

This is in response to the FCC proposal to drop Morse code testing requirements for all Amateur Radio License classes.

I disagree with the proposal, and favor keeping Morse code testing. Some say that Morse code, also referred to as CW, is just another mode, and if people want to use it, then they'll have to learn it.

Now while it's true that Morse code is indeed another mode, it's a very unique mode. I can't think of any other mode that requires the operator to be the encoder and decoder. As such, Morse code must be effectively learned and should require an exam to verify proficiency. Failure to do so will eventually lead to animosity between proficient operators and those who didn't learn it right, but are on the air anyway. When using digital modes, computers do all the work. The operator types what they want to send on a keyboard, then reads the response on a display, and even though there are programs that allow you to do the same for Morse code, these are not widely used and, because many people still send by hand using a Morse code key, the programs are not as effective as their digital mode counterparts, which have standardized transmission rates and digital error correction.

I agree that you shouldn't keep something around just for nostalgic reasons, but those that say CW is old and antiquated probably don't understand how effective it is. In addition, it requires a minimal amount of bandwidth, as well as a minimal amount of equipment. Learning how to send and receive 5WPM takes discipline and a little effort, but people do manage to learn it and pass the exam. My feeling is that many Technician class operators want access to HF bands, but want to get there with as little effort as possible.

Also, those that already have higher level class licenses who would like the Morse code requirement dropped probably don't use it now, and are possibly anticipating the expansion of the phone (voice) sub-bands through the reduction of the non-voice sub-bands, such as CW.

Even as I write this I feel as though the FCC has already made up it's mind regarding dropping the Morse code requirement, and I know that they'll probably not consider any additional suggestions, but I have two nonetheless. If the Morse code requirement is dropped, in order to maintain the skill level of higher class licenses, for those wishing to advance the FCC should consider making the General and Extra class license exams more stringent, either by using a

larger question pool, or by stopping the public release of question pools. As I mentioned above, Technician class operators want to get HF access with as little effort as possible, but operating on the HF bands is not the same as operating FM repeaters on VHF and UHF, which is all that the vast majority of Technician class operators ever do. Without the required discipline of learning Morse code, the only thing Technician class operators need to do is memorize enough answers from the published question pools to get a passing grade on the written exam. I know Morse code wasn't meant to be the sole disciplined gating item to obtain a higher level operators license, but in absence of any other disciplined tool or exam, it has become an important one. Eliminating it altogether, without any additional steps to augment the written exam will have the effect of opening the doors to a significant number of newly upgraded inadequate HF operators. My second suggestion is somewhat along the same lines. Drop the Morse code requirement for the General class license, but keep it for the Extra class. This would effectively keep inadequate CW operators off of the Extra class license CW sub-bands, as well as giving some General class operators encouragement to advance to the next level.