



The Amateur in You, Part 1

What have you been pondering?



CQ

A fellow ham recently asked me whether it's appropriate to call out CQ on a repeater. I told him that it's certainly not illegal, and a few remaining hams still do that, possibly by habit, but also that its use on repeaters is not encouraged by the ARRL (American Radio Relay League). He then asked why the ARRL discourages its use on repeaters, if it's not breaking any rules. Well, I guess that's the ten-thousand-dollar question, isn't it?

The emphasis is changing

Over the past couple of decades the ARRL has been gradually making changes to move the Amateur Radio Service from where it's *largely* a mere pastime to *largely* a public service. Some of these changes include removal of the Morse code requirement for license exams, simplifying and publishing the exams, making exams more readily available to the common folk by the reorganized VE (volunteer examiner) program, the restructuring of the ARES (Amateur Radio Emergency Service) program, and now the consideration of a more entry-level *Tyro* license class, which requires only an online exam.

But one major change the ARRL made is their encouragement of amateurs to use **plain English** in our communication. They've now asked the NCVEC (National Conference of Volunteer Examiner Coordinators) to include only QSO, QSY, and QRM in the Technician exam, having removed all other "Q" codes. Along with that, they now encourage you to use your call sign instead of calling CQ on a repeater ([T2A04](#)) and to break into a phone contact in general ([G2A08](#)), but has no problem with you calling CQ at other times. Also, they have asked us not to use the work *break* except to announce an emergency. So, to comply, when we hear *break* we should clear the frequency and allow the emergency

breaking station immediate access.

Monitoring

Another term that's [encouraged by the ARRL](#) (click **FM Repeaters**) but confusing to some is *monitoring*, which is identical to *listening*, except that it seems to suggest you're making yourself available to help by listening for an emergency or other incident, should somebody call out for help. A secondary meaning of monitoring is that you're announcing to listeners that you're on the air, in case a listener is looking specifically for *you* to talk with.

In reality, the FCC (the rule enforcer), the ARRL (the rule recommender), and the NCVEC (the exam creator) are all separate and independent organizations, each fulfilling a purpose. But they work together in a semi-cooperative way by applying pressure on each other to accomplish their designs. It's my personal opinion that many of the *public service* changes we're seeing today (and not just in amateur radio) is the partial result of the FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) response to perform their supposed role as effectively as expected in the aftermath of Hurricane Andrew in 1992, and then Hurricane Katrina in 2005. I say *supposed* because (again, in my opinion) the public has a very unrealistic expectation of FEMA's purpose, leading to their extreme criticism of the agency in recent years.

The bottom line

In the end, it's not illegal to call out CQ on a repeater, and I hope nobody will correct or even criticize another ham for doing so...that's not our job. Simply answer the call, as you would any other, and be a friend.

— Noji KNØJJ