



Second Century

Fulfilling Our Purpose as Good Citizens

We all have a responsibility to act as good citizens, whether that is as a citizen of a country, a corporate citizen of a company, or as a citizen of a local community. The FCC’s Part 97 provides rules and regulations that tell us how to be a good citizen of the Amateur Radio community.

Part 97, or more accurately *Code of Federal Regulations* (CFR), Title 47 — Telecommunication, Chapter I - Federal Communications Commission (Continued), Subchapter D-Safety and Special Radio Services, Part 97 - Amateur Radio Service, consists of six subparts. Subpart A is general provisions. Subpart A, § 97.1 gives the “basis and purpose” for the remainder of Part 97. It talks about the fundamental purpose for an Amateur Radio Service.

To quote § 97.1:

Basis and purpose.

The rules and regulations in this part are designed to provide an amateur radio service having a fundamental purpose as expressed in the following principles:

- (a) Recognition and enhancement of the value of the amateur service to the public as a voluntary noncommercial communication service, particularly with respect to providing emergency communications.
- (b) Continuation and extension of the amateur’s proven ability to contribute to the advancement of the radio art.
- (c) Encouragement and improvement of the amateur service through rules which provide for advancing skills in both the communication and technical phases of the art.
- (d) Expansion of the existing reservoir within the amateur radio service of trained operators, technicians, and electronics experts.
- (e) Continuation and extension of the amateur’s unique ability to enhance international goodwill.

To be a good citizen of the Amateur Radio community, one must operate in ways that support the goals stated in § 97.1, or at least not operate contrary to the goals. However, it is a sad fact of life that not every operator always behaves as a good citizen — whether through error, ignorance, or willful intent.

While all these goals are important, and I encourage you to read them and think about all of them, I’d like to call out goals (b), (c), and (d). They talk about contributing to the advancement of the radio art, advancing skills in communications, and expanding the reservoir of trained operators. These goals collectively talk about improving, collectively and individually, the experience of operating in Amateur Radio.

For systematic improvement to occur, monitoring and feedback is required. However, the FCC recognized that it cannot be the sole monitor of amateur operations. In the wake of several FCC regional office closures, and a reduction in field staff, the FCC proposed a program to ARRL to re-energize enforcement efforts in the Amateur Radio bands. We are moving forward with that program.

The ARRL and the FCC recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) establishing a Volunteer Monitor program. The Volunteer Monitor program, which was approved by the ARRL Board in

July 2018, is a cooperative program of the FCC and ARRL in which volunteers trained and vetted by ARRL will monitor the airwaves and collect evidence that can be used to correct misconduct or recognize exemplary on-air operation.

As stated in the MoU, the objectives of the Volunteer Monitoring Program are, among other things, “to foster amongst Amateur Radio Service operators a wider knowledge of and better compliance with laws, rules and regulations governing the Amateur Radio Service.” But to be good citizens, we need to do more than just comply with the law. We need to treat each other with respect, whether we are on the air or not.

I hope with this editorial to “foster...a wider knowledge of” the basis and purpose of our Amateur Radio Service. I encourage every amateur to reflect on their operating with respect to providing an Amateur Radio Service having a fundamental purpose as expressed in § 97.1. I encourage you to operate in ways that advance Amateur Radio and enhance international goodwill.

I encourage your comments to me at ceo@arrl.org.

For more information on the new Volunteer Monitor program, see “Happenings” on page 79 of the June 2019 issue of QST.