

To: Federal Communications Commission
In RE: RM-11699 Encryption of Amateur Radio Communications
28 July 2013

From: John W (Bill) Farnham
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I am commenting IN FAVOR of the proposed rulemaking to allow encryption of amateur radio communications. I am doing so as a licensed amateur operator (KI4FZT), but more than that, as Division Chief of the Division of Emergency Communications of my agency, address above. We are a part of county government, and as such, interact with both local agencies, the Tennessee Emergency Management Agency, FEMA, and others. I have been involved in emergency communications since the early 70s.

I have seen firsthand the difference that amateur communications capability brings to the table during disasters and emergencies. I am keenly aware of the need for digital communications and of the requirement for 100% accuracy in transmitted data. I am also aware that it is possible that my agency, on behalf of other served agencies, or the served agencies/customers themselves may, at times, have data to transmit that is of a sensitive nature. I do not mean information that is classified in any way, but rather that is sensitive in regards to privacy and such issues.

While we have excellent public safety radio communications systems in place, I have also witnessed their weaknesses and their failures. If I have a customer that needs to transmit information, for instance, to the state EOC, and they tell me that information is needed for health or safety, and that it contains private information, I need to be able to send that information as securely as they need it to be sent, EVEN if I am restricted to using amateur radio channels to send it.

Recent history has shown clearly the unwavering need for amateur radio as part of an emergency communications plan. And that plan should not be brought to a halt in its execution when a customer – a SERVED agency (e.g. hospital) – decides they need to add some privacy or security to the information they are asking our agency to provide a transport layer for.

I have talked to numerous other local government agencies about this issue, as well as TEMA. And they all agree that this proposal should be acted on FAVORABLY.

I also work with the nearby Level I Trauma Center and Regional Medical Communications Center at University of Tennessee Medical Center. The emergency management and communications personnel at that institution with whom I have discussed this issue also agree that the Commission should act FAVORABLY on this proposal.

This proposal will assist in keeping Amateur radio alive and well, and make it useful to those who may be forced to use it when no normal alternative is available. It is not just about this or that type of

encryption, a password protected document or zip file, or HIPAA, it is more about protecting the information being transmitted in behalf of the public and those involved.

Please concentrate on the previous paragraph, and act IN FAVOR of encryption of amateur radio communications.

/s/ John W (Bill) Farnham

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