

FCC Issues First Waiver for Government-Sponsored Disaster Drill

On Tuesday October 27, the FCC's Wireless Telecommunications Bureau ([WTB](#)) granted the [first waiver](#) that allows amateurs who participate in a government-sponsored emergency preparedness and disaster drill to communicate on behalf of their employers during the drill. The waiver request was made on behalf of the Commonwealth of Kentucky. That state will be conducting a full-scale exercise on Wednesday, October 28, 2009 from 8 AM-5 PM (EDT) to test their emergency response to the possible release of chemical agents at Blue Grass Army Depot, located near Richmond, Kentucky.

"The waiver request was what could almost be termed a 'textbook example' of the process," said ARRL Regulatory Information Manager Dan Henderson, N1ND. "The waiver request met all of the criteria outlined in the Commission's recent [Public Notice DA 09-2259](#): A government-sponsored drill, the specifics of when and where the event would happen, the identification of the amateur licensees that would be providing communications on behalf of their employers, the identification of the employers and a brief description of the drill. With all of the requirements in order, the WTB was able to turn the waiver around promptly, allowing the amateurs involved to participate in the exercise."

It is important to note that while this particular waiver -- the first issued under the new guidelines -- could be readily handled within the short time frame, Henderson suggests that government agencies wishing to request similar waivers in the future provide sufficient lead-time for their requests. "I wouldn't recommend that a waiver request be filed at the last minute," he said. "The Kentucky waiver had the benefit of being the first one -- meaning there was no lag time in processing. It also had the advantage of easily meeting all of the requirements, making it an easier decision. I would encourage government agencies to file the waiver request as soon as they know which amateurs will need to be included in the waiver. This will allow the FCC as much lead time as possible. I am not certain they will be in a position to expedite last-minute requests."

More information on *Public Notice DA 09-2259* can be found [here](#) on the ARRL Web site.