

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.

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 an on-line complaint form found at esupport.fcc.gov/complaints.htm. You can also file your complaint with the FCC’s Consumer Center by e-mailing 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 12th 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. When you open the on-line complaint form, you will be asked a series of questions that will take you to the particular section of the form you need to complete. If you do not use the on-line complaint form, 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, or contact the FCC’s Consumer Center using the information provided for filing a complaint.



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For this or any other consumer publication in an accessible format (electronic ASCII text, Braille, large print, or audio), please write or call us at the address or phone number below, or send an e-mail to FCC504@fcc.gov.

To receive information on this and other FCC consumer topics through the Commission's electronic subscriber service, visit www.fcc.gov/cgb/contacts/.

This document is for consumer education purposes only and is not intended to affect any proceedings or cases involving this subject matter or related issues.

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