

Who's in Control of Your Field Day Station?



The ARRL is always answering questions about FCC rules as they apply to Field Day. Of course, every station must have a control operator (97.103). On Field Day, you often operate using someone else's or a club callsign. The station licensee or club call trustee is ultimately responsible for all transmissions from their station. During Field Day, many amateurs often use a single call sign, so the station licensee must designate a control operator(s) who is responsible for the operation of that station when the licensee is not in direct control. **Both the station licensee and the control operator are equally responsible for all transmissions** (97.103(a) and (b)). When the station licensee designates others as control operators, they should make a note in the log. You are no longer required to carry a photocopy of your license whenever you are the control operator of a station, but it's still a good idea. **A third-party is defined as anyone who does not have operating privileges on the frequency and mode being used.**

Q. Are there any exceptions to the FCC rules for Field Day?

A. No, FCC Part 97 rules apply 24/7 every day of the year – no exceptions.

Q. The trustee of our club callsign is an Extra. Does this mean our station can operate on any frequency?

A. No. Many people mistakenly believe that a club callsign automatically carries the operating privileges of the callsign trustee. That is not true. **A club callsign comes from a station license and carries no operating privileges. A station may only operate according to the privileges of the Control Operator at the control point for that station.** Example, if a control operator is a General, that transmitter may only operate using General class privileges.

Q. My call is being used for Field Day, but I can't be at the station for the duration of the contest. (I like sleeping in my air-conditioned house, even during Field Day.) Do we have to take the transmitter off the air when I am not present?

A. No, you may designate a control operator or operators who should fulfill your duties as the station licensee. In fact, you don't have to be there at all, but you are responsible for making sure that the appointed control operator(s) is capable of carrying out your wishes (97.103(b) and 97.105). After all, if there is a problem the FCC is going to contact you as the licensee or trustee of a club call.

Q. Can KB1ZDZ, a General class licensee, operate at the station of N1ND, an Extra Class licensee, during Field Day? Can he operate in the Extra Class segment even though he only holds a General class license?

A. The answer to the first question is "yes" – he may operate using his license privileges from N1ND's station. However if he wishes to participate on frequencies other than those his license allows, there must be a control operator with privileges for the desired operating frequencies continuously monitoring and supervising the operation at the control point of the transmitter. FCC rules state that **"A control operator must ensure the immediate proper operation of the station."** (97.105(a)). The rules go on to say, "A station may only be operated in the manner and to the extent permitted by the privileges authorized for the class of operator license held by the control operator" (97.105(b)).

Q. I am an Extra Class licensee, but I am going to use a Technician class operator's station and call sign during Field Day. Can I legally operate her station and use her call outside the Technician subbands?

A. You, the Extra, can be designated as the control operator. If you are authorized by the licensee, you may use the call sign of the Technician class licensee and operate within the Technician class privileges. However, if an Extra Class control operator wants to operate outside the Technician class operator privileges, they may do so, but must identify by appending their call to that of the Technician, such as signing "KB1ZDZ / N1ND" on CW or separating the calls by the word "stroke" on Phone (97.105(a) and (b), 97.119(d)). True, this is a long identification procedure, but it is the only way to identify in this case. Why would an Extra want to use a Technician call? Well, that may not always be the case, but it clearly illustrates the point.

Q. What is the identification procedure for a club station license during Field Day?

A. **A club station license carries no operator privileges.** The person designated as control operator for the station must use his or her own privileges. If operation takes place in the Extra class part of the band, there must be an Extra class control operator present at the control point monitoring and supervising the operation. This does not necessitate the use of the supplementary station ID as mentioned in Section 97.119(e).

Q. During Field Day, members of the public wander through as we operate. Many times, these unlicensed individuals want to operate. Can they legally operate our Field Day station?

A. Only a licensed amateur is eligible to be the control operator, and obviously an unlicensed person can't be the control operator of an amateur station. So, an unlicensed person cannot legally operate the Field Day station. However **they may participate under the immediate supervision and direction of a control operator present at the control point.** Third parties may only communicate directly with other US stations or with countries with which the US has signed third-party agreements (97.115(a) and (b)). **Part 97 rules are always in effect.** There is no "special exception" for Field Day. It is the hope of the ARRL that everyone will do lots of operating during Field Day, demonstrate Amateur Radio to the public, practice our emergency communications capabilities, eat lots of good Field Day cooking and most of all, have a good time while doing it. However, it all must take place in the context of the FCC rules.

Q. During Field Day, there may be DX stations on the air. May they be worked?

A. In most cases, yes. However, if a person is participating as a third party under the supervision of a control operator, there must be a third-party agreement between the DX country's government and the US. The complete list of countries with which the US has Third Party agreements may be found at: www.arrl.org/third-party-operating-agreements

Q. We will be using a special 1 by 1 callsign for Field Day. Is there anything special we must do?

A. Yes, at least once per hour each station using the special call must also ID with the FCC-issued station call. (97.119(d))