

History of The Amateur Radio VEC Program

Prior to 1984, **all Amateur radio licensing examinations were administered directly or indirectly by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC)** acting under the regulations set out in the Communications Act of 1934, which governed all aspects of radio communications in the United States of America. **Amateur Radio exams were available only at one of the 23 FCC district offices scattered around the country,** although in some circumstances (primarily when the applicant resided at least 125 miles away from one of the 23 district offices) examinations for the first 3 levels of license (Novice, Technician, and General) were available by mail. The General class license, if issued as a result of a mail examination, was known as the "Conditional" class. Even with the situation where exams could be taken by mail, the actual grading of the exams was still performed by FCC personnel, at one of the district offices.

The volunteer examiner program came into being as a result of several factors. **Primarily due to budget cutbacks,** the federal government decided to remove itself from the administration of most categories of radio license examinations. **On September 13, 1982, public law 97-259 was enacted which amended the Communications Act of 1934 to permit the FCC to accept the services of private individuals and organizations acting to prepare and administer examinations for applicants wishing to obtain (or upgrade) an Amateur Radio license. Approximately one month after this legislation became law, the ARRL (American Radio Relay League) filed a petition requesting that only non-profit educational organizations be allowed to participate in the program.**

A series of intermediate steps followed, which were concerned with how the examinations were to be developed, who would prepare the questions to be used, how the country would be divided into different regions so that paperwork could be routed more efficiently, and so on. Ultimately, **13 examination districts were created.** One of the questions that arose was the one of how to handle the expenses involved in preparing, distributing, and administering the various exams. Another was who would certify the necessary volunteer examiners.

Once these and other procedural questions were resolved, a two-tier arrangement was implemented. a relatively small number of VEC's (Volunteer Examiner Coordinators) would be chosen, and each of these would interface between the FCC and individual examiners, who became known as VE's (Volunteer Examiners). Thus, the FCC only needed to deal with a few separate organizations, rather than hundreds (or thousands) of individual examiners. **Initially, there were 28 VEC's registered with and certified by the FCC. That number has declined slowly, and as of this writing there are 14 active VEC's in operation.**