

Before the
Federal Communications Commission
Washington, D.C. 20554

In the Matter of
1998 Biennial Regulatory Review
Amendment of Part 97 of the Commission's
Amateur Service Rules

WT Docket No. 98-14
RM 9148
RM 9150
RM 9196

Comments of

Donald G. Powell - P.O. Box 443 - Newton, TX 75966

I file the comments on November 12, 1998 in the
FCC's Notice of Proposed Rule Making WT Docket 98-143

As an F.C.C. licensed Amateur Extra operator, I
am in agreement amateur radio service operators
and other F.C.C. licensed radio services that no longer
believe that it is in the best interest of the public
to continue to require morse code use, practical testing
or proficiency for the F.C.C. licensing of any radio operator.
I also support life-time licenses for cost reduction purposes.

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Submitted by:
Donald G. Powell
Donald G. Powell

My comments are being filed on paper, without a
diskette, since it is not feasible for me to
include a diskette.

Subj: "In the matter of 1998 biennial Regulatory Review--Amendment of part 97 of the Commission's Amateur Service Rules, FCC WT Docket 98-143"

My Call sign is KC7OEE. Name and address is Robert Emil Johnson, 1542 W. Calle Del Ducado, Green Valley, AZ 85614. Telephone: (520) 625-6678. Web: rejohnson@theriver.com.

My comments are as a "no coder" and three years radio experience in a single community.

About three years ago I qualified for my call sign KC7OEE through school, study and passing two exams. I'm 77 years of age and a military and civilian journalist retiree spanning more than 40 years. I live in a retirement community 25 miles south of Tucson that has HUGE RESTRICTIONS AGAINST ANY VISIBLE ANTENNA AND A STIGMA AGAINST HAMs IN GENERAL.

On three occasions in my lifetime I have tried to learn the language of code, but failed. However, I knew the ability of a "no code" license would suit my interest ---home and away. I don't have a disability. I just can't find the time and personal mental strength to immerse myself in learning a second language. Too many other things --- family, volunteer tasks and hobbies -- weigh heavy in competition. I'm sure also that age now is a factor. Add to this the advancements in telephones which have radio features, amateur radio today is diminishing in my importance and perhaps use in the future.

At the moment I'm locked into using 2 meter and 70 centimeter bands. I've found them suitable for my purpose. For immediate use while mobile, I carry a dual bander in my van. I have also a 2 meter desk unit and separate scanner in den. I'm reachable or can broadcast seven days a week. This is all voluntary on my part. So to speak, with the added use of the amateur radio club's repeater for emergencies and other uses, I'm on duty daily.

I'm founder and head of a neighborhood association security system consisting of 170 homes. Previously before becoming a "no code" operator, I established and held the same community position at Pearl City, Hawaii. I was a resident there for 21 years. Here at Green Valley in my first year as a "no coder", I volunteered to write an Emergency Community Plan for our amateur radio club. After completion and adoption, this plan was made known to all amateur radio clubs nationwide though an article printed in QST Magazine, an amateur radio publication. The result was 60 coast to coast requested copies of the plan for other clubs. Remember, this was done by a "no coder".

As many communities throughout the USA, Green Valley continues to have growing problems. Electricity, television and phone service often fail. The availability of amateur radio has been a God sent on several occasions. Many residents are handicapped and just the knowledge that amateur radio is available brings a smile to their faces. Mobile operators also continue to be helpful on a daily basis to stranded motorists, law enforcement and community.

Do I have a desire to upgrade my license to a higher standard? Absolutely not. I see no need of it. I have no desire to reach other HAM in London or Tokyo, or for that matter to chat with an operator in New York City or Los Angeles. It's not in my interest. My need is immediate for family, friends and community trouble shooting.

Since joining my local amateur radio club however I have learned several disturbing things:

The core of the club is held together by a majority of old timers who learned and were required to be proficient in high speed CW in past commercial, government and military careers. They are a group within a group. Aside of them are wives and close friends who have learned the code and upgraded licenses beyond Novice or Technical.

Then there are "no coders" who have senior licensing through questionable disabilities. They are the baby boomers who will outlive the old timers. They walk- the- walk and talk- the- talk with no technical background or substance. They are from rural communities for the most part. Although their need for amateur radio is greater than most living outside a populated area, the manner in which they received a license will always be in question.

There's a third group -- the "no coders", like me. We make up the majority of our 140 membership, however, in actual hands-on activities like short wave radio demonstrations, community assistance in parades, sports and other events, weekly breakfasts and monthly meetings, we are back seaters. Not being able to join in technical

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conversations and know how, and a lack of higher frequency equipment, has keeps us reluctant to be true joiner. Additionally, an element missing from this group is needed FCC enforcement against unauthorized frequency broadcasting or using "borrowed" call signs. This is constantly watched over by old timers, a bred soon departing. This problem, although minor, needs FCC teeth.

Several years down the road with the advent of losing more amateur radio frequency bands, more and more in-use cellular phones and projected pennies per minute phone charges, amateur radio will cease to be important except to the true diehard. This group, primary pre-baby boomers, is departing in numbers. They are the glue holding our club together -- erecting and maintaining repeaters. They are the mainstay of amateur radio here today, but who replaces them when they are gone?

What would I suggest as needed licensing based on amateur radio needs for the future?

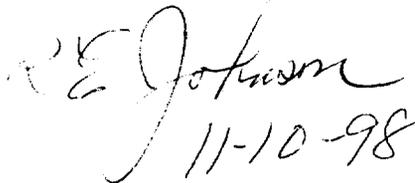
TWO GROUPS:

1. General Class Operators License. Written exams and no code.

2. Master Class Operators License. Written exams and understandable code to 20 wpm. An exception would be certified disabilities with a verifiable statement of disability by a doctor.

The above observations are sent to you as a single individual. The observations are not that of club officers or general membership. I just felt my observations were important enough to be heard.

ROBERT E. JOHNSON
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11-10-98
