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Policies and Procedures

Title: Acquisition of Radio Frequency Authorizations and Equipment

Number: 260.1.v3

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Originating Office: Office of the Chief Information Office, Communications Services Staff, Telecommunications Mission Area Control Officer

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Distribution: Headquarters, Areas, and Locations

This directive states authorities, policies, and procedures for initiating, modifying, or terminating a Radio Frequency Authorization, as well as the acquisition of radio frequency devices.

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1. Purpose

This directive states authorities, policies, and procedures for initiating, modifying, or terminating a Radio Frequency Authorization, as well as the acquisition of radio frequency devices.

2. Background

The use of the radio spectrum is essential to Government functions ranging from defense and public safety to air traffic control and weather forecasting. U.S. policies for managing the spectrum must ensure it is used efficiently and fairly while promoting innovation and serving user needs.

Many ARS functions require the use of radio or radio-type transmitting/receiving equipment or related devices. The assignment of a Radio Frequency Authorization (RFA) is required prior to the acquisition of any device which emits electromagnetic waves through free space, such as radios, radar, telemetry equipment, or radio-type instruments used for research. RFAs are granted by the Interdepartmental Radio Advisory Committee (IRAC)/Frequency Assignment Subcommittee (FAS) which is headed by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) under the Department of Commerce (DOC).

3. Policy

No radio transmitting/receiving equipment shall be acquired until a radio frequency authorization request has been submitted and approved by the IRAC/FAS. A copy of the RFA shall be maintained in the purchase order file.

Frequencies specifically assigned for Government use are those in the M30-50, M162-174 (VHF), and M406-420 (UHF) bands.

All radio frequency equipment must be programmable in one of the bands listed above and must meet the congressional mandate for narrowband compliance if operating in the VHF or UHF bands.

RFA requests for new systems utilizing new equipment shall be submitted to the ARS Radio Frequency Manager (ARS/OCIO/CSS) at least one year prior to the date of planned procurement. This lead time will allow for a system review by the USDA IRAC Representative and any coordination required with other Government Agencies if applicable. All other frequency requests should be sent to the ARS Radio Frequency Manager at least six to eight months prior to planned usage to allow for Agency coordination.

If adding, substituting, or removing one or more of the particulars of an RFA (i.e., station class, wattage, latitude/longitude, etc.), a modification must be submitted to the ARS Radio Frequency Manager who will submit a modified RFA to the IRAC/FAS via established channels.

When a frequency is no longer required or used at a location, a request to cancel that frequency must be sent to the ARS Radio Frequency Manager so that record can be removed from the Government Master File (GMF).

4. Responsibilities

4.1 ARS OCIO Radio Frequency Manager shall:

- Serve as principal point of contact for all matters relating to radio communications and frequency management.
- Represent ARS to the USDA IRAC Representative
- Maintain a current copy of the NTIA Manual and be familiar with NTIA policies.
- Manage all radio frequencies used by the Agency.
 - Maintain a file of all current RFAs for the Agency.
 - Submit Agency requests for radio frequency assignments.
 - Disseminate RFAs to office/location point of contact upon approval of new or modified requests.
 - Report and/or resolve radio interference or noncompliance with regulations.
 - Review and update all RFAs within five years of the revision date of the RFA.

4.2 Requesting Office/Location shall:

- Designate a central point of contact as needed for overseeing the process of applying for an RFA. This is often (but not always) the same individual requesting a frequency (or frequencies).
- Forward radio frequency requests to the ARS Radio Frequency Manager for processing.
- Maintain copies of all documentation pertaining to radio and associated equipment purchase, the radio frequency request submitted for approval, and the approved RFA.

5. Authorities

The Communications Act of 1934, as amended

Executive Order 12046 dated March 26, 1978

NTIA Manual of Regulations and Procedures for Radio Frequency Management

Department of Commerce Organization Order 10-10, dated October 5, 1992

Departmental Regulation 3300-005, Policies for Planning and Managing Wireless Technologies in USDA

6. Procedures

When requesting a new frequency assignment, the initiator of the request must provide the information requested in Exhibit A of this P&P to the individual designated as the point of contact for the Office/Location as indicated in Section 4.

The Office/Location point of contact will ensure all requested information has been provided and will forward the request to the ARS Radio Frequency Manager.

The ARS Frequency Manager will translate the information provided by the requestor into the card format required by NTIA and transmit the request to the USDA/IRAC/FAS representative.

The USDA/IRAC/FAS representative will review the card format request, make corrections if necessary, assign a USDA serial number to the request, coordinate with other Federal agencies if required, and transmit the final request to the NTIA/IRAC/FAS.

The NTIA/IRAC/FAS will review the formal request making comments, requesting clarification, or approving. If approved, an NTIA serial number will be assigned and the RFA will be added to the GMF. If not immediately approved, the USDA/IRAC/FAS representative will work with the ARS Frequency Manager (and the requestor if necessary) to address any issues or concerns identified by the NTIA/IRAC/FAS and the request will be resubmitted for approval.

Upon receiving copies of the approved RFAs, the ARS Radio Frequency Manager will distribute them to the requesting office/location. A copy of the RFA should be kept by the office/location point of contact and/or the initiator of the request.

7. Acquisition of Equipment

No radio transmitting/receiving or other type radio equipment, instrument, or device shall be acquired by purchase or lease until the request for a RFA has been approved and an authorization number assigned.

USDA/Forest Service has consolidated radio contracts which can be used for purchasing new equipment. Discounts on these contracts generally exceed GSA discounts by a substantial margin. If you are interested in information concerning the consolidated radio contracts, please contact the ARS Radio Frequency Manager.

8. Definitions

ARS Agricultural Research Service
CSS Communications Services Staff
DOC Department of Commerce
FAS Frequency Assignment Subcommittee
GMF Government Master File
IRAC Interdepartmental Radio Advisory Committee
MHz Megahertz

NTIA National Telecommunications and Information Administration
OCIO Office of the Chief Information Officer
RFA Radio Frequency Authorization
UHF Ultra High Frequency
USDA United States Department of Agriculture
VHF Very High Frequency

General inquiries regarding radio frequency should be directed to Maureen Harris at 301-504-1088 or maureen.harris@ars.usda.gov.

/s/

Paul Gibson
ARS/OCIO

Date

5/7/12

Exhibit A

Information Required for Requesting a Radio Frequency Assignment

The information requested in 4-8 is required for each frequency used by a station in a system. (Antenna information or specific station location information is not required for mobile stations; however, the area of operation of the mobiles is required.)

1. Agency, contact person, address, and phone number
2. Brief description of operation and requirement for radio communications.
3. Name of the system (Please note: An office name, area of operation, project name, or any other appropriate name may be used to identify the system.)
4. Transmitting station:
 - a. Location: (i.e. Athens, GA)
 - b. Coordinates of location: (latitude and longitude to the nearest second)
 - Must use NAD 83 datum for all coordinates
 - c. Elevation of location above mean sea level: (in meters)
 - d. Type of antenna: (i.e. collinear, coaxial, yagi, etc.)
 - e. Gain of antenna: (in Dbi – can be obtained from manufacturer)
 - f. Height of antenna above ground level: (in meters)
 - g. Orientation of antenna in degrees from True North (ND for non-directional):
5. Transmitter location and antenna
 - a. Location: (i.e. Athens, GA)
 - b. Coordinates of location: (latitude and longitude to the nearest second)
 - c. Elevation of location above mean sea level: (in meters)
 - d. Type of antenna: (i.e. collinear, coaxial, yagi, etc.)
 - e. Gain of antenna: (in Dbi – can be obtained from manufacturer)
 - f. Height of antenna above ground level: (in meters)
 - g. Orientation of antenna in degrees from True North (ND for non-directional):
6. Receiver location and antenna
 - a. If the receiving station is at a fixed location for point-to-point communication or is a repeater in a land-mobile system, provide the information outlined in #5 above for the receiver location and antenna.
 - b. If the receiving station is mobile, identify the area of operation (i.e. 80 kilometer radius of the transmitter station, throughout the state of Georgia, etc.)
7. Total number of stations in the system: (Indicate one of the following ranges: 1-10, 11-30, 31-100, 101-300, or 301-1000)
8. System Drawing that illustrates and identifies:
 - a. All stations in the system
 - b. Frequencies used by each station
 - c. Type of station
 - d. Assigned call signs

To modify/update an existing RFA, simply mark the desired changes on a copy of the RFA and submit it to the ARS Radio Frequency Manager for processing.