

FCC Abuse of Power Investigation



The FCC has announced that it has concluded a 3-year-long investigation into allegations of radio amateurs systemically violating **§97.313 Transmitter power standards**, section (a) which states:

(a) “amateur station must use the minimum transmitter power necessary to carry out the desired communications.”

The FCC appointed a committee to look into the matter and after 3 years of monitoring over-the-air RF densities using calibrated meters and antennas and direct observation of amateur stations in use, determined that the vast majority of amateur radio operators consistently used the maximum power output of their equipment.

Mobile radios using local repeater systems routinely had their power levels set to maximum even when the minimum settings would have sufficed.

The committee reported that home HF base stations were capable, on average, of 100 watts output (they also noted that several manufacturers produced units capable of 200 watts output). All of the observed operations were conducted at the maximum output power regardless of the distance between stations or the propagation conditions.

Some of the most blatant violations were found among amateurs using amplifiers external to their transceivers. HF linear amplifiers were recorded using an average of 800 watts output power, again, regardless of the distance or conditions. Approximately 3% of power amplifier users were found to regularly operate at legal limits, 1,500 watts, and beyond. In extreme cases amateurs were found to have purchased commercial AM radio station transmitters capable of many thousand watt outputs on which they operated in blatant disregard not only of good practices, but without properly identifying their transmissions in an attempt to shield themselves from fines or loss of license.

The FCC has weighed its options and has decided to modify part **§97.313 Transmitter power standards**, sections (b) and (c) which currently states;

(b) No station may transmit with a transmitter power exceeding 1.5 kW PEP.

(c) No station may transmit with a transmitter power output exceeding 200 W PEP:

The change to the rule will now read:

(b) No station may transmit with a transmitter power exceeding 200 W PEP.

(c) No station may transmit with a transmitter power output exceeding 100 W PEP:

Any radio amateur exceeding these power limits will be subject to a fine of \$10,000 per violation and suspension of their operating privileges for a period of 5 years.

When asked for comment a spokesperson gave the following statement:

“The FCC does not want to punish the good guys and gals out there who follow the rules. It’s always a few bad apples that ruin it for the rest, but in this case we found that most of the apples were rotten and it was the minority of radio amateurs who kept their power levels low.”

Therefore beginning April 1st, 2019 the FCC has banned all HF linear amplifiers capable of output power exceeding 200 watts and will require owners of those base stations capable of producing 200 watts to have power output regulators installed to limit them to 100 watts maximum.

Additionally the FCC is looking into the issue of restricting antenna gain to a maximum of 6 decibels effective radiated power. Ⓢ

