

American Radio Relay League Utah Section

Information From:  
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For Immediate Release

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### **US Forest Service Proposed Fee Increase Will Severely Impact Amateur Radio Emergency Communications Capability**

The US Forest Service is planning to implement an annual fee for new and existing communications use authorizations. The fee is based on statutory requirements specified in the Agricultural Improvement ACT of 2018, or Farm Bill, to cover costs associated with the Forest Service processes for maintenance and other activities. This proposed fee increase will significantly impact the ability for amateur radio operators to provide emergency communications to support Utah communities in times of disaster.

Unlike commercial and other not for profit organizations, by statute amateur radio is precluded from charging for any services performed as outlined by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), and therefore, it is not possible to pass on the proposed \$1,400 annual fee to those benefiting (including the Forest Service) from the services provided. The amateur radio community has built, using their own personal funds and equipment, an infrastructure that supports states and local communities. This infrastructure is not only used during disasters but also supports community events such as parades and sporting events.

“Amateur radio plays an important role during disasters and keeping the public safe during large community events.” said Pat Malan, Utah Section Manager, American Radio Relay League (ARRL). “Having been in a 7.1 Quake providing communications for Public Safety, Red Cross, and religious organizations, I know the significant benefit Amateur Radio is able to provide.” Currently, there are approximately ninety-five (95) communications sites on Forest Service lands within the state of Utah. They are used to augment communications during natural disasters such as fires, floods, and severe storms supporting many different state and local agencies.

The President of the Utah VHF Society, Mel Parkes said “With the implementation of the proposed fee increase many of these sites will be shut down or forced to move to less effective locations.”

If you wish to comment on the proposed rule change you have until February 22, 2022 and may do so on the web at <http://www.regulations.gov/> or via USPS mail to Director, Lands & Realty Management Staff, 201 14th Street SW, Washington, DC 20250-1124, and must include the identifier “RIN 0596-AD44”.

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