

Reduction of number of license classes.

Deleting the Novice license class would simplify the Commission's record keeping and have negligible effect on entry level applicants. Allowing present license holders to retain licenses would be essentially a face saving gesture since most Novice licensees that have not upgraded within two years of initial licensing are inactive and have no intention of obtaining a higher class license. In the 13 years that I have been a volunteer examiner (VE) I have noticed that when applicants obtained a Novice license, those who are active today upgraded to a higher class within a year. If the Novice license is deleted licensees should be granted General class Morse code privileges in the 80, 40, 15, and 10 meter bands to forestall the outcry over "taking away my license." The majority of amateurs operating Morse code use transceivers or transmitters in the 100 watt output class so the power restriction presently in effect in the Novice frequency allocations are unnecessary. The present Novice frequency allocations should be allocated to the digital modes that are allegedly replacing Morse code rather than to voice modes because the new digital modes require more bandwidth than Morse code. Overcrowding of this segment (non voice) of the amateur bands, I believe, will ultimately result in the demise of Morse code operation. Morse code equipment is much simpler and much less costly than digital mode communications equipment and, therefore, more attractive to the beginner and experimenters in amateur radio.

Deleting the Technician Plus license would have a greater impact on entry level applicants than deletion of the Novice license. The majority of Technician Plus licensees that I have met are former Citizen's Band operators that specifically wanted voice privileges on the 10 meter band with the absolute minimum amount of study and learning. Deleting this license class would force new applicants to become proficient in the Morse code at a much higher level; something that is likely to be resisted. These present licensees should be permitted to retain their licenses in the same manner as the Novice licensees if that class is deleted.

General and Advanced class volunteer examiners.

General and Advanced class volunteer examiners should be allowed to administer all examination elements which they have had to pass (General class: 1A, 1B, 2, 3A, 3B; Advanced class: 1A, 1B, 2, 3A, 3B, 4A). This would make it much easier to assemble VE teams. As a VE team liaison, I have had difficulty on occasion finding enough Extra class VEs to hold an examination session. In this isolated community (60 - 90 miles to the next town) of 25,000 having an amateur population of 400+ only a handful of Extra class licensees are willing to serve as VEs. The majority of these VEs are not available for a specific examination session. Having a pool of Advanced class VEs to draw on for General and Advanced class license examinations would make assembling a VE team considerably easier. Applicants for the Extra class license are infrequent, one or two per year.

Morse code testing.

The present three tier Morse code examinations of five, 13, and 20 words per minute (WPM) could be reduced to two tiers if the Novice and Technician Plus license classes are eliminated. The loss of entry level Morse code test would require that applicants pass the 13 WPM Morse code test to obtain any high frequency privileges. The adoption of an 8 to 10 WPM Morse code test for the General class may be acceptable if the 13 WPM Morse code test is retained for the Advanced class. If a two tier Morse code test is adopted the lower speed of the two tier should not be lower than 10 WPM. The 20 WPM code test should be retained for Extra class license. Licensees

studying to upgrade their license do not usually use on the air operating to hone their Morse code skills but rather use tape recorded lessons or computer programs to provide the learning environment because the results are consistent. Sending and receiving Morse code is the only skill that must be learned to obtain an amateur license. Many examinees at VE sessions that I have participated in have indicated that memorization is the mechanism that got them through the written examination. While they knew the answers to the examination questions they could not apply their knowledge outside of the scope of the examination question. Some individuals would like to reduce the Morse code requirement for the Extra class license. Does it matter if the Extra class license is the most difficult license to earn in all of the amateur radio world? If the code requirement were 30 WPM there would be only a slightly smaller population of Extra class licensees. Applicants that are truly interested will rise to the challenge.

The Morse code examinations should be one minute solid copy or fill-in-the-blank, but not the either-or approach that the American Radio Relay League is presently using. Multiple choice Morse code examinations are unacceptable. The fill-in-the-blank examinations appear to be somewhat more difficult than the one minute of solid copy.

Written examinations.

I do not feel that VECs and VEs require additional flexibility in preparing written examinations. The categories of examination questions appear to be sufficiently broad to cover new technologies and subjects as they emerge.

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