

Ham Radio License Changes Over The Years

1912 - The introduction of licensing. 5 wpm code required

1917 - Code requirement increased to 10 wpm

1917 - Cessation of activity due to WWI (lasts till 1919)

1922 - Amateur Radio call signs will now be government assigned.

Previously, hams made up their own call signs (often a person's initials). The Amateur Radio service is created with two classes of licenses, First Grade and Second Grade. First Grade required a written essay examination and a code test of 5 words per minute. The test was administered before a "Radio Inspector" at a Commerce Department Field Office. The Second Grade license was for people who could not appear at a Commerce Dept. Field Office. An existing Amateur Radio First Grade licensee would administer the test.

1923 - Amateur Extra First Grade license class added.

Another new license class was created, the Amateur Extra First Grade. This license conveyed additional operating privileges, after passing a more difficult written examination and a code test of 20 words per minute.

1924 - Spark gap transmitters banned on newly allocated 80, 40, 20, and 5 meter bands

1926 - Spark gap transmitters made illegal on the ham bands

1927 - The existing Amateur First Grade license is renamed the Amateur Class license. The Federal Radio Commission created.

1928 - The Radio Commission starts testing for "Amateur First Grade" licenses.

1932 - The Amateur Class license class is renamed the Amateur First Class license.

1934 - Establishment of the FCC. License restructuring. Code requirement increased to 13 wpm. Accurate logging required. Mobile or portable operation required written notice to the FCC.

1939 - FCC introduces multiple-choice tests.

1940 - US amateurs prohibited from contacting other countries. All licensees required to supply fingerprints, photo, and proof of citizenship to FCC

1941 - 80m taken over by Army

1942 - Cessation of activity due to WWII (1942-1945)

1945 - Amateur license terms are extended from 3 to 5 years

1949 - Citizen's Radio Service established (the 1.1 meter ham band is reassigned to models and Class D Citizens' Band radio in 1958)

1951 - New license classes and names changed.

FCC creates the Novice, Technician and Extra class licenses to join the Advanced (formerly class A), General (formally Class B) and Conditional (formerly class C) licenses. License terms were now 5 years except Novice which was 1 year, non-renewable. Novices were limited to 75 watts input with crystal frequency control of CW on portions of the HF bands. Novices also had CW and Phone privileges in the 145-147 MHz segment of 2 meters. A Novice call sign was 2x3 with the second letter being an "N". The Novice test was a 20 question written and 5 wpm CW test originally administered by FCC examiners. Also, a person could only hold a Novice license one time. The Technician license as created had amateur privileges from 220 MHz and up (No 6 or 2 meters). The intent was to get a bunch of people experimenting on the then new (their first use was during WWII) "UHF" frequencies.

1952 - FCC stopped issuing new Advanced class licenses

December — FCC stopped issuing new Advanced class licenses and took away unique Advanced and Extra privileges, everyone General and up had the same privileges (after changing license classes and rules 1 year earlier).

1954 - Novice license testing duty turned over to hams.

Novice license testing was turned over to volunteer hams who would administer the code test, send paperwork to the FCC who would then return a written test which the volunteer would administer and then send to the FCC for final grading.

1955 - Technician class licensees receive 6 meter privileges.

1959 - Technician class licensees are given a portion of the 2 meter band (145-147MHz).

1967 - Incentive Licensing takes effect

"Incentive Licensing" takes effect, returning the Advanced class license and taking privileges away from Generals, effectively stopping growth of Amateur Radio and

causing a lot of bad feelings among the amateur community for the ARRL who originally proposed the program.

1972 - Technician licenses are granted access to the complete 2 meter band. Novices are allowed to use radios with a VFO, and logging requirements are relaxed.

1974 - FCC begins issuing "WR" prefix callings as part of new repeater regulations.

1975 - The Novice and Technician licenses get major changes.

Among the changes are an increase in power for Novices from 75 to 250 watts.

Technicians are also given full Novice privileges on the HF bands

1976 - "WN" prefixes for Novice licenses were eliminated

Effective July 1, 1976, any Extra class licensee who had been a licensed Amateur for 25 years or more could select one specific 1x2 call sign.

Effective October 1, 1976, anyone who had held an Amateur Extra class license prior to November 22, 1967, could select one specific 1x2 call sign.

1977 - FCC suspends all Amateur Radio license fees. Code sending test is waived.

Effective January 1, 1977, anyone who had held an Amateur Extra class license prior to July 2, 1974, could select one specific 1x2 call sign.

Effective April 1, 1977, anyone who held an Amateur Extra class license prior to July 1, 1976, could select one specific 1x2 call sign.

Effective July 1, 1977, any Amateur Extra class licensee could select one specific 1x2 call sign.

1978 - Call signs now assigned automatically in sequential order.

As of March 24, the FCC will be assigning call signs automatically, in sequential order. This is the start of the "Group" call sign assignments. Also the Novice license becomes a renewable license (following the example of all other license classes).

The FCC stopped (February 23) the Extra-class only vanity call sign program due to internal mishandling and maybe some corruption.

The ability of a person to hold multiple station licenses (having multiple call signs),

known as a secondary callsign, at different addresses is eliminated by the FCC.

Instant upgrades (/AE) allowed. Moving to a new call district no longer required a change of callsign.

1982 - VEC created

President Regan signs into law a bill that allows the FCC to authorize licensed hams to create and administer amateur radio license tests.

1984 - Amateur licenses go from a 5 year term to 10 years. Testing no longer required to take place at FCC field offices.

1987 - Novice enhancement. Expansion of privileges for Novices; voice privileges; a chance to sample HF without a Morse key.

1988 - Military and commercial use of Morse code ceases.

1991 - No-code Tech license class created.

FCC creates a new Technician license without a Morse code requirement. This was based on a proposal by QCWA.

1995 - Vanity callsigns introduced.

1999 - Three license classes now.

The FCC proposes major changes to amateur rules, cutting license classes from six down to three with a single 5 wpm code test for the two highest classes - General and Extra (new Novice and Advanced class licenses are eliminated).

2000 - Highest code test is 5 WPM

April 15 — Code speed for General and Extra license reduced to 5 wpm. No new Novice, Technician Plus or Advanced class licenses will be issued. Novice and Advanced class licenses can continue to be renewed. All Technician Plus licenses became converted to Technician (on the license), but retained their HF (equivalent to Novice) privileges. In a few years when all code tests were eliminated, ALL Technician Licensees have HF (Novice) privileges.

2005 - No more code test

FCC releases NPRM regarding the elimination of Morse Code tests for all licenses.

2006 - December - Coming just before the end of the year (like the license restructuring of 1999/2000) FCC releases first a confusing press release and then a few days later the official Report and Order eliminating Morse Code testing requirements for all license classes. The FCC also opens the door for a possible reconsideration of some of the voice frequency allocations announced just 1 month previously.