more signed aboard following the August recess, raising the total number of cosponsors to 106.

NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE BILL CREATES STORM CLOUD

A provision in a bill authorizing appropriations for the National Weather Service, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and other government weather services has raised fears that Amateur Radio-related activities such as SKYWARN may be endangered. The provision, Section 3(c) entitled "Competition with Private Sector", also has triggered concern on the part of some that the bill could reduce the government's ability to monitor and issue severe weather warnings. Some hams already have contacted their Senators requesting them to oppose the measure, HR-1553.

Section 3(c) says the NWS "shall not provide, or assist other entities to provide, a service if that service is currently provided or can be provided by commercial enterprise." There would be exceptions if the private sector were unwilling or unable to provide the service or if the service provides "vital weather warnings and forecasts for the protection of lives and property of the general public."

The provision is being championed by commercial weather services that provide fee-based "cloudy and warmer"-style and so-called "value-added" weather forecasts, primarily to commercial broadcasters. Some believe the bill could keep the NWS from providing needed weather information, including storm watches and warnings, storm tracking information, and other weather-related data to ARES/RACES organizations or to emergency management officials.

ARRL Legislative and Public Affairs Manager Steve Mansfield, N1MZA, says HR 1553, "generally can be construed as supporting the

National Weather Service's role in the dissemination of severe weather warnings, because it specifically designates the service as the sole issuer of severe weather warnings." Mansfield notes, however, that NWS and NOAA authorizing legislation hasn't passed the Congress for six years.

Beyond that, the "private sector" provision in Section 3(c) has drawn fire from the White House, which has requested its removal. A Statement of Administration Policy notes that the provision "could create confusion about who is responsible for specific marine and aviation weather forecasts." Mansfield says that even if the bill does make it through Congress intact, he does not believe it will harm Amateur Radio's SKYWARN relationship with NWS.

HR 1553 has passed the House. Action is pending in the Senate Commerce, Science and Technology Committee, chaired by Sen John McCain. ARRL LETTER

Free logger:

At a price all hams will love, Bob Furzer, K4CY, has made his logging software--appropriately dubbed Logger--available free to the general amateur population. It's a Windows 95/98-based program, and it supports full ADIF imports and exports. It also includes PSK-31 software. Version 6.07 now is available. To obtain a copy, visit <http://www.guam.net/pub/midxa> and click on "Logger" on the main page. Jim Kehler, KH2D, has offered to assist Logger users in converting their old logs into ADIF format. Contact him at kh2d@kuentos.guam.net. ARRL LETTER

NO WORD YET ON AMATEUR RESTRUCTURING

An FCC staff member says the Commission staff is "diligently working" towards getting a Report and Order on Amateur Radio license restructuring out the door. But beyond that, the FCC staffer--who did not want to be identified by name--said it was impossible to predict when that would happen. Rumors aside, the FCC official said that Commission rules prevent "revealing any information about internal thinking or scheduling" on the restructuring question.

The proceeding--known formally as the 1998 Biennial Regulatory Review of Part 97 (WT Docket 98-143)--must jump through a number of hoops within the FCC bureaucracy. The FCC's move last spring into consolidated offices at The Portals also disrupted routine work flow.

A year ago, the FCC proposed phasing out the Novice and Technician Plus licenses, leaving just four amateur license classes in place--Technician, General, Advanced, and Extra. The Commission also asked the amateur community to express its opinions on Morse code requirements, but offered no specific recommendations of its own.

The previous month, the ARRL Board of Directors issued its own plan to restyle Amateur Radio. Among other details, the ARRL plan also called for four license classes and for "refarming" Novice/Tech Plus subbands to provide additional spectrum for higher-class operators. Under the League plan, the Technician license would remain unchanged, and the General would become the entry-level ticket for those interested in HF operation. The ARRL proposed Morse code requirements of 5 WPM for General and 12 WPM for Advanced and Extra class.

"We are simply in that period of time when no information is available," the FCC staff member said. "This is a normal part of the Commission's quasi-judicial decision-making process and a

necessary part of being objective and fair to all."

The FCC staff member said that although comments and reply comments are in--some 2200 comments were filed in the proceeding, mostly by individual amateurs--more late-filed ones continue to turn up. He said the FCC staff "is working on resolving this docket" along with its other tasks.

Before the long-awaited Report and Order sees the light of day, the Wireless Bureau staff first must digest the comments. Then, the staff will circulate its recommendations to the Commissioners. The Commissioners and their staff will mull the WTB input and accept a plan that quite likely represents a compromise.

The ultimate FCC decision will come either at the Commission's monthly meeting or it will be handled "on circulation"--outside of an actual meeting. A Public Notice will be issued, and the actual Report and Order will follow. The bottom line is that Amateur Radio operators will have to wait a few weeks or a few months longer before the restructuring issue is resolved.

"No one wants this proceeding decided more than we do," the FCC staff member concluded. To which most hams would shout a resounding "Amen!" ARRL LETTER

FREE TESTING

QRZ announces on-line practice exams: QRZ has announced that free, online practice amateur exams for all license classes now are available at <http://www.qrz.com>. The exams include instant scoring and all images and diagrams from current VEC question pools.--Fred Lloyd, AA7BQ

FCC SETS SIGHTS ON BEEFED-UP 10-METER ENFORCEMENT

The FCC's Legal Adviser for Enforcement Riley Hollingsworth says hams can expect more rigorous enforcement on 10 meter issues next year. Over the Labor Day weekend, Hollingsworth told visitors to the Shelby Hamfest in North Carolina that the next area of enforcement would be the encroachment of unlicensed individuals into the 10-meter band and a crackdown on illegal RF amplifiers. His announcement drew loud applause from the Shelby crowd. Hollingsworth elaborated on the comments this week in an interview concerning this and other enforcement issues.

"We're coming on to ten months of rejuvenated amateur enforcement now, and two issues are clear--two areas we need to really crank up on next year," Hollingsworth said. "One is the incursion into 10 meters by unlicensed operators--CBers and so forth. The other is sales of illegal equipment on the Internet and at hamfests."

At Shelby, Hollingsworth told the crowd that he'd spotted more illegal equipment at Shelby that he'd seen last May at the Dayton Hamvention. At the Hamvention, FCC Field Office personnel from Detroit warned several vendors about potential violations involving RF amplifiers.

The Shelby Hamfest, held at the Cleveland County Fairgrounds, is best known for its flea market, not for its forums, but Hollingsworth still managed to draw a standing-room-only crowd for his Sunday morning presentation. After addressing the overflow forum audience, Shelby Hamfest organizers hastily scheduled a second forum and rearranged the room to gain more seating. Hollingsworth was

scheduled to appear at the Virginia State Convention in Virginia Beach September 18-19.

Hollingsworth says his recent enforcement initiative aimed at call sign hoarders has met with some success. "I appreciate the people who have come in on their own and either turned in or trimmed down the number of club call signs that they had," he said this week. During a two-week period in late August, Hollingsworth said 43 call signs voluntarily were turned back to the FCC without any prompting.

Hollingsworth says he's received replies from all of the letters the FCC has sent to multiple call sign holders, including members of the Tucker family in La Mirada, California. On June 30, the FCC requested that family patriarch Roy T. Tucker, N6TK, and other licensees in the Tucker family provide justification in writing for the two dozen or so club call signs held by various family members.

"I have about a half a dozen cases in the hopper," Hollingsworth said of the call sign inquiries initiative, but added that he's deferring judgment on whether the message has gotten across to the amateur community. "I would like to think so," he said, "but I won't know until I've seen these responses."

His stack includes replies from the Tucker family, who have hired an attorney to handle the FCC inquiry.

Hollingsworth says he's optimistic that an anticipated FCC internal reorganization that will create a new Enforcement Bureau will occur no later than

the end of the year but could be as early as October 1--the start of the new federal fiscal year. Hollingsworth has assured that the change will have no effect on Amateur Radio enforcement efforts.--John Kanode, N4MM, provided some information for this report ARRL LETTER

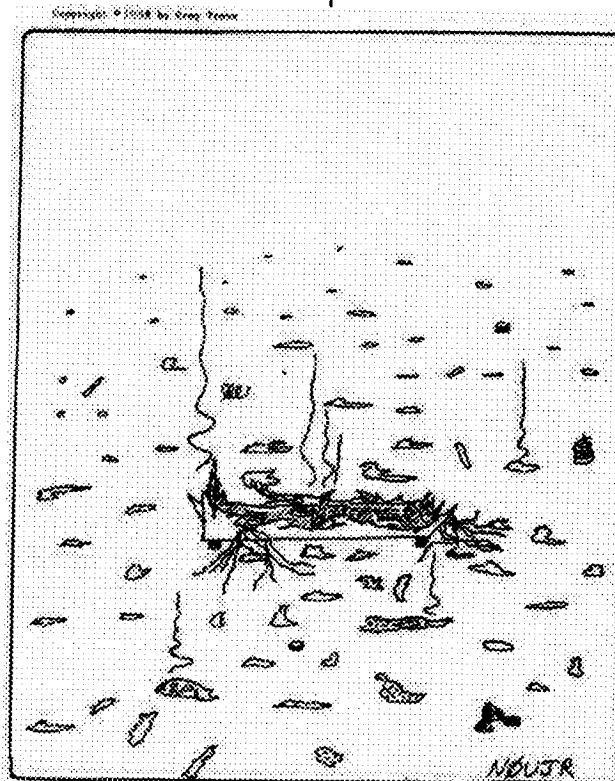


Fig. 3-2: Transceiver exploded view.

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