



The Short Circuit

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FCC Decisions Draw Comments

By Larry Ledlow, Jr. N1TX

The Federal Communications Commission surprised the amateur community last December with a stunning series of decisions re-aligning frequency allocations and doing away with Morse code requirements for any US license class. In the midst of a long, bitter fight against the Commission over Broadband Over Power Line (BPL), the FCC appeared to accede to a number of pending requests for rule changes, including many from the ARRL. None had anything to do with BPL.

I have a very strong opinion on this latest development: The FCC is trying to buy us off their BPL shenanigans. Trust me. I love CW, and I have never been able to conjure a rational argument for CW requirements. I am happy to see them go. I think there are a lot of us out there with similar thinking. Meanwhile, I will continue to practice the art of CW as will millions worldwide for another 50 or so years.

BPL is far from resolved, and the FCC has been duplicitous in promoting an industry whose very capabilities are limited yet they have enormous potential to interfere with properly licensed, law-abiding users of the valuable radio spectrum. I personally think these rules revisions and a

"Christmas gift" of no-code is a red herring to buy our good will. These revisions are long overdue.

I also have a sense there will be considerable pressure on some of our under-used frequencies like 3 and 5 GHz. I predict they will make a commercial grab for our 3 and 5 GHz allocations. We will have to keep our collective eye on the ball and not be swept away with over-joyous hearts.

Obviously, I am not the only one who reacted to the FCC announcements. Ed Trump AL7N is a major supporter of code for practical reasons. "My personal opinion on the dropping of the code 'test' was that the 'real' Morse Code testing ceased when the FCC dropped the 13 and 20 WPM SENDING AND RECEIVING requirement from amateur examinations.

"Five WPM is no proficiency at all and such speed is useless for any kind of meaningful efficient communication for any real purpose, so in effect, the amateur community has been doing without 'Morse code testing' for a long time.

"Only after some proficiency is gained in communicating with Morse with other operators can one say he or she has really 'learned' Morse. And if anyone gets to this point in using it as a 'language' they will never

really forget it either.

"All you really need to communicate by RADIO is a simple transceiver and antenna, a Morse key, some headphones, your ears and a pencil and paper.....Simple can still be better, or even best.

"No computers, printers, proprietary programs, modems or any of that stuff is really necessary when it comes right down to getting the job done.

"CW still is a viable and useful

**NEW EXAM
COORDINATOR
NEEDED SEE
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Figure 1.

mode (literally useable with anything you can turn on and off) and as such is a comfortable communications tool for those who still choose to use it.

"I count myself among those operators."

Dick Hammonds KL7B wrote, "I couldn't agree more with Ed. That is some Christmas

(Continued on page 2)



(FCC—Continued from page 1)

'gift' the FCC handed us. If, as Larry says, the FCC is trying to 'buy our goodwill'....it ain't working, FCC!

"I love CW. Thirty meters is my favorite band. I also play with just about all the digital modes. Neat stuff!

"But the CW is what set us apart. Sure it was tough, but by god you were proud to have accomplished it!

"Thanks for nothing FCC!"

Said Jim Movius KL7JM: "I enjoy CW and will continue to enjoy it. Knowing the code with one word per minute proficiency is worth while. Being able to key the PTT switch of a HT at 1 wpm to send an emergency message could be a life saver.

"Five wpm proficiency can be reached by 99+% of the population in a few hours of practice. We now hear a lot of "gotta copy on ya" and "that's a big 10-4 good buddy" type language on the air. Stand by for more."

"I'm still a relatively new ham and was licensed under the 5 wpm rule. The truth is, that if I had been required to do 13 wpm I'd be a lot better at CW now," wrote Dave Frederick KL1KG, a General class.

Al Webber KL7AG had some words of support for the elimination of code testing. "It is long overdue. There would be more people using the mode IMO if it hadn't been used as a stick instead of a carrot."

Paul Young NL7V is a skilled DXer and contester. He opined, "I don't operate much

CW but have always felt that it was part of obtaining an amateur radio license. I try to keep my speed up to 20 wpm as that is a good speed to copy and it was the speed required to master in order to obtain the Extra Class License.

"When the FCC reduced the code requirements to 5 WPM, I felt it was just a matter of time until the code would be dropped. As some other countries had done. Now the new hams will not know how much fun it was to make your first 100 CW contacts on equipment you built using a wire antenna.

"I hope ham radio does not become forgotten in the future as technology changes."

Kevin Abnett NL7WO offered these interesting perspectives. "I fail to understand why the people who are most opposed to BPL are the CW operators. When BPL comes on line, voice communications will be significantly impacted, and the CW operators will still be able to communicate. BPL may be the best thing to ever happen to Morse code.

"The FCC should have dropped the code requirement when microphones became practical, about 50 years ago. In the future, code (or something similar) will come back into usage again. HF spectrum is just too valuable. Radios are able to send/receive code automatically. There is no reason for human beings to spend months of time learning to do the same thing as a \$5 chip."

Wayne Santos N1CKM "would have hoped that they kept the 5 WPM for the Extra

Class license only - keeps something in the challenge of getting that Terminal license."

One immediate impact the FCC ruling has had is adding considerable confusion to the license examining process.

Benny NL7XH helps to clarify: "There appears to be some confusion on the VE exams that we hold. Here is the information that I have and it comes straight from Jim Wiley. He is the chairman of the ARRL VE testing program for the entire United States.

"The current exams are NO LONGER any good. They have to be changed as there are about 11 questions that pertain to frequency usage that have been upgraded or changed by FCC. These questions have to be addressed in the tests.

"There ARE NO TEST being give in the United States until these questions are taken care of.

"It is expected that the new exam will be ready for February exams. We will keep you posted as to when I receive the new exams.

"As for the July reference that was mentioned there will be changes in the General requirement when ARRL adopts the FCC's new policy on no code requirements for Ham radio.

"These will not occur until July 1 as far as I know. It would be expected that the exams will also change again in July but I have no direct input on this.

"All this was clearly stated in the last issue of *QST* magazine. If you have questions pertaining to the exams please give me a call: 479-5203." #



Ham Test Coordinator Needed

By **Benny Benevento**
NL7XH

It is time for someone in the club to step up and take over the VE examiner coordinator position here in Fairbanks.

I have been doing this for around 15 years and have been looking for someone to take over for the past 4 years.

I am now near 72 years old and have many other interests and this is not high on my priority list.

The job consists of the following:

1. Schedule the Noel Wein Library for the exams (this is already done for this year)

2. Receive the test packages from Anchorage each month and schedule three VE examiners.

3. Collect the paper work and enter it in a batch format (the folks in Anchorage will supply the program) to send to FCC.

4. Send the exam packages back to Anchorage after the session is completed.

There is much enjoyment watching the folks as they pass the exams.

I will help anyone that needs assistance to get them on line.

With my age, and other interests I am going to pass the torch on ASAP. #

On-Line Exam Prep

www.aa9pw.com/radio

www.w5yi.org

www.qrz.com/testing.html

www.eham.net/exams/

www.hamtestonline.com

www.hamuniversity.com

www.hamuniverse.com

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many.googlepages.com/home

www.hamquick.com

www.w8mhb.com

www.qrz.com/download/exams/

www.nu-ware.com

www.hamradio-online.com

www.ac6v.com/mail.htm

NEWS FLASH
Bill KC8MVW has
agreed to
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exams
Kc8mvw@arrl.net

Rep Supports Ham BPL Fight

ARRL, NEWINGTON, CT, Jan 18, 2007 -- US Rep Mike Ross, WD5DVR (D-AR), has introduced a bill in the 110th Congress calling on the FCC to study the interference potential of broadband over power line (BPL) technology and report its findings back to Congress. One of two radio amateurs in the House, Ross submitted the "Emergency Amateur Radio Interference Protection Act of 2007" (HR 462) on January 12. The bill's official text became available today. ARRL President Joel Harrison, W5ZN, says the League shares Ross's concern about interference to emergency communication networks.

"We wholly support his effort to ensure that public safety remains a priority over flawed political agendas regarding communication technology," Harrison commented.

The bill calls for the FCC to conduct "a comprehensive BPL service study leading to improved rules to prevent interference." If the measure is adopted by both houses of Congress and signed by the president, the FCC would have to undertake a study of BPL's interference potential within 90 days of enactment and report to the House Committee on Energy and Commerce and the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transpor-

tation.

In 2005, Ross introduced a non-binding House resolution, HRes 230, in the 109th Congress that would have had the FCC conduct "a full and complete analysis" of radio interference from BPL with an eye toward revising the FCC rules that govern BPL to minimize the potential of harmful interference. It was unsuccessful.

HR 462 would require the Commission to address several technical facets, including variations in BPL emission field strength with distance from power lines and a technical justification for using a particular distance extrapolation factor when making measurements. #





AARC Members Pitch to Scouts

Club vice president Ron Brooks WL7CPS arranged for AARC hams to make several brief presentations on the hobby to Boy Scout Troop 1 and visiting Cub Scouts. Topics included licensing, satellites, contesting and awards, public service, and use of digital modes for emergencies. The Scouts' new meeting place is the former Alaska Railroad depot downtown.



AMSAT Eagle Finds New Nest

AMSAT, Silver Spring, MD. The most ambitious project sponsored by US satellite enthusiasts, AMSAT OSCAR - Eagle, found a crucial home last November. The spacecraft is the next generation high earth orbit satellite under construction now by AMSAT North America. Eagle will provide many services and reliable communications on bands previously not available, and will build upon technology developed by AMSAT-NA for use in P3E. Eagle is currently in the development stage, though major components are finished (and installed on P3E) and other components such as the software defined transponder have been demonstrated.

AMSAT-NA has accepted an offer to co-locate its Satellite Integration Lab with the Hawk Institute for Space Sciences (HISS), a division of the Maryland Hawk Corporation which is a 501(c)(3) non-profit educational organization affiliated with the University of Maryland Eastern Shore (UMES). The HISS facilities, currently under construction, are in the Mid-Atlantic Institute for Space and Technology (MIST) building in Pocomoke City, Maryland, on the Maryland Eastern Shore of the Chesapeake Bay. Maryland Hawk is a member of MIST. HISS is a division/unit of Maryland Hawk. Pocomoke City is about a 3-hour drive southeast of the Baltimore-Washington International airport.

AMSAT-NA has been actively

searching for a suitable location for the past two years as AMSAT's most recent lab at the municipal airport in Orlando, Florida, was condemned due to damage by Hurricane Charley on August 13, 2004. With the unanimous approval of the AMSAT-NA Board of Directors, AMSAT-NA has executed two Memoranda of Understanding, one with the University of Maryland Eastern Shore and the other with Maryland Hawk Corporation, formalizing the relationship. These MOUs give AMSAT-NA essentially no-cost access to the HISS facility in return for sharing its equipment and ideas with HISS. In addition, the agreement with UMES calls for AMSAT-NA to work collaboratively with UMES to identify opportunities to work together on satellite and related technology projects as well as to work with their students and faculty to enhance hands-on studies and dissertation research. The possibility also exists for AMSAT-NA scientists and engineers to receive Adjunct status at the UMES.

AMSAT's VP for Engineering, Bob McGwier N4HY, commented "I consider these happenings to be a serious beginning of the activities towards a real spacecraft." AMSAT's lead mechanical engineer, Bob Davis KF4KSS, is also an employee of HISS, resulting in AMSAT having a representative on site at all times. Bob Davis was AMSAT's mechanical design expert in the Or-

lando lab during the AO-40 satellite campaign.

HISS is currently constructing the interior walls for their new 8,000 square foot facility. It is being designed around AMSAT's dual clean room, which was used for AO-40 and is in storage at Florida Space Institute. AMSAT will move the clean room and the parts and equipment currently in storage in the Orlando area to the new lab in the next few months. The facility will also include adequate meeting and office space for visiting AMSAT personnel. The agreement with HISS also provides AMSAT limited access to NASA Wallops Flight Facility with its environmental testing, machine shop, rocket manufacturing and launch facilities.

AMSAT members Bob Davis KF4KSS, Rick Hambly W2GPS, Tom Clark K3IO, Jim Sanford WB4GCS and Bob McGwier N4HY have worked very hard on this project. AMSAT members are encouraged to volunteer to work in the new lab, come by and visit (call first), and donate to the P3E and Eagle satellite funds.

Satellites are very expensive to build and to launch. Most funds for this and other AMSAT efforts are donations. Those of you able to contribute to the Eagle project or other work, please contact them at the web site www.amsat.org or call toll free 888-322-6728. #

Eagle will provide many services and reliable communications on bands previously not available...



The \$140M Disconnect in NY City



One of the major lessons learned since the terror attacks in New York in September 2001 was that emergency services had difficulty communicating with each other. The problem is acknowledged to be nationwide. Is it just a matter of money to solve the problem? Perhaps not.

Nearly five years before 9/11, the New York City Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) began working to correct a major hindrance to police work in the subway system: a radio network that keeps transit officers underground from talking with officers patrolling the streets above. Subway radio systems operate on VHF, while New York's finest above ground use a UHF system.

After spending \$140 million, the authority completed the installation of the system city-wide last fall, but it has not been turned on. This is because the new system suffers by widespread interference that garbles communication and creates areas where radios cannot receive properly.

Fixing the problem may require replacing new equipment with more advanced components at a cost of up to \$20 million more. If all goes well and disputes over which agency will pay for the changes can be resolved, the police say the full system could be turned on next year, some four years behind schedule.



The goal is to allow members of the same agency to communicate with each other, whether dealing with a street crime gone underground or something far more catastrophic, like an accident or terrorist attack in the subway.

Fixing the interference is not the only problem. The authority's new system uses a network of underground antenna cable that was already in place in the tunnels. But the authority has discovered that 72 miles of cable - one-fifth of the system - was so old and deteriorated it could not adequately carry the signal.

The authority plans to replace the cable over the next several years at an additional cost of \$36 million. When all of the fixes are made, the project will eventually have cost about \$210 million, far more than its original budget of \$115 million.

Police officers patrolling the subways have long used a VHF radio system that is separate from the UHF system used by officers working aboveground.

The subway is a technically difficult environment for radio operations, and officials with both agencies said they could not have anticipated the severity of the problems. That applies in particular to the interference, which occurs when signals aboveground and below it mix as they pass through station entrances and gratings in the street, producing a buzz on radios that can range from a

slight annoyance to a transmission killer.

According to RCC Consultants, the company charged with early design work, radio networks in other subway systems also had to cope with interference, but perhaps not to the same degree.

Even as the equipment was being produced, however, the MTA's engineers were searching for ways to modify the system to reduce the interference. As part of that effort, they began looking at digital components that were only then being developed and had not been available when the system was designed.

In mid-2004, the Police Department informed the transportation authority that it would not use the radio system unless the interference was eliminated, but a year later, officials at the authority made a concerted push to get the department to see things their way.

While agreeing that the interference needed to be corrected, transit officials said the radio system could be put into use while a solution was developed.

While the police were intended as the radio system's primary user, it was also designed to be used by the Fire Department, but on a different frequency. Even after upgrade They still won't be able to talk with the police. ☺

From the News Wire

MIKE CAUGHRAN, KL7R, SK (ARRL, Feb 2, 2007) -- Well-known low-power (QRP) and homebrewing enthusiast Michael S. "Mike" Caughran, KL7R, of Juneau, Alaska, died January 22 of injuries suffered in an automobile accident in Hawaii. He was 51. Caughran may be best known as one-half of the team -- with Bill Meara, N2CQR/M0HBR -- that created and produced the weekly SolderSmoke podcast. "I think people were drawn in by Mike's friendly voice and manner," Meara commented on a memorial page for KL7R.

"Even if they weren't necessarily interested in the technical stuff we were talking to, they liked listening to Mike." A member of ARRL and the Juneau Amateur Radio Club, Caughran also wrote articles for the Michigan QRP Club's T5W newsletter and he was an active ham radio contester.

"Mike was one of those people who you instantly like because of his honest, straightforward and humble way of talking and expressing ideas," said Mike Hall, WB8ICN, who edits T5W. "His co-hosting of SolderSmoke provided me hours and hours of enjoyment while I drove or flew all over the East Coast doing my job. His Web site and his comments on the Sunday night QRP Conference on EchoLink has brought me back to more homebrewing projects and experimentation than ever before."

Caughran was an IT professional with the State of Alaska. Survivors include his wife and son.

PROPOSED CELLPHONE LAW COULD END AR MOBILE OPERATIONS IN NM (K5FSB via ARN) A proposed new driving law aimed primarily at banning all cellphone use while a vehicle is in motion could also mean an end to ham radio mobile operation in New Mexico. This, because it prohibits the use of any and all two-way mobile communication devices while operating a motor vehicle, even if the communications device can be operated hands free.

Introduced to the legislature by Representative Antonio Lujan, the law would define a mobile communication device as being a cellular telephone or any other device that enables a person to transmit to and receive signals from another person or device. The only people excepted from the ban are those reporting an emergency situation, or commercially in the performance of ones job duties.

The proposed law is very narrow in defining an emergency. It calls it a situation in which a person has reason to fear for his or her life or safety or believes that a criminal act may be perpetrated against that person or another. The also includes reporting a fire, a traffic accident in which one or more injuries are apparent, a serious

road

hazard, a medical or hazardous materials emergency or a person who is driving in a reckless, careless or otherwise unsafe manner.

So far, there is no exemption for radio amateurs, even during times of emergency communications training exercises. A first time conviction of using a two-way device while in motion in New Mexico would bring with it a \$30 fine.

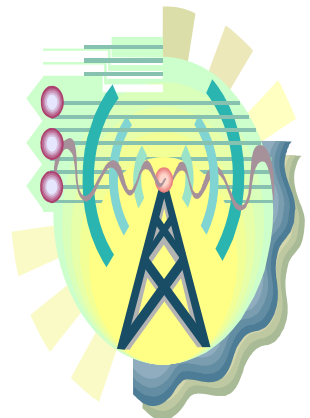
WIKIPEDIA HAM LIST NEEDS UPDATE Your help is needed to save a very valuable reference source on Wikipedia.com. The page is the Amateur Radio organizations list included in the online open source encyclopedia.

It seems that the page has been marked for possible deletion because there's been little added to it in some time. In order to save it, you need to go to the page and using the Wikipedia edit tools add your radio clubs listing to it.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_amateur_radio_organizations#United_States is the URL.

PCSAT-1 DIGIPEATER OFF TILL MARCH Bob Bruninga, WB4APR, reports the end of the P C SAT One packet digipeater operations for the time being. This, as the most recent full sun period for the bird comes to a conclusion. This is a battery-saving step to extend their lives. The spacecraft is heavily used.

"Mike was one of those people who you instantly like..."



Arctic Amateur Radio Club

Membership \$20 individual, \$25 family. Send checks to
AARC

PO Box 81804

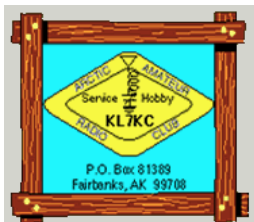
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FROM THE BOARD:

The monthly board meetings are **NO LONGER** held at Trio Hawaiian Grill. A more permanent venue will be announced soon. Contact a board member for information. First Thursday after general membership meetings, 7 PM.

Herb Walls KL7JLF SK

Mark Griggs KB8YMN of the SW Columbus Ham Radio Club relayed a message from the family of Herb Walls KL7JLF that he has passed away. Herb went Silent Key in Columbus, Ohio, on January 31, 2006, after a battle with prostate cancer. The Fairbanksan was to be buried in Columbus on Saturday, February 3rd.

Herb was a World War II veteran of the US Army. During that service he was awarded five battle stars, a bronze star, and a purple heart.

He is survived by 4 brothers and 4 sisters. To send condolences, you may contact Herb's brother, Ron Walls, at 472 Lombard rd. Columbus, Ohio 43228. His telephone is 614-878-1216.

Calendar of Events

Feb 2: General meeting, UAF IARC Room 401. 7 PM. Pre-meeting activities start 6 PM.

Feb 3-4: Jr. Yukon Quest. Starts noon Sat, Chena River near Visitor's Center. Operators needed. Contact AD4BL.

Feb 3: License exams. Noel Wein Library. 1 PM. Help wanted. Contact KC8MVW.

Feb 4: North American Sprint, SSB. 0000-0400Z.

Feb 8: AARC Board Meeting. Visitor's Center Log Cabin, 7 PM.

Feb 10: Yukon Quest begins in Whitehorse. Operators needed. Contact AD4BL.

Feb 10: FISTS Winter Sprint, 1700-2100Z. www.fists.org

Feb 17-18: ARRL International

DX Contest, CW.

Feb 17-Feb 18, 1500Z-2100Z, Alexandria, VA. Mount Vernon Amateur Radio Club, K4US. Commemorate George Washington's Birthday. 28.415 14.240 7.240 MHz.

Mar 2: General meeting, UAF IARC Room 401. 7 PM. Pre-meeting activities start 6 PM.

Mar 3: License exams. Noel Wein Library. 1 PM. Help wanted. Contact KC8MVW.

Mar 3-4: ARRL International DX Contest, SSB.

Mar 3-Mar 4, 1500Z-2200Z, Milan, OH. Thomas Edison Memorial Radio Club, NI8G. 21.370 14.270 7.270 3.770

Mar 8: AARC Board. TBD.

Yukon Quest Operations

The race begins Saturday 2/10 in Whitehorse.

Operations at the Visitor's Center log cabin will be 24/7 for the duration of the event, which usually lasts 12-14 days. HF, VHF, packet, telephone, fax, and email will be monitored by AARC members. Staff will also update the YQ web page. It's still not too late to volunteer. Contact AD4BL to schedule a shift.

