
Okeechobee Amateur Radio Club Repeater Rules of Conduct

We understand that everyone slips once in a very great while, no matter how hard they try. But, we expect all users of the repeaters to do their very best to follow these few simple and obvious rules of repeater conduct.

1. Always identify according to the regulations. Correct operating procedure is a distinct characteristic of amateur radio. Amateur radio regulations are largely self-enforced and we all need to work together towards these goals.
2. Give consideration to other users when in a lengthy conversation. Take breaks long enough for others to step in and use the repeater. They may not be interested in your discussion but have a desire to use the repeater, so don't be a "repeater hog".
3. Conversations on repeaters should be friendly ones. Do not make negative commentaries on institutions, groups or people. Do not use the repeaters to "put people down". Amateur radio is not a broadcast medium (97.113(5)(b)). Are we talking about censorship? No, not exactly. A person may have the right to stand on the street and say bad things about someone. They don't have the same right when they are a house guest in that person's house. When using repeaters, you are a guest operator. No one has any right to use the repeaters in ways that the club feels are objectionable.
4. Our repeaters are "G" rated 24 hours a day. You never know who may be listening to the repeater, including non-hams. This is important to understand for several reasons.
 - a. Our repeaters serve many purposes. One of the most important is the exposure it gives the hobby to the community. Any scanner can be used to listen to our repeaters. That's good – it's actually the most visible aspect of our club. It's one of our most effective forms of publicity.
 - b. We want non-hams to know that Amateur Radio is an interesting hobby and a good group of people to get to know – something clean and educational – something they would want their kids to get involved in. Kids may or may not listen late at night, but their parents do.
 - c. Think about CB. The government tolerates the language on CB partly because they only use a few kilohertz of spectrum. It's not a huge waste. Amateur Radio on the other hand, uses a lot of valuable spectrum. There needs to be a noticeable difference between Amateur Radio and CB. Don't let our activities on the air become a weapon in the hands of people who want to discredit us. Let's all do our part to give Amateur Radio a positive image.
 - d. We want any ham that listens to us think of us as good operators, not idiots. Any time we talk on the repeater, we are ambassadors for the hobby. Have you ever noticed how you like to listen to some repeaters, but sometimes you find a repeater user that makes you roll your eyes and twist the knob? We lose good people because of what they hear on our repeaters.

Our governing rule and philosophy is simple: Absolutely no obscene, indecent, profane, disparaging, slanderous or libelous language at any time. Our repeaters are open for all to use, *provided you follow the club's rules when using them.*

Please know that depending on the situation, this may be a “one-strike” ball game for an offender! Don't lose the privilege of using these repeaters!

What gives the repeater owner the right to tell someone how to operate?

All repeaters have rules. These rules often go beyond Part 97. And, users who refuse to comply with the repeater's rules can be told to stop using the repeaters. This is entirely at the judgment of the repeater trustee(s).

Rule 97.205(e) says, “...Limiting the use of a repeater to only certain user stations is permissible.” There are no qualifications – if's, and, or but's – to this rule. The FCC supports a trustee's right to control the use of their repeaters. “A repeater is not a public utility – you don't have a “right” to use it! When you are using someone else's repeater you are, in effect, a visitor in the owner's station. So, you should conduct yourself accordingly. If you use that station in a manner that the owner finds objectionable, that person has every right to revoke your privilege of using it!”

The FCC's enforcement pages on their website have case after case where the repeater owner or trustee prevails in cases where someone has lost their privilege to use repeaters. The FCC by its own statement will work to change behavior considered a disgrace to Amateur Radio. A partial context from one of the enforcement letters states “.....The Commission requires that repeaters be under the supervision of a control operator and not only expects, but requires such control operators and licensees to be responsible for the proper operation of the repeater system. *Control operators may take whatever steps are appropriate to ensure compliance with the repeater rules, including limiting the repeater use to certain users, converting the repeater to a closed repeater or taking it off the air entirely.*”

Beyond the FCC minimum requirements, it's up to each repeater owner to set their own operating rules – which is the purpose of this document – to establish the rules of use for our repeaters. A repeater user needs to try to fit in. If the rules for the repeaters are uncomfortable for you and do not suit your personal needs or style, we encourage you to try other repeaters or even try talking on simplex.

Mark Brandel, KF4EA
OARC Trustee