

SPECIAL ELECTION

Please be sure to attend the January 18th meeting at the Norwich Fire Headquarters (10 North Main Street, Norwich, CT). There will be a special election held to elect a replacement for the President which was vacated when Matt-KB1LCS took a job in another state. Your attendance will ensure we have the required quorum and help us elect someone to lead RASON for the remainder of the year.

Saturday Breakfast Gathering

In the not-so-distant past we had a monthly gathering for breakfast at OldTymes restaurant. It was a chance for folks to gather and socialize. It was a chance to talk about Ham Radio or whatever struck our fancy. For awhile it was quite popular and fairly well attended. But over time attendance slipped and the tradition slipped into history.

Are you interested in restoring the tradition? If so, please let either Scott-W1SSN or Chip-N1MIE know your feelings (see contact list). If sufficient interest is expressed we'll make an announcement. If not ... well, you know ...

Monthly Connecticut Section News Summary

My warmest wishes to each of you and your families for a wonderful holiday season and safe and happy New Year. Thank you for your support and for all you do to enhance our service.

We will be meeting the New year with many changes. Indeed, Amateur radio is receiving a lot of thought and attention and there are all sorts of changes and reactions. Reflectors are active with talk about these changes: operating privileges, the elimination by FCC of the code requirement, and Red Cross background checks to name a few. So this month, I will shorten this column and give you my position endorsed by the Section cabinet about how I think together we ought to proceed on some issues. There's lots more news on the ARRL Web Site CT Page so please go to <http://www.arrl.org/sections/?sect=CT> . Thank you.

The following statement is adapted from one written by George Lillenstein, AB1GL, president of NARL. He has written what I think is a wonderful statement of policy for his club which I know he will be posting shortly. I liked it so well that with his permission, I have adapted it to fit Section needs. I hope you will all use it as a framework for discussion and move forward to implement the suggestions here.

CT SECTION STATEMENT OF PHILOSOPHY: Although the FCC has eliminated code tests, I encourage all operators to learn and use Morse Code regularly, even though it is no longer a prerequisite for licensing, for the vital reasons stated below.

BACKGROUND: The FCC has at long last announced the elimination of the requirement to pass the element one Morse Code exam. This will go into effect when it is published in the Federal Register. As this goes to press no one knows what the exact date will be. Operators holding Technician licenses will automatically be entitled to the same privileges as the former "Technician Plus" licensees. This includes the 10-meter SSB window from 28,300 to 28,500 MHz, and CW windows in the 10, 15, 40 and 80-meter bands. Those taking General and Extra exams no longer need to

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hold an Element One (Morse Code) certificate. While the Code is no longer required to obtain a ham license, the band plan still limits Technicians to transmitting only Morse Code on their newly allowed HF openings on 15, 40 and 80.

WHAT YOU CAN DO: Our collective mission is to create a pool of skilled radio operators. I consider “skill” to include many areas not included in the FCC exams. I encourage all hams to take the ARRL emergency communications courses. I encourage hams to participate in traffic nets, to use digital modes, to practice building home-brew antennas and to participate in other technical projects such as the new 1750Hz tone alerting unit for emergency notification described at <http://www.ctares.org>. And I encourage all operators to learn and use Morse Code regularly, even though it is no longer a prerequisite for licensure. Morse Code is still the best way to get a signal through in adverse conditions. It can be sent using minimal equipment. It can be received and interpreted directly by the human ear, with no electronic or computer decoding required. It is useful in many other situations besides radio. If you are hospitalized with a stroke and can't speak, are trapped under rubble, or trying to signal a search plane with a mirror -- Morse Code is your best bet. Morse Code is useful for the handicapped. And learning Morse Code is a character-builder. It is a challenge nearly everyone can overcome, and feel good about. I encourage those who teach to plan to continue teaching Morse Code and encourage all to use it. I encourage you to implement a beginner's code net on the air, and discuss code operating techniques at your meetings and classes along with the other modes. The code is not going away -- it's just not required for the license any more.

Betsy Doane, K1EIC, Section Manager

Next month, I will talk about this Sections goals in the New Year and show you the statement that clarifies CLIDE's position on the use of various digital modes. In the meantime, check out <http://www.ctares.org/clide>.

Repeaters

RASON

146.730	PL=156.7	Norwich, CT
449.725	PL=156.7	Norwich, CT

SCRAMS

146.670	PL=156.7	Groton, CT
448.975	PL=156.7	Groton, CT
146.970	PL=156.7	Waterford, CT

Others

145.390	PL=156.7	Ledyard, CT
146.060	PL=156.7	Salem, CT
146.865	PL=156.7	Subbase, CT
147.240	PL=100.0	Westerly, RI

Packet

RASON

N1NW	145.030	PBBS/Node
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Glastonbury

W1EDF	145.030	FlexNet Node
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Local Nets

Traffic

E.C.T.N.	146.730	Daily	2100
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ARES

S.E.C.T	146.970	Mon	2000
N.E.C.T	147.225	Wed	2000
K1ARC	3.915	1st Wed	2000
ARES HF	3.965	Thu	1900

Weather

NL Co WN	147.060	Wed	2000
	146.970	1st Wed	2000
Skywarn	146.970	<i>on demand</i>	

Fun

TIPS Net	146.730	Tue	1930
VHF/UHF	146.730	Sun	2000
10m Phone	28.443±	Thu	2000
Picnic Table	3.988±	Fri	2030
alt	1.935±	Fri	2100
Ragchew	53.29- p82.5	Sun	1900

FCC to Drop Morse Testing for All Amateur License Classes

In an historic move, the FCC has acted to drop the Morse code requirement for all Amateur Radio license classes. The Commission today adopted a Report and Order (R&O) in WT Docket 05-235. In a break from typical practice, the FCC only issued a public notice at or about the close of business and not the actual Report and Order, so some details -- including the effective date of the R&O -- remain uncertain. The public notice is located at, http://hraunfoss.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/DOC-269012A1.pdf.

Also today, the FCC also adopted an Order on Reconsideration, in WT Docket 04-140 -- the "omnibus" proceeding -- agreeing to modify the Amateur Radio rules in response to an ARRL request to accommodate automatically controlled narrowband digital stations on 80 meters in the wake of rule changes that became effective today at 12:01 AM Eastern Time. The Commission said it will carve out the 3585 to 3600 kHz frequency segment for such operations. Prior to the long-awaited action on the Morse code issue, Amateur Radio applicants for General and higher class licenses had to pass a 5 WPM Morse code test to operate on HF. The Commission said today's R&O eliminates that requirement for General and Amateur Extra applicants.

"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," the FCC said. The ARRL had asked the FCC to retain the 5 WPM for Amateur Extra class applicants only. The FCC proposed earlier to drop the requirement across the board, however, and it held to that decision in today's R&O.

Perhaps more important, the FCC's action in WT Docket 05-235 appears to put all Technician licensees on an equal footing: Once the R&O goes into effect, holders of Technician class licenses will have equivalent HF privileges, whether or not they've passed the 5 WPM Element 1 Morse examination. The FCC said the R&O in the Morse code docket would eliminate a disparity in the operating privileges for the Technician and Technician Plus class licensees. Techni-

Upcoming Events

January

- 1 Straight Key Night
- 4 SCRAMS Meeting
- 6-7 ARRL RTTY Round-Up
- 9 Tri-City ARC Meeting
- 18 RASON Meeting

February

- 1 SCRAMS Meeting
- 13 Tri-City ARC Meeting
- 15 RASON Meeting
- 17-18 ARRL Int. DX Contest (CW)

March

- 1 SCRAMS Meeting
- 3-4 ARRL Int. DX Contest (Phone)
- 13 Tri-City ARC Meeting
- 15 RASON Meeting

April

- 5 SCRAMS Meeting
- 10 Tri-City ARC Meeting
- 19 RASON Meeting

May

- 3 SCRAMS Meeting
- 8 Tri-City ARC Meeting
- 17 RASON Meeting

June

- 7 SCRAMS Meeting
- 9-11 ARRL June VHF QSO Party
- 12 Tri-City ARC Meeting
- 21 RASON Meeting
- 23-24 ARRL Field Day

July

- 5 SCRAMS Meeting
- 10 Tri-City ARC Meeting
- 14-15 IARU HF World Championships
- 19 RASON Meeting

cian licensees without Element 1 credit (ie, Tech Plus licensees) currently have operating privileges on all amateur frequencies above 30 MHz.

“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,” the FCC said in its public notice. “Therefore, the FCC, in today’s action, afforded Technician and Technician Plus licensees identical operating privileges.”

The wholesale elimination of a Morse code requirement for all license classes ends a longstanding national and international regulatory tradition in the requirements to gain access to Amateur Radio frequencies below 30 MHz. The first no-code license in the US was the Technician ticket, instituted in 1991. The question of whether or not to drop the Morse requirement altogether has been the subject of often-heated debate over the past several years, but the handwriting has been on the wall. A number of countries, including Canada, no longer require applicants for an Amateur Radio license to pass a Morse code test to gain HF operating privileges. The list has been increasing regularly.

The FCC said today’s R&O in WT Docket 05-235 comports with revisions to the international Radio Regulations resulting from the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) World Radiocommunication Conference 2003 (WRC-03). At that gathering, delegates agreed to authorize each country to determine whether or not to require that applicants demonstrate Morse code proficiency in order to qualify for an Amateur Radio license with privileges on frequencies below 30 MHz.

Typically, the effective date of an FCC Order is 30 days after it appears in the Federal Register. That would mean the Morse requirement and the revised 80-meter segment for automatically controlled digital stations would likely not go into effect until late January 2007.

The ARRL will provide any additional information on these important Part 97 rule revisions as it becomes available.

FCC Revokes Amateur Radio License of Convicted Felon

The FCC has ordered that David Edward Cox, W5OER, of Pride, Louisiana, be stripped of his Technician class Amateur Radio license. In October 2005, the FCC sent Cox an Order to Show Cause to initiate a hearing proceeding to determine if Cox, who's serving time on several felony convictions, possessed the requisite character to remain an FCC licensee or should face license revocation. The FCC says Cox failed to respond to the show-cause order. A Commission administrative law judge subsequently concluded that Cox had waived his right to a hearing, terminated the proceeding and released an Order of Revocation December 4. A few years ago, the FCC began applying its so-called "1990 Character Order," initially intended to apply to Broadcast Service licensees, to Amateur Radio licensees and applicants.

The Commission says its character policies "provide that any felony conviction is a matter predictive of licensee behavior and is directly relevant to the functioning of the Commission's regulatory mission.

The revocation order is effective 40 days after that date, unless Cox appeals.

An Amateur Radio licensee since 1995, Cox has a clean record in terms of obeying FCC rules and regulations, the Commission said. The revocation order recounts Cox's 2004 felony burglary conviction that drew five years' probation. Later the same year, he was arrested on federal firearms charges and has been incarcerated ever since after accepting a plea agreement.

The FCC said it finds Cox's "egregious criminal misconduct" justifies revoking his Amateur Radio ticket. In footnotes, the Commission cited several cases in which it has applied its character standards to Amateur Radio licensees. Two of the cases involved radio-related violations, while one stemmed from a felony conviction for indecent assault upon and corruption of minors and another from a felony conviction for computer fraud and lack of candor regarding that conviction in representations to the FCC.

ARRL Challenges FCC Dismissal of Virginia BPL Interference Complaints

The FCC has told five Manassas, Virginia, radio amateurs that its testing showed the city's BPL system complies with FCC Part 15 rules, and it dismissed their interference complaints. The League is questioning the Commission's conclusions, however. Six Manassas radio amateurs earlier this year complained of BPL interference to their mobile operations. FCC engineers took measurements at several locations in Manassas on October 25 and 26. Spectrum Enforcement Division Chief Kathryn S. Berthot reported the results December 14.

"These measurements demonstrate that the Manassas BPL system is in compliance with the radiated emission limits specified in Section 15.611(b) of the Commission's rules at the two sites in areas we tested where emissions appear to be the highest," Berthot wrote, adding that the measurements showed the system is notching at 20 dB or greater to protect the 40-meter band. "Accordingly, based on the results of our investigation, we conclude that the Manassas BPL system is in compliance with the FCC's requirements, and the complaints are hereby dismissed." BPL proponent The United Power Line Council called the letter "complete and total vindication" of the Manassas BPL system.

Not so fast, says ARRL General Counsel Chris Imlay, W3KD, who responded December 21 on behalf of the League and the complainants <http://www.arrl.org/tis/info/HTML/plc/BPL-Manassas-2006-12-21.pdf>. Imlay maintained that Berthot's letter raises more questions than it answers. Because the "alleged testing" took place in the presence of BPL operator COM-Tek and equipment maker Main.net but without the complainants, Imlay said, there's no independent means to evaluate the FCC's conclusions.

"In ARRL's view, the Commission owes the complainants a far more comprehensive response to their two-year-old complaints than what is set forth in the terse and uninformative dismissal letter," Imlay wrote. Copies of his letter went to the five FCC commissioners and to the complainants. One complainant, George Tarnovsky, K4GVT, says neither he nor the other five complainants

was alerted to the planned FCC testing. The others are Donald "Butch" Blasdel, W4HJL; William South, N3OH; Arthur Whittum, W1CRO; Jack Cochran, WC4J, and Dwight Agnew, AI4II.

Imlay says Berthot's December 14 letter overlooks Whittum's May 2006 interference complaint, and, because of that, Whittum's complaint "remains pending and unadjudicated." Beyond that, Imlay contended, the Amateur Radio complainants, as FCC licensees, deserve better treatment and protection from the FCC.

Because the Commission -- and especially OET -- has exhibited "an overwhelming and obvious bias in favor of BPL" and "done everything possible to deny or obfuscate the substantial interference potential of BPL" on HF, Imlay wrote, the League is unwilling to accept what he called "the unsupported conclusions" in Berthot's letter. Those conclusions, he noted, vary substantially with the complainants' own observations and measurements, verified by the ARRL Laboratory staff.

Among other things, the League wants to know if any of the complainants were notified prior to the FCC's October testing, whether the OET is "routinely involved" in enforcement-related field measurements, when COMTek and Main.net learned of the planned testing, precisely where the FCC tested and how it determined the sites and the system's status during the tests -- including system loading. In addition, the League requested technical details of the testing, including measured emission levels.

Imlay says the Amateur Radio complainants "have been stonewalled by the City and COMTek, and now they have been stonewalled by the Commission, after waiting patiently for two years for some action." If the FCC seriously intends to claim that the Manassas system complies with the rules, he continued, it "must be willing to provide the information necessary to support its dismissal order with documentation that is objectively verifiable."

Shorts from ARRL Contest Rate Sheet...

While you're waiting for the weather to improve, here's some good reading in preparation

for antenna season: The Handbook of Rigging by W.E. Rossnagel is widely available or you can try the on-line resource "Wire Rope 101" (<https://www.hanessupply.com/page1.html>) from Hanes Supply. (Thanks, Eric K3NA)

Trying to remove a ground rod? Let Jim N2EY give you some tips. "The first step is to break the adhesion to the soil by turning the rod. Get a large pipe wrench - not an adjustable wrench or gripping pliers, but a true pipe wrench. Use the pipe wrench to grab the ground rod in the classic 3-points-of-contact way. Turn the rod. If you need more leverage, put a breaker bar or length of pipe on the pipe wrench. A couple of turns will loosen most ground rods so well that you can yank them out with one hand. Jacks and chains and such should only be used after the turning process has been tried."

If you're looking for nearby broadcast stations, "Go to the FCC Web site <http://www.fcc.gov/mb/audio/> and click on the link for AM query. Plug in the lat/lon of your QTH near the bottom of the form, with a distance of 15 miles or so. You'll get all the licenses, with their powers, whether they have different day/night power and/or patterns, and distance from you. DA means directional antenna, DA-N means directional at night, DA2 means directional with different patterns day and night." (Thanks, Jim K9YC)

Technical URL of the Month -- After the recent big solar flares - quite rare at the bottom of the solar cycle - there is renewed interest in sunspots. For those interested in some illustrations, Paul NA5N has put together a very nice one-page guide to solar phenomena. It's available from the G-QRP Web site (<http://www.gqrp.com>) under the SPRAT button as "Handiman's Guide to Solar Activity" in the Datasheets list. There's quite a lot of good information on that site, as well.

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