

The Smokehouse

Where Country Hams Hang Out

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FCC Proposes to Reinstate Amateur Radio Service Fees

[UPDATED 2020-09-01 @1845 UTC] Amateur radio licensees would pay a \$50 fee for each amateur radio license application if the FCC adopts rules it proposed this week. Included in the FCC's fee proposal are applications for new licenses, renewal and upgrades to existing licenses, and vanity call sign requests. Excluded are applications for administrative updates, such as changes of address, and annual regulatory fees.

The FCC proposal is contained in a *Notice of*

Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) in MD Docket 20-270, which was adopted to implement portions of the “Repack Airwaves Yielding Better Access for Users of Modern Services Act” of 2018 — the so-called “[Ray Baum’s Act](#).”

The Act requires that the FCC switch from a Congressionally-mandated fee structure to a cost-based system of assessment. In its *NPRM*, the FCC proposed application fees for a broad range of services that use the FCC's Universal Licensing System (ULS), including the Amateur Radio Service that had been excluded by an earlier statute. The 2018 statute excludes the Amateur Service from annual regulatory fees, but not from application fees.

“[A]pplications for personal licenses are

mostly automated and do not have individualized staff costs for data input or review,” the FCC said in its *NPRM*. “For these automated processes — new/major modifications, renewal, and minor modifications — we propose a nominal application fee of \$50 due to automating the processes, routine ULS maintenance, and limited instances where staff input is required.”

The same \$50 fee would apply to all Amateur Service applications, including those for vanity call signs. “Although there is currently no fee for vanity call signs in the Amateur Radio Service, we find that such applications impose similar costs in aggregate on Commission resources as new applications and therefore propose a \$50 fee,” the FCC said.

The FCC is not proposing to charge for administrative updates, such as mailing address changes for amateur applications, and amateur radio will remain exempt from annual regulatory fees. “For administrative updates [and] modifications, which also are highly automated, we find that it is in the public interest to encourage licensees to update their [own] information without a charge,” the FCC said.

The FCC also proposes to assess a \$50 fee for individuals who want a printed copy of their license. “The Commission has proposed to eliminate these services — but to the extent the Commission does not do so, we propose a fee of \$50 to cover the costs of these services,” the FCC said.

The Ray Baum’s Act does not exempt filing fees in the Amateur Radio Service. The FCC dropped assessment of fees for vanity call signs several years ago.

ARRL is reviewing the matter and intends to file comments in opposition.

Deadlines for comments and reply comments will be determined once the *NPRM* appears in the *Federal Register*. Interested parties may file

comments by using the FCC’s Electronic Comment Filing System ([ECFS](#)), posting to MD Docket No. 20-270. This docket is already open to accept comments, even though deadlines have not yet been set.



FCC Application Fee Proposal Proceeding is Open for Comments

Comments are being accepted on the *Notice of Proposed Rulemaking* ([NPRM](#)) in MD Docket 20-270, which proposes application fees for radio amateurs. Formal deadlines for comments and reply comments will be determined once the *NPRM* appears in the *Federal Register*. Comments may be filed now, however, by using the FCC’s Electronic Comment Filing System ([ECFS](#)), posting to MD Docket No. 20-270. The docket is already open for accepting comments, even though deadlines have not yet been set.

Maine Radio Amateur Dies after Fall from Tower

James Larnar, NIATO, of Bangor, Maine, died on Wednesday, September 2, after apparently falling a reported 80 feet from an amateur radio tower in the rural Knox County town of Union. The incident happened just before 1 PM local time.

Said to have been a tower professional who had done a lot of work for many Maine broadcasters, Larnar, an ARRL member, was 74. According to news accounts, Larnar was disassembling an antenna on a tower located on Olson Farm Lane.

The Knox County Sheriff’s Office and Union Fire and Rescue responded, and the rescue squad pronounced Larnar dead at the scene. The deceased was equipped with a harness and carabiner clips and was believed to have been secured to the tower, a close friend on the scene told authorities.

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration was contacted and will conduct a follow-up investigation along with the Maine Medical Examiner’s office. — *Thanks to the Bangor Daily News and the Rockland Courier-Gazette, and to Norman Blake, WIIT*



Scouting's Jamboree on the Air Set for October 16, 17, and 18

Jamboree on the Air ([JOTA](#)) and Jamboree on the Internet (JOTI) will be held this year on October 16, 17, and 18. [Register](#) online as an individual or as a group.

Jamboree on the Air is the largest Scouting event in the world. In a typical year, more than 1 million Scouts participate in JOTA, with over 11,000 stations operated by 20,000+ young radio amateurs from 150+ countries around the world.

[JOTA details](#) are available on the K2BSA website. The website menu will direct users to additional supporting information. K2BSA's Jim Wilson, K5ND, says many locations are already offering virtual radio merit badge classes "and no doubt will be using similar approaches for Jamboree on the Air."



US Mail is the Only Way to Vote in ARRL Division Elections

The candidates for the 2020 ARRL Division elections are now official. Unfortunately, incorrect information regarding electronic balloting in ARRL Division elections was disseminated in the Midwest Division. ARRL does not use electronic voting. The only way to cast a vote is by US Postal Service mail.

We urge you to participate by casting and mailing your ballot. Ballots, accompanied by a photograph and a 300-word statement (if provided) from each candidate, will be mailed out to members by October 1.

If you do not receive your ballot by October 16, contact Carla Pereira, KC1HSX, at cpereira@arrrl.org.

Completed ballots are due back at ARRL Headquarters no later than noon Eastern Time on Friday, November 20, 2020. — *The Ethics & Elections Committee of the Board of Directors*

Minutes -August 18, 2020

In consideration of COVID guidelines, instead of the traditional August Potluck, Pizza and snacks were served to a crowd of 15 members and guests. Among the guests were prospective member Paul Wells KO4FCB, William K4UOJ's boys, and Ali Fair, friend of Anthony K4AUU. It was noted that Anthony is recovering well from major cardiac surgery a few weeks ago. Business meeting got underway at 7PM. The minutes were accepted as printed, and the Treasurer reported \$xxxxx cash and \$xxxxx savings. Repeater committee mentioned ongoing progress with the '94 repeater, noting much increased Range but occasional duplex noise. The DR2X Fusion repeater was on display, and plans are to get it on the air from the antenna atop city hall soon. We have a position on the water tower on West Main street, the antenna & feedline are defective. We hope to have it all replaced by the end of the year, for some future application. Hamfest committee noted that 2021 Hamfest is scheduled for March 6. There is a possibility that the hamfest might have to be cancelled or postponed depending on the COVID situation. It was suggested that we should stay in touch with

CCCC manager Greg Davis to discuss plans. Probably the decision should be made about 60 days out, around first of the year. The proposal from last meeting to build a communications trailer was taken off the table. After brief discussion, a motion by KC4RGE & second by KN4WL to cancel the project, was passed. There was discussion about outreach in general. Paul KO4FCB was nominated for membership. Chappy KD4SS gave a demonstration of a 1940 RCA console radio that he was repairing for someone. Meeting adjourned at 7:45.

Brazil Proposes to End Amateur Radio Exams

The Brazilian National Telecommunications Agency (ANATEL) has [proposed](#) to end amateur radio certificate exams for all classes, replacing the current system with free access to the initial Class C license, access to Class B for those presenting a technical course certificate in telecommunications (or similar) or who have 3 years of experience as a Class C licensee, and to Class A for those who present a certificate of higher education in telecommunications (or similar) or who have 3

years of experience as a Class B licensee.

The proposal suggests eliminating different prefixes for each state and retaining license-class prefixes. There would no longer be any special call signs. Brazil's IARU member-society, LABRE, suggested that the proposal flies in the face of international regulatory consensus related to amateur radio and is contrary to LABRE's thinking with regard to minimum licensing requirements. It also does not square with ANATEL's request for support from LABRE in the revision of Brazil's amateur radio regulations, LABRE said.

LABRE has requested a meeting with ANATEL to discuss the proposal.

Unauthorized Transmissions Reported in 144 MHz Satellite Allocation

The Deutscher Amateur Radio Club (DARC) reported unauthorized transmissions in the 144 MHz satellite segment of the 2-meter amateur radio primary allocation. DARC said that signals from illegal transmitters in the 144.010 to 144.020 MHz range are coming from "water vitalizers" or

"water energizers." The manufacturer specifies 144.015 MHz as the transmit frequency in its product description. The DARC Electromagnetic Compatibility (EMC) Department seeks further details and location information in preparation to file a complaint.

"The devices apparently generate fields with considerable field strength and a long range," DARC said. "The signals appear increasingly in the morning or in the evening.

The illegal transmitters are typically in operation from 5 to 60 minutes (in multiples of 5 minutes). The signal is generally very stable in frequency, but occasionally shows short-term fluctuations of up to a few hundred hertz." The carrier is not modulated.

The 144.000 – 146.000 MHz band is allocated globally to the Amateur Radio and Amateur Satellite Services on a primary basis, and is the only globally harmonized amateur radio VHF band. DARC has posted a [video](#) of the unauthorized transmission.