

Subject: [EXEC-COM:2275] Re: Discussion Paper - more  
Date: Thu, 6 Nov 2003 17:45:59 -0500  
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Thread-Topic: Discussion Paper - more  
Thread-Index: AcOKj3YaNhmjFfiuTGWawDywQWHyogAlNxcQ  
From: "Sumner, Dave, K1ZZ" <dsumner@arrl.org>  
To: "exec-com" <exec-com@reflector.arrl.org>  
Reply-To: exec-com@arrl.org  
X-OriginalArrivalTime: 06 Nov 2003 22:46:01.0771 (UTC) FILETIME=[C0D5BFB0:01C3A4B7]  
X-MIME-Autoconverted: from quoted-printable to 8bit by mail.ntplx.net id hA6MI7CW008767

I've started to answer Rick's question a couple of times but have not managed to finish. He's certainly right that it's easier to discuss in person than via email. After I send this I probably won't have email access again until we're all at DFW, because I will be in DC tomorrow at the BPL Coalition meeting.

Briefly stated, my interest in the licensing structure is not driven by the Morse issue, although removing the Morse requirement for at least one class of HF license makes it possible to rationalize the structure without taking any privileges away from anyone.

"If it ain't broke, don't fix it" is a popular saying. I would say that the amateur licensing structure in this country IS broken, and has been broken ever since the Novice license became irrelevant. We bought a couple of years with Novice Enhancement in the mid-80s, but that was just a delaying action. Things got worse when the VHF Technician license became the de facto entry level license.

There are two things wrong with the Technician as the entry level. First, it doesn't have enough privileges. Second, it has too many privileges.

Another way of saying this is that for an entry level license, the Technician conveys the WRONG privileges. Someone just starting out doesn't need to be able to run 1500 watts on 23 cm, or to operate a repeater, or to license an amateur satellite. But because the license conveys those sorts of privileges the examination has to include related material. That's completely counterproductive. It forces people to memorize stuff they don't need to know, except to pass the exam, which clutters up the stuff that they do need to know in order to blend in with and be accepted by the rest of the amateur community.

But maybe in spite of it all (and I grant that it's not difficult for a motivated person to pass the Technician exam, even if a lot of it is pointless), they manage to get on the air. When they do, their experience as brand new radio amateurs is utterly at the mercy of their local amateur community. If they live in a place where newcomers are welcomed there's a chance they'll stay. If not, there's virtually no chance of that happening because there's nothing they can do in amateur radio that isn't dependent on that local amateur community. And let's face it, we know that's a problem in a lot of places. It's why I lobbied for one of our core values in strategic planning to be "Offer a welcoming and open community."

So with the existing system we get new hams who have learned the wrong stuff, have trouble being accepted (in part because they've been forced to learn the wrong stuff), and if they get on the air often don't enjoy it.

We need a better entry level -- a 21st Century Novice license. One that conveys HF privileges (limited, but enough to be fun) because HF is inherently more interesting, and because if there's a problem gaining acceptance in the local amateur community you can find another community on HF to be a part of. One that doesn't convey privileges that are useless to a newcomer, so the exam can be more relevant (NOT dumbed down).

But one without a code test, because that's the only way it can become the entry level license given the existence of a codeless Technician license.

We can do that without taking anything away from current members, core or otherwise. And by doing it there's an opportunity to create new core members, to replace the ones who die every year (it's going to happen to all of us sooner or later).

The alternative is that we continue to serve an ever-diminishing group of core members, while allowing a larger group of radio amateurs to grow outside the ARRL. If we allow that to happen, amateur radio will become increasingly unhealthy and sooner or later the ARRL itself will become irrelevant.

I don't have to emphasize how important it is that we don't let that happen.

See you at DFW.

73,  
Dave K1ZZ

-----Original Message-----

From: Roderick, Rick (aol.com)  
Sent: Thursday, November 06, 2003 12:57 PM  
To: exec-com  
Subject: [EXEC-COM:2270] Discussion Paper - more

Hi All:

I had asked a couple of times, why are we really wanting to change the license structure. Get more members? Because the FCC wants us to?

We want to dumb down? Who knows, I guess...

Assuming it is to dumb down and allow an entry to HF without CW, our second most popular mode, I'd like us to look at giving the Techs, or whatever entry license we call it, the old novice bands. Those freqs remain an open issue of course. What segments would be CW, digital, or phone is a secondary issue. Seems to be a good way to integrate them into HF, maintain a reasonable distinction in classes, and provide an incentive for them to advance. (deja vu - novice)

We can retain the same conditions on general and extra except raise the extra's cw back up, even if the FCC will reject it. Our core members, from my perspective, would like it. Then raise the bar on the exam for tech, or whatever we call the entry license.

Just some thoughts.

73,  
K5UR