You, the FCC and Your Radio License Responsibility

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The Automatic Termination program has been active since February. Our conversations with those companies that have received termination notices have revealed that there are a number people who have licenses but don't really understand their responsibility in maintaining the integrity of the license.

One of the FCC's jobs is to ensure that people that are licensed for frequencies are actually using them. The Automatic Termination program makes it easier for the FCC to notify those licensees who have not submitted the required notifications of construction in a timely manner.

It is incumbent on all licensees to be familiar with the information on their license. EWA recently had a client who received his license but didn't notice that he had received a new call sign and that he was required to file a notification of construction. When he failed to submit the notification of construction within the allotted one-year time frame, the Automatic Termination process was triggered.

ULS: The Licensees' Tool

It used to be that the licensee had to go through a third-party, a lawyer or a licensing company to change any information on their licenses. Through the Universal Licensing System (ULS), the FCC's web site opened up the opportunity for licensees to be responsible for the maintenance of their own radio licenses. ULS automated the FCC database to allow for more ease of interaction between the licensee and the database making essential administrative changes as easy to accomplish as going web surfing.

To access the ULS, you must know and have on file your radio license call sign, FCC Registration Number (FRN) and your password.. An FRN can be obtained by registering through the FCC Commission Registration System (CORES) at https://svartifoss2.fcc.gov/coresWeb/publicHome.do. In this process, you will also choose a password. Using the FRN and ULS password, you may then access the FCC ULS site, (http://wireless.fcc.gov/uls/ or the link is on the Wireless Telecommunications Bureau page).

Now you can easily fulfill your responsibility to file for notifications of construction, minor radio system modifications and assignments of the license.

EWA: An Expert on ULS

There is another way to manage your radio system licenses. Leave it to the experts at the Enterprise Wireless Alliance (EWA). For more than 50 years, we have been guiding licensees through the regulatory maze. Our veteran staff is experienced at processing administrative changes, such as a new address, construction notification, and assignment of authorization. We had a radio dealer client, whose customer died suddenly leaving his wife to continue running their plumbing business. She did not know what to do with the radio licenses to reflect the change in company ownership. She could have gone into ULS, but at a time like this she didn't want to be bothered. She provided EWA with the FRN and password and we took care of the assignment of license through the ULS.

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Most companies have an employee managing their radio system licensing. Is that person trained to keep up with changing FCC licensing policies? If that person is replaced who trains the new person? EWA assists our members with continuing ULS training. We can teach you the critical steps you need to take to keep your radio system licenses in good standing with the FCC. Call us to find out more about this and the many other services EWA provides.

The ULS is a tool for the licensee to become familiar with and to use. But, if a licensee doesn't feel comfortable with ULS or doesn't want to deal with it, then that is yet another time when they can call EWA to take care of their spectrum needs. □

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Further complicating this, scheduling conflicts, logistical problems, and unexpected costs frequently result from getting the necessary contractors and end-users on location at the same time. Compare this to the 20-minute installation of a wireless I/O radio, allowing one man to quickly complete the job and move to his next assignment.

Reliability

People often question the reliability of wireless products. As in all technological innovations, "new" takes some getting used to. Radio has proved itself as a reliable data highway for remote data collection. With the wireless I/O functionality of radio networks, the reliability question again becomes a possible stumbling block for the advancement of this technology.

Some wireless I/O providers have built safeguards into their networks to help operators address reliability. Examples of this are "link alarms," "command alarms," and "autonomous collection mode."

Link alarms let an operator know if the signal between an I/O slave and the RTU has been lost. The operator then knows that he is no longer receiving data from the instrument.

Command alarms warn the operator that while the link is operational, a command to change (such as a command to shut a valve) could not be executed. The reason may be mechanical or electrical, but in either case the "need to know" is critical – and the wireless I/O can supply this alarm.

Autonomous mode means that if an RTU loses its radio link to the SCADA software host, the wireless I/O radio and the radio in the RTU will continue communicating. The RTU is programmed to be the control on the location – so if, for example, a tank reaches the high-level mark, the RTU will receive this information from the wireless I/O radio and send (via wireless I/O radio) the command to shut the valve to the tank.

Notification Makes the Difference

No system is completely immune to signal loss. Wired systems are prone to having wires cut during construction or repairs. Rust, corrosion, steam, dirt, dust, and water all can affect a wired instrumentation system. The difference is that wire cannot notify you of a problem – but a radio can. □

Author Biography –
Stephen D. Emrich has more than 15 years of technical sales and marketing experience and recently joined FreeWave Technologies as a business development executive. Emrich previously served as vice president of sales and marketing for Ira D. Conklin & Sons, where he sold a foam filling process for abandoned natural gas distribution pipelines. In that position, Emrich was responsible for users in the following markets: water/waste water, traffic control, gas distribution, electric utility, public safety and railroad.