

Appendix A

Official Observer Advisory Notice

FSD-213-R (6/99)

Radio: _____ your call sign was heard calling () working () _____ at ____:____ UTC.

Date: _____ Frequency: _____ Mode: _____ Your RST _____.

I am sorry to report that I noted your operation as above, and felt you could use a little operating assistance in the following areas: () Frequency Instability; () Chirp; () Spurious; () Harmonic; () Hum; () Key Clicks; () Broad Signal; () Distorted Audio; () Over Deviation; () Out of Band; () Improper Identification; () Language; () Causing Interference; () Carrier; () Other (see Remarks).

Remarks: _____

For reference, see Industry Canada RIC _____. Please take a few minutes to determine what equipment factors or operating practices might have contributed to this apparent departure from the Regulations or good amateur operating practice. The intent of this notice is to alert you to the above noted operating condition. NO REPLY IS NECESSARY. The undersigned RAC Official Observer has fulfilled this helping role by simply alerting you, and is not required to reply to any correspondence. Thank you for your attention and any cooperative effort to enhance the high standards of the Amateur Radio Service which we all share with pride.

Signed _____, RAC OO. Call Sign _____

Appendix B

Good Operator Report

FSD-15-R (6/99)

Radio: _____ your call sign was heard calling () working () _____ at ____:____ UTC.

Date: _____ Frequency: _____ Mode: _____ Your RST _____.

We thought you would like to know . . .

that this RAC Official Observer has noted your EXCELLENT () signal quality () operating procedure as a fine example for all radio amateurs.

Remarks: _____

The undersigned RAC Official Observer thanks you for your excellent example of good amateur radio operating practice for others in the Amateur Radio Service. Keep inspiring others to do better, by your good example.

Signed _____, RAC OO. Call Sign _____

imperative that you portray your OO activities as being of help and assistance to those with whom you come in contact. This helping role has been a tradition in the OO program since its founding over 50 years ago by the American Radio Relay League.

5.2 Advice not Enforcement

To be viable and effective, the OO program must avoid the appearance of enforcement. Before amateurs can be receptive to your help, you must have a clear understanding of your role as one who offers technical and operational advice. You are not one who engages in any form of enforcement. You can foster the kind of rapport necessary to bring about behavioral change (a) if you understand your proper role, and (b) if your entire demeanor and your manner of communicating is beyond reproach, totally objective, and delivered in the spirit of assistance. Remember: You are not an enforcer; you are an advisor-helper.

5.3 Projecting the Friendly Spirit on Your Advisory Notices

Your principal avenue of communication with the amateurs you monitor is the OO Advisory Notice. This is the card on which you advise amateurs of violations of the regulations and of signal discrepancies of a technical nature. How you fill out this Advisory Notice will make or break the program. Your objective is to bring about compliance with the regulations by friendly persuasion. The printed portion is intended to appeal to the spirit of cooperation in a friendly manner. For the OO notice to bring about the desired response, the OO must project a caring attitude about the person receiving it. This can be done with a neat handwritten message in the remarks section to detail the infraction in an objective, friendly manner. Also most importantly, the OO should add a personal note to “soften the blow” of the OO advisory. Words like: “I hope this report will be of help to you. 73” can go a long way to bring about good results. A sentence like that could have been printed on the form, but a neat, legible, handwritten message personalizes it and projects the caring concept. Make sure that all comments made on advisory reports are either objective factual comments regarding the infraction, or friendly ones as above. Under no circumstances should an OO ever make comments like “You should know better!”. Such comments are not in keeping with the objectives of the program. Also, remember that what you put in writing must never be interpreted as libelous by the recipient.

5.4 Reactions and How to Deal with Them

If you take your OO job too seriously, you may find yourself in an occasional emotional turmoil because of some of the reactions you get in response to your Advisory Notices. Here are some typical reactions with some discussion of each.

1) “It wasn’t me, I wasn’t on, someone must be bootlegging my call.” Of the few negative comments likely to be received, this is fairly typical. It *may* mean that you are not using enough care in identifying a station heard. While it is unlikely that the call was being “bootlegged,” you have no way of knowing whether or not the amateur involved really was on the air then. Since the notice is a friendly advisory, it doesn’t matter. It will have done its job anyway. Please note also that the OO Advisory Notice refers to “your call sign heard.” This is to avoid placing blame, and stress objective reporting of what is heard.

2) “I paid a thousand dollars for this equipment. It’s the best made and you must be wrong.” This is a head-in-the-sand attitude. The amount paid for the equipment is not necessarily a measure of its signal quality. Any equipment can be maladjusted, and a malfunction is possible too.

3) “I don’t belong to RAC and want nothing to do with any of its programs. Who appointed you guardian of the amateur bands?” Fortunately, reactions such as this are rare, but when received, the temptation to reply in kind should be resisted. There are amateurs who, having disapproved of something RAC is doing or has done (maybe years ago), illogically oppose *anything* RAC does today. Don’t get embroiled in a “holier than thou” dialogue.

There is something to the old adage “You can lead a horse to water, but you can’t make him drink.” Some people can be shown that what they are doing is wrong and causing others a problem, but they shrug and go on doing it. Remember that you can’t force them to comply. They have to make that decision for themselves. If they persist, given enough rope, they will usually “hang” themselves.

If you receive more than your share of defensive (or abusive) comments, first ensure that you are not to blame. Understand that the natural tendency is for the Advisory Notice recipient to be defensive. You must do everything possible to let the recipient know that you are (1) simply reporting a condition relating to radio signals; and that (2) you are not attacking the individual personally. If you are sure that you are following this advice, then you should not be troubled by the occasional negative response you may receive. If you are getting a continual stream of adverse reactions, you may want to analyze the reactions you are getting, to learn what might be triggering them and how to better deal with certain situations. Advice from your OO Coordinator or Section Manager might be helpful.

5.5 You, the Official Observer

Not everyone is suited for Official Observer activity. You must search within yourself to see if you have the qualities that it takes. Your duties involve service to your fellow amateurs. While others are busy working the rare DX station, the OO may be off monitoring second harmonics. You have to love to help your fellow amateurs. Get satisfaction from those who respond positively to your work! There will be lots of those. Your efforts may go largely unheralded by the amateur community. If your motivational interest is in wearing the policeman’s badge of authority, then save yourself and the Amateur Radio Service the embarrassment of your participation. But, if the OO program is right for you, and you are willing, go for it. We need you!

4. ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES

4.1 Introduction

RAC Official Observers are among the most important of Field Organization appointees, because the OO performs a function vital to the future of Amateur Radio's own well-being. The OO must not only be a well-qualified, but must also be capable of exercising good judgment, tact and diplomacy. There is no place in the OO program for amateurs with uncontrollable prejudices or patronizing attitudes. The OO is dedicated to a mission of help and fraternalism, to advise fellow amateurs of potential violations of amateur regulations and to request that they take corrective measures in the interest of the general welfare of the Amateur Radio Service.

4.2 Official Observer Advisory Notice (Appendix A)

The primary notification tool of the OO is the Official Observer Advisory Notice. This form is used for notifying stations of discrepancies in operation. A space is provided for reference to the appropriate regulation. The OO should study the regulation in question to be sure it applies. The psychology of properly filling out an Advisory Notice is discussed below. A rubber stamp is convenient for indicating a return address. Cards are mailed to the address shown in the call sign data base on the RAC web site.

Official Observers should be careful to avoid sending a notice to someone interfering with them or a net or repeater in which they are operating. This is not ordinarily conducive to good relations with the amateurs the program is trying to serve. Even when a station has a poor signal, it is best not to take the chance of giving the impression that the notice arises from your personal interest. (On the other hand, there is no harm in asking another Official Observer to take an independent look if the poor signals continue to be observed.) Make your advisories strictly the result of detached objective monitoring in which you are not otherwise personally involved.

4.3 Good Operator Report (Appendix B)

To further project the OO objective of being of assistance to fellow amateurs, the OO should also report on stations heard that have outstanding *good* signals or operating procedures. In today's radio world of high quality commercial equipment, the radio owner is less likely to be responsible for the technical excellence of his signal, but his operating skill is a matter of individual cultivation. Thus, it is primarily operating technique that would be subject to recognition via the "Good Operator Report." Such reports should be sent to those amateurs who set an example for the rest of the community by displaying the *best* that Amateur Radio has to offer. The "Good Operator Report" is intended to further enhance the positive image of the Official Observer program within the Amateur Radio community as well as to properly recognize excellence in on the air activities.

Issue at least 70% Good Operator Reports every month, especially as a new Official Observer.

4.4 Official Observer Activity Report

The OO is required to send an Official Observer Activity Report to the OO Coordinator or Section Manager in a regular, timely manner (usually monthly). The Section Manager (or OO Coordinator) determines the acceptable frequency. Retain a copy for your own records. A compilation of observation statistics will prove helpful to an evaluation of the effectiveness of the OO program. Please keep your report free of extraneous comments; just include the facts. A copy is retained by the OO Coordinator and the original forwarded to the RAC Field Services Manager. The OO should keep his/her copy for three years.

4.5 Correspondence

An OO may become embroiled in a "pen pal" exchange as a result of a Advisory Notice. It is nice to be helpful, but Official Observers need not feel that they are obliged to solve all the recipient's problems. Of course, one doesn't just "brush off" an amateur who, upon being notified he has a problem with his signal, asks for assistance on how to correct it. Some Official Observers may go to considerable trouble to render such assistance. This is fine, but it is not required. There are practical limitations to the extent an OO can become involved in the problems of an amateur to whom an Advisory Notice is sent. Your follow-up correspondence may refer to the services of a local amateur radio club to suggest corrective technical action

5. THE PSYCHOLOGY OF ACHIEVING VOLUNTARY COMPLIANCE

5.1 Introduction

Vital to the success of the Official Observer program is acceptance by the amateur community of volunteer monitoring efforts. The manner in which each individual OO conducts their OO activities is important to that overall acceptance. It is

Even more difficult for many amateurs to understand is how to deal with those advocates of “free thinking,” non-compliance with voluntary band plans, etc. These individualists usually revel in bringing the general amateur population to loggerheads. The psychology of such behaviour is purposeful. People who feel good about themselves do not usually find it necessary to draw attention to themselves in “useless” manners. Unfortunately, such individuals thrive on baiting the listening audience into discussions of who is going to call the monitoring station first, who had the frequency first, etc. Often these individualists are far better versed in the rules and regulations than those who confront them on the air. Too often this leads to frustration manifested by catcalls, whistles, carriers, and general chaos on the frequency - exactly the attention which continues to fan the flames. To expect the OO to solve such problems is not realistic.

In summary, our efforts should not raise the false hopes and expectations of the general amateur population that this program will eliminate all the woes of the amateur world. Such problems are too deeply rooted in the psychological deficiencies of only a small percentage of people in our society as a whole. In spite of the potential that the program has to make the amateur radio bands a better place for all to operate, it will not cure all the ills of our fraternity or society. For any to claim that it will does us all a disservice.

Always remember as an “OO” that people do like to be appreciated, so it is most effective when the word gets around that “an RAC OO sent me a nice note saying that I operate a good station with good operating practices”!

3. TECHNICAL STANDARDS

3.1 Introduction

With different technical backgrounds amongst the participants in the OO program, this guide cannot begin to try to present a comprehensive technical base. There are many technical publications that can do that. The high level of expertise and the general courtesy exhibited by the amateur community is well known, and will no doubt be tapped in staffing the OO program. Thus, the amateur population can gain more knowledge and understanding of what are the probable causes of technical difficulties with their radios.

3.2 What to Watch For and Some Precautions

The OO program is intended first to recognize the many excellent amateur operators and then to note some troubling operating practices or technical difficulties by a few amateurs. Having recognized an operating problem OO's then call such problems to the attention of those who often are unaware of the discrepancy, or who do not realize that what they are doing is a violation. For example, it is quite common for an amateur to be unaware of a harmonic or spurious signal strong enough to be heard in distant places, sometimes outside the amateur bands. Listen for second and third harmonics of amateur band signals. It is often surprising how many can be heard. Usually newcomers are most grateful to be notified, but experienced Advanced Qualification holders, especially those running high power, or involved in control operations, are not immune to excessive harmonic radiation.

Often the operator of a station having key clicks or chirp on his CW signals is unaware they exist. Broad signals, with by-products of splatter and distortion, are frequent on the phone bands, while FM signals are prone to over-deviation. These are all technical difficulties subject to Advisory Notifications. The recipient will usually appreciate the notification.

Key clicks and phone splatter can also result from receiver overload in the case of extremely strong signals, especially those being radiated locally. Be careful to make sure you are not sending a notice to someone merely because his signal is strong, causing clicks or splatter at your location, which would not be noticeable at a distance. Even in the case of one-hop skip, a signal can be so strong as to produce overloading in some receivers. Sometimes a local condition can make a signal sound as though it is ac-modulated. Occasionally strange mixing effects caused by strong local signals can cause “birdies” where no signal actually exists. Images are also frequently present in receivers without proper shielding or isolation between stages, and of course are also more pronounced with strong local signals. Whenever you hear a signal where it shouldn't be, always consider that it could possibly be your equipment. Check it out carefully, and only when there is no shadow of doubt, send the OO Advisory Notice. If in doubt, don't. Nothing is worse than accusing someone of something the individual is not guilty of. When an OO does this, the whole program suffers. Consequently, the OO must be careful to make proper call sign identification, and make sure that any noted discrepancy is not the result of receiver deficiencies or carelessness.

1. OVERVIEW

1.1 Introduction

The Radio Amateurs of Canada Official Observer program was developed to encourage the traditional high standards on the amateur radio bands. Governmental belt-tightening does not and will not provide Industry Canada with the necessary resources to extensively monitor the amateur radio bands. Moreover, changes in license structure have already caused a large influx of new operators into the Amateur Radio Service, creating an even greater need for monitoring of amateur band activity.

1.2 General Objectives and Concepts

The general objectives of the RAC Official Observer program are to:

1. Foster a wider knowledge of and better compliance with the regulations governing the Amateur Radio Service;
2. Extend the concepts of self-regulation and self-administration of the Service;
3. Enhance the opportunity for individual amateurs to contribute to the public welfare.

The role of the Official Observer program is more properly regarded as an unbiased forum for technical and operational advice and other assistance to amateurs who are receptive. The task is not to find fault but to identify cause and effect, many of which are not based on technical but behavioral or social issues, and to find ways to achieve solutions. *The mission is not direct enforcement.* Because the boundary between observation and enforcement is not always obvious, mature judgment is clearly required of the Official Observer. The Official Observer program, to be viable and effective must avoid any appearance of enforcement. It must also avoid the appearance of having a vested interest in any specific type of amateur operations or of being highly sympathetic to amateur groups which advocate specific activities or causes.

RFI complaints (except as they may arise from improper amateur operation), foreign broadcast intruders and the like, are not within the authorization of the Official Observer program and OOs must not become involved in these matters. [RFI matters should be referred to the local club RFI committees. Reports of non-amateur HF intruders (e.g., foreign broadcast) may be sent to RAC HQ for referral to the IARU Monitoring Program, a separate program.]

1.3 Appointment Procedure

1. All Official Observer appointment inquiries are sent to the Section Manager (SM), since all OO appointments are initiated by the Section Manager or the SM's designee, the OO Coordinator.
2. The SM (or OO Coordinator), after assessing the OO's credentials, may request an appointment certificate.
3. The RAC Field Services Manager sends the appointment certificate and initial supplies to the new OO.
4. The Section Manager and/or OO Coordinator may at any time decertify any OO who fails, in their opinion, to maintain the high standards of the OO program .

2. RULES AND REGULATIONS

2.1 The Rule Book

Amateur Radio in Canada is governed by the Radiocommunications Act and Regulations thereunder. A thorough knowledge of the Regulations and the Radiocommunications Information Circulars (RICs) is an obvious necessity in performing OO functions. You should expect that the recipient of an OO Advisory Notice will look to you for absolute accuracy in reference to the rules. Preserving the integrity of the program demands that you be extremely careful and that you are indeed correct. More important than being able to cite chapter and verse from memory is to be able to quickly locate the information you need.

2.2 Rules Application

The Official Observer program must promote compliance with the rules, but you must limit your activity to black-and-white violation situations only. Exercise common sense and avoid hair splitting. Stay clear of the "gray areas."

If you have a question, don't be a lawyer: check with your Official Observer Coordinator first. In any case, never ask Industry Canada, as that defeats the purpose of the Official Observer program to encourage self-monitoring.

2.3 Expectations

The OO Program must avoid creating the perception that the program will cure all the ills that abound on the air. Some of these ills are clearly violations; others are not. The ability to differentiate is important. The general amateur public must not think that volunteer monitoring is the godsend to these on-the-air problems (both real and perceived).

Certain cases of malicious interference and harassment are prevalent on repeaters in some parts of the country. The program must *not* cause the expectations of our fellow amateurs to rise to inappropriate high levels. The OO program objective is to reinforce good operating habits and not to punish bad habits. That is the task of enforcement.



The RAC Official Observer Guide

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