

No Code International

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August 20, 1999

TO: All IARU Region 1 Member Societies
FROM: No Code International
SUBJECT: The Morse Code Requirement in Amateur Radio Licensing

Dear IARU Region 1 Society,

This input from No-Code International (NCI) to the Region 1 IARU Conference is from an international organization with members from 42 countries and many of whom are also members of IARU member societies. On behalf of our members, NCI offers IARU members our views on modernization of licensing requirements, and the future of amateur radio.

There are no longer any valid reasons for a Morse code requirement in amateur radio licensing. International regulation S25.5 (the "Morse requirement" part of Article S25) must be removed as soon as is practicable. Timely removal of S25.5, by ITU member administrations, will continue to be the main objective sought by NCI, irrespective of what policy the IARU develops. However, we are aware of a significant number of societies with policies parallel to those of NCI. We see a situation where some out-of-date IARU policies will be overtaken by events.

The review of (the whole of) Article S25 in the international radio regulations is not in itself an essential action, but can be carried out at an appropriate future time to update the international layer of amateur radio regulations. The removal of S25.5 is administratively very simple to deal with, by simply being "struck out" as no longer having relevance. As well, we believe that S25.5 does not comply with the ITU Constitution, and is also offensive regarding United Nations declarations regarding personal discrimination. The formulated "barrier" is being exposed for what it is. From various sources we are aware of many administrations who need no further convincing about removing S25.5 and eliminating Morse testing in national regulations.

There is no need to link review of Article S25 with the formation of an associated ITU-R recommendation on amateur radio licensing. There is certainly no case to have a "mandatory recommendation." It would also be irrelevant to have a Morse code test described in a recommendation.

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IARU Region One Member Societies:

The linkage from regulations to recommendations should be by a “may” rather than “shall” statement, so that the recommendation is of the nature of being good advice but not over-riding national choices. Amateur radio licensing has existed for many decades with no ITU-R recommendation on qualifications for amateur radio licensing. In any case, the wide differences between countries with unique national licensing regimes could not be satisfied by a single ITU-R recommendation.

There also needs to be ripple through from removal of S25.5 to the "reciprocal licensing" and "international amateur radio permit" conditions. Future regional and international agreements should have zero reference to Morse code qualifications. NCI will formally input to those processes at an appropriate time.

One interim situation, pending removal of S25.5, is for administrations to allow access to all amateur HF bands with a 5 word-per-minute Morse element as part of the operational and technical qualifications. Higher speed Morse code testing is not needed to meet existing treaty obligations. IARU is no doubt aware that several administrations have already taken that step, and also mention their policy to completely eliminate all Morse testing once S25.5 is removed.

NCI policy is also to completely eliminate all Morse testing elements in any amateur radio qualification and licence, worldwide, and we are actively pursuing that objective. Some time back NCI did a full mailout to all ITU member administrations with the 5 wpm interim suggestion, along with an associated “sunset clause” statement, however, be in no doubt that NCI is firmly a supporter of “no code requirement whatever” in future regulations.

Morse code does have a future in amateur radio, as an interest group topic. It has no future as a mandatory licensing element.

NCI wishes the organizers of the IARU Region 1 Conference all the best for a successful event. It may not be too late for the IARU to have an effective say in the future of amateur radio, but that could require a good deal of realism to be included in proceedings.

on behalf of the:

NCI BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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