

Vanity Call Signs

On-Air Training
Idaho Falls Bishops' Storehouse
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Welcome

I would like to begin tonight by acknowledging the passing of our dear friend, David Bennion, KG7ORL. Dave passed last Thursday and has been an active ERC operator in the Rigby Region since he received his license in 2014. We extend our condolences to his wife, Marie and their family. Funeral services will be held on Saturday, November 5, at 11:00 AM at the Clark/Ruby Chapel (198 N 4300 E, Rigby). The family will receive friends on Friday evening from 6 to 7:30 at the Eckersell Memorial Chapel in Rigby (101 W. Main St., Rigby). In his memory, please join me in a few moments of silent air time.

Thank you. KG7ORL, you will be missed.

Introduction

Your call sign is your unique identity. It is yours! No one else in the entire universe is known by that identifier. We get asked in our classes all the time about vanity call signs or students often say, "...a call sign I can remember." I'm sometimes amazed at how many call signs we *can* remember. I have found myself in situations many times where I can remember the call sign, but can't remember the operator's name.

Anyway, tonight I want to talk about vanity call signs: what they are, how to get one, and where to research them.

What is a vanity call sign?

In many ways, we can compare our FCC call signs to automobile license plates. When you go to the DMV to register a new car for the first time, the clerk reaches behind the counter and pulls the next plate off the stack and hands it to you. It's the same way with FCC calls. When you passed your technician exam, the VEC filed the paperwork with the FCC and the FCC handed you the next call sign available.

If you want to choose what letters and numbers appear on your license plate, you can fill out a form and request a vanity license plate. If you'd like to choose what letters and numbers appear in your FCC call sign, you fill out a form and request a vanity call sign.

Before you request a vanity call sign, you must already have a call sign issued to you.

How do you get a vanity call sign?

To request a vanity call sign, you submit the request directly to the FCC. You can do that either on the web or by mail. The website URL is a huge monstrous string of random characters, so I won't bother trying to read it over the air. However, I'm attempting something new tonight. A summary of this training is available on the ERC homepage. Links to the websites mentioned tonight are listed there.

When submitting your application, you can request up to 25 different call signs at the same time. When the FCC processes your application, they'll look at the first one on the list. If it is available, they'll assign it to you and complete the application. If it is not available, they will move to the second one on your list and so on until either they find one that is available or they reach the end of the list.

If they get to the end of the list and none of your requested vanities are available, you will retain your current call sign.

There is a common myth that vanity call signs are issued on a first-come-first-serve basis. This is not true. Everyone that requests a particular call sign is thrown into the proverbial hat and randomly drawn out.

Also, the cost to request a vanity call sign is free. In the past, you would submit your payment with the request. Then the FCC would have to refund the money to each requester that was not granted a new call sign. Imagine 50 operators all submitting a request for the same call sign. One is awarded the vanity and the FCC has to process paperwork to refund money to 49 other operators. It was costing more to process the refunds than was being received for the fulfilled request.

One other bit of information worth mentioning is that the format of the vanity is restricted by your license class. Technician and General class operators can only request a 1x3 or a 2x3 call sign. A 1x3 means a single letter followed by a number followed by three letters. A 2x3 is two letters a number and three letters. In the US that first letter has to be a K, N, or W. Extra class operators can request 1x2, 2x1, or 2x2 vanity call signs.

Where do I look to see what's available?

So how do you know which call signs are available? Point your browser at radioqth.net. RadioQTH not only tells you what call signs are available, but also WHEN call signs will become available. Remember, after a call sign expires, there is a two-year waiting period before the call sign can be reassigned. This permits you to reclaim your own call sign if you let it expire and it allows close family members to claim it as a vanity if they desire. RadioQTH shows you how much time remains in that two-year period.

Maybe you are a CW enthusiast and want to select a call sign that you can send quickly during those heated weekend Morse code contests. Well, RadioQTH has a tool to measure the CW weight of a call sign. You type in a call sign, or several call signs, and it will measure

in terms of the number of morse code elements (dits, dahs, spacing, etc.) how “heavy” your call sign is. In terms of CW weight, lighter or lower numbers are faster.

As an example, let's compare my current and former call signs. The CW weight for N7TMS is 48. My former call sign, KF7ZCP, although it contains only one additional letter, weighs in at 82. I can transmit my current call sign in nearly half the time it would take to transmit my former call sign.

Summary

What have I missed? Are there any questions or comments about vanity call signs?

Conclusion

Again, login to the IdahoERC web site to see a brief summary of this training, get the links to the FCC vanity request form, and access to this complete script.

Thanks for being there tonight, for your comments and questions. This is N7TMS. Back to net control.

Web Summary

Vanity call signs are a great way to personalize your FCC call sign.

You can request a vanity call sign through the FCC web site:

http://wireless.fcc.gov/services/index.htm?job=cft&id=amateur&page=cft_get_call_sign

Use the RadioQTH.net web site to determine if and when particular call signs will become available.

<http://radioqth.net>

The complete transcript from the recent training can be found here.

<http://rexburghams.org/training/...>