

I wish to support the petition for the allowance of encryption in amateur radio, RM-11699 Encryption of Amateur Radio Communications.

As with almost everything, the evolution of radio and communications is constant. From the beginning of the Amateur Radio Service, change in any form has been resisted by a large portion of the hobby. Just look at one of the main forms of voice communication on the HF radio bands, single-sideband (SSB). It was ignored, resisted, and talked about negatively shortly after its inception. It was different, why did the hobby need another form/mode of communication when what we have was "working fine" just the way it was? Decades later, it is the primary mode for voice transmission on the HF bands. Some are using SSB on the VHF bands as well.

If there wasn't a requirement for public service organizations to encrypt data, this would not be an issue. Yes, those in opposition to encryption can cite examples where it wasn't used and others can point to examples where it was needed or requested by a public service.

The Amateur Radio Service prides itself on being able to communicate and transmit, voice and data, when all else fails. If we want to continue to do that, we must allow encryption on a limited basis. Those opposed seem to limit their objections to self-enforcement and potentially opening up the spectrum for illegal use of the amateur bands. If I understand the petition, it requests for the use of encryption on a limited basis and during emergency service operations and related training exercises. This is not an open invitation for unlimited use of encryption; it is a request with very limited scope. Policing would be much easier than I believe those in opposition suggest. Local clubs would know if there is an actual emergency and/or a training exercise being conducted. If none were present, the basic practices for identifying "pirate" radio stations would apply and the "rogue" station could be identified.

If the Amateur Radio Service is going to continue to evolve, adapt, be requested and used during emergency and disaster situations, it needs to be able to support those public service organizations to the best of its abilities. As more and more of the public service spectrum is being encrypted, amateur radio must also move in that direction to support actual emergencies and training exercises. If we don't, the service will be requested less and less making the hobby irrelevant.

I recommend the Amateur Radio Service be permitted to encrypt transmission during emergency situations at the request of the public service or when training for such events with the permission of the local public service organizations they support. Additionally, I recommend it be permitted on a trial basis for a period of no more than five years at which time encryption in amateur radio should be reviewed again and permanent decision rendered.

Sincerely,

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