

ARRL Shows IBEC BPL Systems Are Interfering, Violating FCC Rules

<http://www.arrl.org/news/arrl-shows-ibec-bpl-systems-are-interfering-violating-fcc-rules>

Jan 7, 2011 - ARRL, the national association for Amateur Radio has filed a complaint with the Federal Communications Commission documenting ongoing harmful interference and egregious rules violations by Broadband over Power Lines (BPL) systems installed by IBEC, Inc. in Virginia, Pennsylvania, and Indiana. The ARRL has requested that the FCC “initiate immediately an enforcement proceeding regarding these BPL systems, and cause them to cease operation until such time as they are each in full compliance with the Commission’s Rules.”

Contrary to earlier representations to the ARRL and to statements in the online BPL database, IBEC’s systems in these locations are not universally notching the Amateur bands as is necessary in order to avoid emissions at levels that are likely to cause harmful interference to licensed Amateur Radio stations. In fact, measurements by ARRL staff and confirmed independently show that IBEC systems are not even notching the aeronautical bands that the FCC rules require BPL systems to avoid and are operating at power levels that cause radiation well in excess of the FCC limits.

The ARRL even discovered IBEC BPL systems in operation that are not listed in the online BPL database – another clear violation of the FCC rules, which require listing 30 days prior to initiation of service.

“While IBEC was cooperative in the early stages of their BPL system development and appeared to understand what was necessary to avoid harmful interference, it appears that corners have been cut in the course of deployment,” observed ARRL Chief Executive Officer David Sumner, K1ZZ. “We can only speculate as to the reasons why they have taken this path, but the fact is that IBEC is not playing by the rules and their systems must cease operation until they are brought into compliance.”

For months, amateur operator Kevin Ward, K4BDR of Afton, Virginia has experienced harmful interference at his home as well as during mobile operation during his regular commutes to work. The BPL system in his area uses power lines owned by the Central Virginia Electric Cooperative. Complaints to IBEC have been fruitless. Measurements taken in the area of Lovington and Arrington, Virginia show that the system is operating well in excess of maximum radiated emission limits and without necessary notching. Measurements of radiated emissions from an IBEC system in Martinsville, Indiana using power lines owned by the South Central Indiana Rural Electric Membership Cooperative (SCI REMC) gave similar results.

IBEC systems were observed operating in Somerset, Pennsylvania and Fairfield, Virginia well above permitted radiated emission levels, despite there being no listing in the online BPL database anywhere in the vicinity of these locations.

ARRL General Counsel Christopher D. Imlay, W3KD observed, “The information supplied to the FCC in support of this complaint amply justifies the modifications of the BPL rules urged by ARRL in ET Docket No. 04-37, including the mandatory, full-time notching of all Amateur Radio allocations by BPL systems, to a notch depth of at least 30 to 35dB.” This rulemaking proceeding was reopened by the FCC as a belated response to an April 2008 order by the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit, which ruled in favor of the ARRL in finding that the FCC had failed to comply with the Administrative Procedure Act and had not provided a reasoned justification for some of its decisions in adopting rules for BPL systems.