

The Amateur Auxiliary of the FCC and The ARRL's OO Program



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What is the Amateur Auxiliary

- The Amateur Auxiliary is composed of approximately 700 ARRL volunteer-appointees, known as Official Observers (OO) and the Local Interference Committee (LIC) who monitor the bands and notify Amateur Radio Operators of technical and operating discrepancies.
- OOs are helpers and advisors, not "band cops." In cases involving serious rule violations, such as malicious interference, they are trained and certified to gather and forward evidence that can be used by the FCC in enforcement actions. The program is based on a formal agreement between the FCC and the ARRL.
- LIC's, appointed by their ARRL Section Managers, address local interference issues.

What are the Auxiliary's objectives

- 1. Foster a wider knowledge of and better compliance with the FCC rules
- 2. Support the concepts of self-regulation in the Amateur Service
- 3. Enhance the opportunity for individual amateurs to contribute to the public welfare
- 4. Enable the Enforcement Bureau of FCC to effectively utilize its limited resources

What does an OO do

- The OO performs his/her function by observing rather than transmitting. They keep watch for such things as frequency instability, harmonics, hum, key clicks, broad signals, distorted audio, over deviation, out-of-band operation and other potential problems. The OO completes his/her task once the notification card is sent.
- In substantive rule violations cases, OOs refer problems to ARRL HQ. After review by HQ staff, the OO may be requested to provide additional information that may be forwarded to the FCC for possible enforcement action.

What does an OOC do

- The OOC is an ARRL section-level leadership official, appointed by the [Section Manager](#), for two related purposes: to supervise the maintenance monitoring work of the section [Official Observers](#), and to coordinate special [Amateur Auxiliary](#) efforts with Headquarters and the SM.
- It is the job of the OO Coordinator to recruit, supervise and direct the efforts of OOs in the section, and to report their activity monthly to the Section Manager, and Headquarters.

The OO is there to help

- The role of the Amateur Auxiliary is to provide an unbiased forum for technical and operational advice and other assistance to amateurs. The task is not to find fault or blame! It is to identify cause and effect. They also identify solutions and promote good amateur operating and engineering practices.

OO's do not enforce the rules

- Enforcement is a function reserved exclusively for the FCC. The OOs job is to provide information to the amateur. Because the boundary between observation and enforcement is not always obvious, good judgment is required of Amateur Auxiliary members. For the Amateur Auxiliary to be effective, OOs must be unbiased and avoid the appearance of having a vested interest in any specific type of amateur operation. OOs cannot advocate for specific activities, groups or causes. OOs are not to be involved in cases where they have a personal interest. The Amateur Auxiliary is designed to deal ONLY with amateur-to-amateur interference and improper on-air operation by amateurs. [Radio Frequency Interference](#) complaints should be referred to their ARRL Section Technical Coordinator.

Non-amateur intruders or "bootleggers"

- Reports of non-amateur HF intruders (a foreign broadcast station, for example) are sent to ARRL HQ for referral to the ARRL [Monitoring System](#). Cases involving bootlegging of call signs are within the scope of the Amateur Auxiliary program.

Repeater jammers

- A component of the Amateur Auxiliary program, Local Interference Committees (LIC) are appointed by the ARRL Section Manager with an OO as chairman to track down and resolve repeater jamming problems. If the problem persists, the LIC may develop information for the FCC.

repeater-to-repeater interference and coordination

- They are resolved locally or regionally, by the parties to the dispute and the affected user community. The ARRL does not become involved in repeater coordination. When such matters come to the attention of the Amateur Auxiliary program, they are referred to local and regional coordinating groups such as the Florida Repeater Council.

The OO is not doing work that should be more properly done by the FCC.

- The ARRL and the FCC have signed a Memorandum of Understanding that defines the relationship between the two. By agreement, the ARRL Amateur Auxiliary does initial fact finding for the FCC, referring appropriate cases to the Enforcement Bureau for consideration. The FCC may also request the Amateur Auxiliary to gather information as needed

What can be done about interference on the HF bands?

- Most interference on today's crowded bands is of the "no-fault" variety, it is better resolved by flexibility rather than confrontation. Malicious or harmful interference is actionable under [Part 97 rules](#)

An example of malicious interference

- 1) Two or more stations are in communication on the same frequency.
- 2) Another station begins transmitting on the same or an adjacent frequency.
- 3) The original stations, acknowledging on-the-air that they cannot copy one another through the interfering station's transmissions, and decide to move to another frequency.
- 4) When they move, the interfering station *follows* and commences interfering transmissions again.
- Additionally, malicious interference must involve an ongoing campaign on a regular, repeated basis: No one can reasonably expect the FCC and/or the Amateur Auxiliary to act on a one-time, isolated event.

rude remarks, racial slurs, obscene or indecent words.

- Much of what is heard may be inappropriate and violates standards of polite society, but it is not illegal. Only obscene or indecent transmissions are illegal. See the ARRL's [FCC Rule Book](#) for a discussion of how the FCC defines the standards for obscenity and indecency. Serious cases can be referred to the Amateur Auxiliary for handling.

What can be done about bad language?

- We cannot expect the FCC to devote its resources to the correction of inappropriate, but not illegal, language or less serious violations. These must be addressed by the amateur community itself. We must not let the bad behavior drive out the good: Each of us who cares about Amateur Radio must maintain the highest possible standards when operating, even in the face of provocation. We must let other amateurs know, as politely as possible, that we expect them to observe the same standards.

. If you get an OO advisory card in the mail

- First, don't worry: **This is not a citation!** The OO postcard is simply a friendly note to alert you to possible equipment factors or operating practices. Remember, OOs are friendly helper-advisors, we are not the "radio police"!

OFFICIAL OBSERVER ADVISORY NOTICE

Radio: _____, your call was heard _____ calling _____ working _____ at _____ UTC.

Date: _____ 19 ____ Frequency _____ kHz. Mode _____. Your RST _____.

The following is noted in the interest of maintaining Amateur Radio's reputation for good operating/technical practices: 1 FREQUENCY INSTABILITY 2 CHIRP 3 SPURIOUS 4 HARMONIC 5 HUM
6 KEY CLICKS 7 BROAD SIGNAL 8 DISTORTED AUDIO 9 OVER DEVIATION 10 OUT OF BAND
11 IMPROPER ID 12 LANGUAGE 13 CAUSING INTERFERENCE 15 CARRIER 20 OTHER

Remarks: _____

Please refer to FCC Regulation _____. Please take a few minutes to determine what equipment factors or operating practices might have contributed to this apparent departure from the rule or the good amateur practice standard. The intent of this notice is to alert you to the above noted operating condition. **NO REPLY IS NECESSARY.** The undersigned ARRL Official Observer has fulfilled this helping role by simply alerting you, and is not required to reply to any correspondence. Thank you for your attention and any cooperative efforts to enhance the high standards of the Amateur Radio Service which we all share with pride.

FSD-213(835) Signature _____ Call _____

Do you have to reply to the notice.

- No reply is necessary! You may want to take a few minutes to determine what caused the apparent problem and take steps to fix it. Like most amateurs, you are proud of your license and you have the same pride in the quality of your signal and operating practices. Your corrective actions might even head off an FCC "pink slip" down the road.

If the card seemed a little nit-picky

- OOs are advised to avoid hair-splitting and to deal with black-and-white rule discrepancies only. They should avoid the "gray areas" of the rules. OOs should not be nit-pickers. For example, an OO should not send a notice to someone who forgot to identify his station for ten minutes and eight seconds! If you feel that the OO sent you a notice that violates the spirit of the OO program, send a copy to your [Section Manager](#) or to [Headquarters](#) for evaluation and possible action. Quality control is critically important in a program as sensitive as this one!

Is a record of the notice kept anywhere

- A record of the notice is kept at ARRL Headquarters for a period of one year, after which it is destroyed. Records are kept so that if a case evolves into a serious, hard-core compliance issue, it may be used by the FCC as evidence, showing that voluntary measures of achieving resolution were ineffective. The information is also used to guide OOs in special monitoring efforts. Otherwise, the information is kept strictly confidential and is never released outside of the Auxiliary.

You received a Good Operator Report

- Congratulations! To emphasize the positive nature of the program, "Good Operator Reports" are sent to operators whose radio signals and/or operating practices are consistent with the highest standards and are a model for others to follow. Every amateur should strive to pattern their operating and signals after your example!

OO's are trained and/or certified

- All OOs must pass a comprehensive examination, based on a set of study materials, before they can be certified as members of the Amateur Auxiliary. These materials include an extensive training manual, *The FCC Rule Book*, and the *ARRL Handbook for Radio Communications*.

How can You apply to be an OO?

- It's not a job for everyone. An OO will observe some operating practices that will frustrate him or her. There's no room in the OO program for "band cops." OOs gain satisfaction when they're able to call an undesirable situation to the attention of someone who honestly wasn't aware of it and who is genuinely appreciative of the assistance.
- To apply, fill out the [online application](#) or contact your [Section Manager](#)

Any Questions?

Links for forms and more information

<http://www.arrl.org/fsd-187-application-for-station-appointment>

<http://www.arrl.org/shop/FCC-Rules-and-Regulations-for-the-Amateur-Radio-Service/>

<http://www.arrl.org/part-97-amateur-radio>

<http://www.arrl.org/intruder-watch>

<http://www.arrl.org/radio-frequency-interference-rfi>