

I vote yes to allowing encryption of the emergency communications transmitted over Amateur Radio equipment and frequencies:

1. Personally Identifiable Information (PII) may be a part of such communications, and it must be protected.
2. The argument that there are other more appropriate encryption-capable communication channels does not take into account that the Amateur Radio is likely to get involved specifically when such channels become unavailable or constrained (and thus unable to carry the entire load of traffic). Otherwise there would be no reason to get Amateur Radio involved in the emergency response at all.
3. While Amateur Radio is not an emergency service per se, when it is summoned to augment the existing communication channels, it becomes de-facto emergency responder. In this process an Amateur Radio operator may deal with PII, and the options would be (a) refuse to transmit such a message, (b) transmit the message in the clear thus disclosing PII (potentially) to the entire world, or (c) encrypt the message. The last option sounds the most appropriate.
4. Allowing this exception does not force all the emergency communications transmitted over Amateur Radio to be encrypted. But it would make possible to encrypt the appropriate messages when needed, thus increasing the utility of Amateur Radio to the primary emergency responders.

Therefore I urge you to pass RM-11699.

Regards,

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