

I am an extra class amateur radio operator (KC6WCT) and a Volunteer Examiner (VE) who teaches amateur radio in high school. I strongly agree with the FCC on removing the requirement for morse code as a condition for getting an amateur radio license. As a VE myself, I can say with experience that morse code is keeping young people out of amateur radio. Today's youth are computer knowledgeable, and as soon as they find out morse code - a technology over a century old - is required they move on to other interests. It has been the experience of both the United States and the United Kingdom that reducing morse code requirements increases amateur radio involvement.

I can't help but worry about the increasing age of amateur radio operators and worry about the future of amateur radio. While there used to be many amateur radio magazines at bookstores, now there are few or none. While there used to always be several amateur radio manuals at Radio Shack stores, lately there have not been. I worry this may ultimately be a question of the survival of the valuable public service of amateur radio.

Many have commented correctly on the decreasing importance of morse code. Take a look at our military, our merchant marine service, and the amateur radio communities of other countries. If that does not convince you, then just listen to the amateur radio bands. It has played a decreasing role over the years in the above areas and countries, including our country. The morse code is no longer required by international regulation since WRC-03. Already Switzerland, Belgium, the United Kingdom, Germany, Norway, New Zealand, Austria, Kenya, France, Iceland, Sweden, Hong Kong, Denmark, the Czech Republic, Croatia, Papua Guinea, Australia, Finland, Luxembourg, Singapore, Ireland, and the Netherlands have all dropped morse code requirements.

In an A.R.R.L. survey about 75% said they rarely or never use morse code. I can assure you as an ARES volunteer that morse code does not play any significant role in emergencies. If amateur radio is to survive as both a hobby and a service for emergencies, then it must focus on the new technologies of the future rather than on a mode which was developed over 150 years ago.

I believe in the lessening importance of morse code and in eliminating it as a license requirement. It is not a matter of lowering standards. It is a matter of modernizing requirements. We no longer teach the reading of the sundial in the public schools. Morse code should be considered as one optional mode of communicating just like any other mode instead of being considered as the most important and vital prerequisite to advancing in amateur radio. There is no other communication mode (packet, SSB, satellite, SCTV, FSTV, etc.) that requires a demonstration of ability in that area. There is no evidence that morse code makes an operator more desirable, motivated, or better qualified.

Focusing so much effort on the antiquated morse code requirement interferes with the amateur radio purpose of advancing the radio art. Make it easy on yourself. I hope you at the F.C.C. take the big long term view of where amateur radio is going and do what is best based upon the future rather than upon past traditions.

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