



NEWS

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See MCI v. FCC, 515 F 2d 385 (D.C. Circ 1974).

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FCC MODIFIES AMATEUR RADIO SERVICE RULES, ELIMINATING MORSE CODE EXAM REQUIREMENTS AND ADDRESSING ARRL PETITION FOR RECONSIDERATION

Washington, D.C. – Today, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) adopted a Report and Order and Order on Reconsideration (Order) that modifies the rules for the Amateur Radio Service by revising the examination requirements for obtaining a General Class or Amateur Extra Class amateur radio operator license and revising the operating privileges for Technician Class licensees. In addition, the Order resolves a petition filed by the American Radio Relay League, Inc. (ARRL) for partial reconsideration of an FCC Order on amateur service rules released on October 10, 2006.

The current amateur service operator license structure contains three classes of amateur radio operator licenses: Technician Class, General Class, and Amateur Extra Class. General Class and Amateur Extra Class licensees are permitted to operate in Amateur bands below 30 MHz, while the introductory Technician Class licensees are only permitted to operate in bands above 30 MHz. Prior to today's action, the FCC, in accordance with international radio regulations, required applicants for General Class and Amateur Extra Class operator licenses to pass a five words-per-minute Morse code examination. Today's Order eliminates that requirement for General and Amateur Extra licensees. This change reflects revisions to international radio regulations made at the International Telecommunication Union's 2003 World Radio Conference (WRC-03), which authorized each country to determine whether to require that individuals demonstrate Morse code proficiency in order to qualify for an amateur radio license with transmitting privileges on frequencies below 30 MHz. This change eliminates an unnecessary regulatory burden that may discourage current amateur radio operators from advancing their skills and participating more fully in the benefits of amateur radio.

Today's Order also revises the operating privileges for Technician Class licensees by eliminating a disparity in the operating privileges for the Technician Class and Technician Plus Class licensees. Technician Class licensees are authorized operating privileges on all amateur frequencies above 30 MHz. The Technician Plus Class license, which is an operator license class that existed prior the FCC's simplification of the amateur license structure in 1999 and was grandfathered after that time, authorized operating privileges on all amateur frequencies above 30 MHz, as well as frequency segments in four HF bands (below 30 MHz) after the successful completion of a Morse code examination. With today's elimination of the Morse code exam requirements, the FCC concluded that the disparity between the operating privileges of Technician Class licensees and Technician Plus Class licensees should not be retained.

Therefore, the FCC, in today's action, afforded Technician and Technician Plus licensees identical operating privileges.

Finally, today's Order resolved a petition filed by the ARRL for partial reconsideration of an FCC Order released on October 10, 2006 (FCC 06-149). In this Order, the FCC authorized amateur stations to transmit voice communications on additional frequencies in certain amateur service bands, including the 75 meter (m) band, which is authorized only for certain wideband voice and image communications. The ARRL argued that the 75 m band should not have been expanded below 3635 kHz, in order to protect automatically controlled digital stations operating in the 3620-3635 kHz portion of the 80 m band. The FCC concluded that these stations can be protected by providing alternate spectrum in the 3585-3600 kHz frequency segment.

Action by the Commission on December 15, 2006, by Report and Order and Order on Reconsideration. Chairman Martin and Commissioners Copps, Adelstein, Tate, and McDowell.

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WT Docket Nos. 04-140 and 05-235.

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