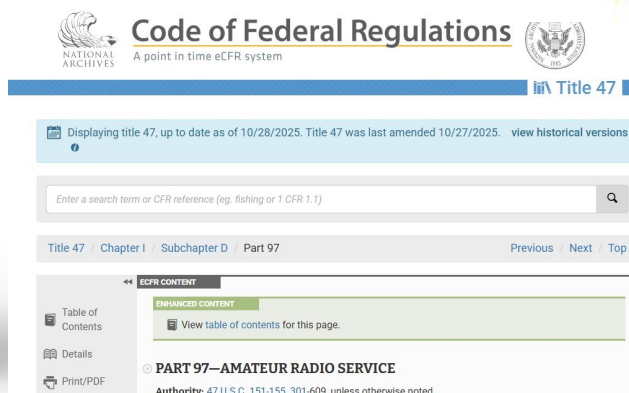
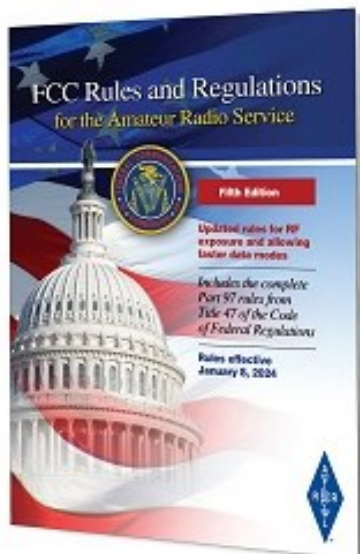


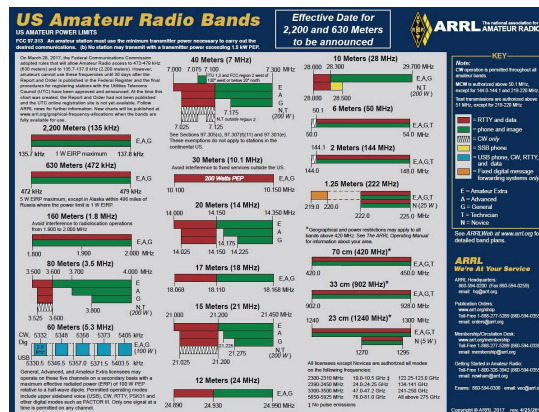
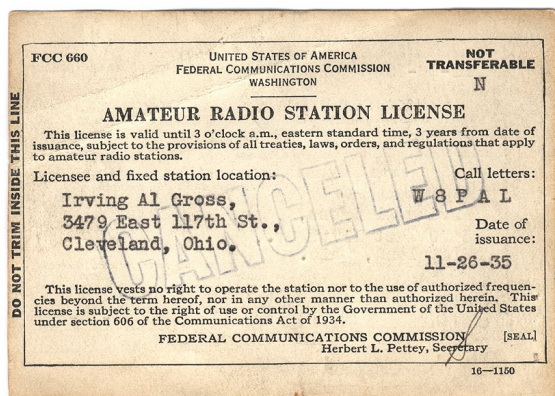
Microvolt

Monthly newsletter of the Utah Amateur Radio Club

January 2026



Them's the Rules



When we passed the ham radio exam, among other topics, we were tested on a basic knowledge of the rules. A few amateurs feel that being tested and licensed on regulations is a little unfair, if not overkill, since several other radio services, such as CB, MURS, and FRS don't require an exam for their use, and so seem to be exempt from any rules. Well, just why is amateur radio regulated so tightly? Let's take a look into that and other questions regarding the *rule of law* as it applies to amateur radio, and the need to create it, follow it, and even enforce it.

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Cover – Following the rules

The rules that govern amateur radio are found in CFR (Code of Federal Regulations) [Title 47](#) (Telecommunication) [Chapter I](#) (Federal Communications Commission) [Subchapter D](#) (Special Radio Services) [Part 97](#) (Amateur Radio Service). As licensed amateurs, we are bound by these rules when we operate on amateur radio frequencies. They outline station operation standards, frequency privileges, signal power output limitations, emergency communication, and examination administration.

If we don't follow the rules, will the ham police come looking for us? Back in June 2024 we discussed the [Best Practices](#) of amateur radio. Although they aren't the same, obeying the rules most definitely fits within amateur radio best practices.

Ours is a *self-policing service*, so that we largely govern ourselves, and are not going to be accosted by any sort of enforcement agency for minor or isolated violations. Major infractions are answerable to the FCC, but no watchdog group is actively scanning the airwaves for violators, so they depend on you. When you see or hear of **serious rules violations** (such as death threats, emergency communication interference, deliberate public safety frequency use by non-public safety operator), it's up to you to [contact the FCC](#) and inform them of the offense. ***Of course, call 911 first if you hear a death threat!***

When you see or hear of **minor offenses** (no timely call sign announcement, temporary accidental illegal transmission, music or singing, swearing), your jobs are to 1) **NOT** publicly inform the operator about the violation over the radio, 2) **NOT** take the violation personally, and 3) be kind, understanding, and **overlook the mistake**. If you're unsure whether an offense is minor, inform (text, email, PM) a more experienced amateur in private and let them handle it, then let it go.

We keep mentioning *the rules*, but are they rules, or are they laws? Technically, only Congress has the ability to create laws. Still, they have delegated the ability to establish local laws to states, and department regulations to the respective agencies. The FCC, FAA, and other such federal agencies possess the ability to establish rules that are enforceable by fines and incarceration. So, whether we refer to the



ordinances as laws or rules, they carry the same obligation of compliance, supported by appropriate privileges for obedience and consequences for violations.

The reason we have rules is to protect us and to protect the interests of those in other services. Our Part 97 rules protect us by ensuring that our slice of the spectrum is free from interference by unwanted neighbors. That being said, we do share parts of our bands with a few services by relegating amateurs as a secondary service on them, such as radiolocation on the 160-meter band. Our rules also help protect operators of other services from intrusion by amateur operators, which can likewise dilute the integrity of their services.



And what about the license-free services like CB and FRS...do they need to follow rules too? Yes, and their rules are much more strict, in that they must only transmit using "certificated" or certified (formerly "type-accepted") equipment, they cannot transmit on certificated

equipment that has been modified, and their transmissions are confined to channelized frequencies. So, no radio service, not even military, is exempt from following rules.

Our amateur radio rules permit us a unique amount of freedom to modify equipment, experiment, and explore innovative means of communication within our privileges (frequencies, power levels, bandwidths, and locations), much more so than that of many other radio services. This latitude and freedom is among the largest reasons our service must be enjoyed by licensing our operators.

Microvolt editorial staff