

# Unauthorized Radio Operation

## FCC Consumer Facts

### Background

Section 301 of the Communications Act of 1934 prohibits the “use or operation of any apparatus for the transmission of energy or communications or signals by radio” without a license issued by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). Thus, generally, in order to use or operate a radio station, the Communications Act requires that you first obtain a license from the FCC.

There are certain limited exceptions. For example, the FCC has provided blanket authorization to operators of Citizens Band (CB) radios, radio control stations, domestic ship and aircraft radios, and certain other types of devices. This blanket authorization means that operators of these devices are not required to have individual station licenses. Operators are required to operate their devices in a manner consistent with the FCC’s operational and technical rules for these services. Failure to do so could be considered an unauthorized operation. For further information regarding operation of these devices, see the FCC’s consumer fact sheet at [www.fcc.gov/cgb/consumerfacts/prs.html](http://www.fcc.gov/cgb/consumerfacts/prs.html).

### Sanctions

The FCC takes enforcement of unauthorized radio operations very seriously. Anyone found operating a radio station without an FCC authorization can be subject to a variety of enforcement actions, including seizure of equipment, imposition of monetary forfeitures, and criminal penalties.

### Filing a Complaint with the FCC

If you have a complaint about unauthorized radio operation, you can file it with the FCC. There is no charge for filing a complaint. You can file your complaint using the on-line complaint Form 2000E found on the FCC Web site at [www.fcc.gov/cgb/complaints.html](http://www.fcc.gov/cgb/complaints.html). You can also file your complaint with the FCC’s Consumer Center by e-mailing [fccinfo@fcc.gov](mailto:fccinfo@fcc.gov); calling 1-888-CALL-FCC (1-888-225-5322) voice or 1-888-TELL-FCC (1-888-835-5322) TTY; faxing 1-866-418-0232; or writing to:

Federal Communications Commission  
Consumer & Governmental Affairs Bureau  
Consumer Inquiries and Complaints Division  
445 12<sup>th</sup> Street, SW  
Washington, DC 20554.

### What to Include in Your Complaint

The best way to provide all the information the FCC needs to process your complaint is to complete fully the on-line complaint Form 2000E. If you do not use the on-line complaint Form 2000E, your complaint, at a minimum, should indicate:

- your name, address, email address, and phone number where you can be reached;
- name and phone number of the company that you are complaining about; and
- any additional details of your complaint, including time, date, and nature of the conduct or activity you are complaining about and identifying information for any companies, organizations, or individuals involved.

### For More Information

For information about other telecommunications issues, visit the FCC’s Consumer & Governmental Affairs Bureau Web site at [www.fcc.gov/cgb](http://www.fcc.gov/cgb), or contact the FCC’s Consumer Center using the information provided for filing a complaint.



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*To receive information on this and other FCC consumer topics through the Commission's electronic subscriber service, click on [www.fcc.gov/cgb/contacts/](http://www.fcc.gov/cgb/contacts/).*

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03/10/08\*

