

AMATEUR MORSE CODE ELIMINATION

The FCC has modified the amateur radio service rules, eliminating Morse code exam requirements.

The current amateur service operator license structure contains three classes of amateur radio operator licenses: Technician Class, General Class, and Amateur Extra Class.

Previously, the Commission, in accordance with international radio regulations, required applicants for General Class and Amateur Extra Class operator licenses to pass a five words-per-minute Morse code examination. The FCC has decided that is no longer a requirement because the FCC believes that the public interest is not served by requiring facility in Morse Code when the trend in amateur communications is to use voice and digital technologies for exchanging messages.

Once the changes are in effect, all Technician licensees -- whether or not they have passed a Morse code examination -- will have "Tech Plus" operating privileges. This means you will have all of your current VHF/UHF and above frequencies and also will have access to the Novice/Technician Plus frequencies on HF.

This change eliminates an unnecessary regulatory burden that may discourage current amateur radio operators from advancing their skills and participating more fully in the benefits of amateur radio.

If you have a Certificate for Successful Completion of Examination (CSCE) for Element 3 (General written test) and have been waiting for the FCC to drop the Morse code requirement. It will not happen automatically. You also will need to wait until the new rules are in effect. CSCEs remain valid for 365 days. There's been no change in that rule. If you have a non-expired CSCE for Element 3 credit, you would need to take the CSCE to a VE test session and have the examination team prepare and submit the paperwork for your license upgrade.

If you hold a novice license, there is no grandfather provision. In order to upgrade to Technician, you will need to pass the Element 2 written examination. The FCC did not change operating privileges for Novice, General, Advanced and Amateur Extra class licensees.

For more information on amateur radio licenses, go to http://wireless.fcc.gov/services/index.htm?job=about_3&id=amateur