

Gentlemen,

I understand the international decision to eliminate the Morse Code requirement for amateur HF communications licenses. However, I disagree with the proposal to merge technician and technician plus licensees into amateur radio General Class. My primary reason for this decision is based on the considerable difficulty I had in learning the Morse Code, so I could have access to the HF bands. The ARRL petition effectively would mean that all the additional study I did for the written examination and learning the Morse Code accomplished nothing, if technician class and technician plus classes are grandfathered into General Class. Only by completing my study for Extra Class would I be differentiated from the new General Class, but in the process I would gain very little and have little incentive.

More worrisome is lowering the requirements to access the HF bands. The Morse Code requirement is a barrier to operators wishing to use the amateur HF bands, but it also shows a commitment by the operator to a higher level of communications skill. Making it easier to gain access to the HF bands may result in the "CB-ization" of HF, where anybody passing a 20 or more question exam will have HF access. What better way for truckers and weekend warrior CB'ers to communicate long distance legally without the restrictions of CB.

If we are not careful, the use of "handles" may become common on the HF bands, instead of license numbers. CB used to require an FCC license but handles were often used and linear amps were omnipresent, even though both were illegal. Enforcement could become extremely difficult and may be nearly impossible. The ability to communicate over HF without the interference of unmodulated carriers and operators talking over each other could become a thing of the past. Emergency communications may become difficult or impossible.

I do not believe it is possible to test a license applicant's knowledge the regulations, radio and electrical safety, basic electronics, digital communications, antennas and feed lines, and HF, VHF, and UHF communications in a 20 or 25 question test. Grandfathering technicians and technician plus license holders into general class should not be allowed. Technician and technician plus applicants should at least be required to successfully pass the current general class written examination, in order to become general class amateur operators.

All of the proposals submitted to the Commission to increase access to HF bands must weigh the problems that are possible with the benefits.

Sincerely,

Douglas L. Barcon  
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