

Radio Use at Sporting and other Public Events: Information for Organisers and Participants

(previously Radiocommunications Agency information sheet RA 328)

1 Introduction

Many kinds of event – including village fetes, religious or other festivals, rock concerts, air shows and sporting events – may involve the use of radio. This information sheet summarises the Wireless Telegraphy Act licensing arrangements for anyone intending to use **radio transmitters** at such events.

2 Why use radio at your event?

The main examples of radio use at sporting and public events are:

- **safety of life** – medical and first aid (including St John's Ambulance Brigade), and site, event and spectator safety. There are separate arrangements for emergency services such as police, fire and ambulance, but the radio frequencies are not available for civilian use;
- **organisers' support services** – site security, crowd control, timekeeping, catering, car parking etc;
- **participants' requirements** for voice and data communications;
- **programme-making** – radio microphones, sound, vision and data links for the production of outside broadcasts, films and tapes;
- **restricted radio services** – short-term sound broadcasting services associated with a particular event. Ofcom's Radio Spectrum Planning and Licensing team produces a guidance note on these services – see Section 7;
- **restricted television services** – short-term television broadcasting services associated with a particular event. Ofcom's TV Broadcasting Planning and Licensing team produces a guidance note on these services – see Section 7.

3 Radio options

If you want to use radio for **organisers' support services** and/or **safety of life**, the following licence categories are most suitable:

- a) You may use **Private Business Radio (PBR)** at your event, if you have a PBR licence and your licence schedule specifies use at the event's location. The licence schedule should be available for inspection if requested. See information leaflet Of20 for details.
- b) You may also hire private mobile radio (PMR) and/or radio paging equipment from a radio supplier who possesses a **PBR Suppliers licence**. This licence authorises the supplier to hire out such equipment for up to one year. You do not need a licence for this – the supplier is responsible for supplying the correct type of equipment operating on the channels set down in his/her licence.
- c) **PMR 446** is a short-range, voice communication system, providing a basic radio service for both business and non-business users. It is ideal for communicating over short distances, and you do not need a licence to use it. PMR 446 has replaced the Short Range Business Radio (SRBR) speech service. See information leaflet OfW57 for details.
- d) You may use **Citizens' Band (CB)** radio, as long as you hold a current CB licence and the equipment is fully within UK specifications for such use. You may not use amplifiers with CB. The licence should be available for inspection if requested. See information leaflet OfW84 for details.

If you, your event's participants and/or programme-makers have **special radio requirements** – such as radio microphones, wireless public address and communications related to participants' safety and medical and technical back-up (including telemetry) – you need a **Programme Making and Special Events (PMSE)** licence. These are distributed by JFMG Ltd on Ofcom's behalf – for contact details, see Section 7.

4 International motor sports events

Major international motor sports events, such as the British Formula One Motor Racing Grand Prix, attract many participants from the UK and overseas and JFMG also look after these radio requirements. For more information, contact JFMG – see Section 7.

5 Licences

a) Licensing requirements

It is illegal to use radio transmitters unless you have a licence issued under the Wireless Telegraphy Act 1949, or the equipment is specifically exempted from licensing.

Unauthorised use of equipment is illegal and could mean immediate termination of use, plus a fine of up to £5,000 and/or six months' imprisonment (on summary conviction), or an unlimited fine and two years' imprisonment and forfeiture of equipment (on conviction on indictment).

b) Who needs to hold a licence?

Generally it is the **user of the equipment**. However, if you hire equipment on a short-term basis, the licensee will often be the hire provider, who will permit you to use the equipment under contract. You must comply with the licence conditions, which the hire provider should pass on to you.

c) Applying for a licence

If you need to apply for a licence, Section 7 of this leaflet tells you how to go about it.

6 The role of event organisers

If we need to take action to prevent the unauthorised use of equipment, we will do so against the licensee or the user of the equipment, not the event organiser (unless the organiser has knowingly permitted the unlicensed use).

However, it is in the organiser's interests for radio operations at the event to run smoothly, and we hope that organisers and governing bodies will actively encourage participants to comply with the UK's requirements for legal radio use. If you are organising an event, please distribute copies of this information sheet, well before the event is due to take place, to anyone involved who may want to use radio there.

7 Further information

For general enquiries please contact:

Ofcom

Programme Making and Special Events Section
Riverside House
2a Southwark Bridge Road
London
SE1 9HA

Tel: 020 7981 3192

E-mail: pmse@ofcom.org.uk

For enquiries about **PMSE licences, including motor sports**, please contact:

JFMG Ltd

33-34 Alfred Place
London
WC1E 7DP

Tel: 020 7299 8660

Fax: 020 7299 8661

E-mail: info@jfmfg.co.uk

Website: www.jfmfg.co.uk

(The JFMG office is open 9am to 6pm, Mondays to Fridays except bank holidays. At other times a co-ordinator is available for emergency frequency assignments; call 07050 177335.)

For enquiries about **other licence categories**, including licence fees and contact points for licence applications, please contact:

Ofcom Contact Centre

Riverside House
2a Southwark Bridge Road
London
SE1 9HA

Tel: 0845 456 3000
Fax: 0845 456 3333
E-mail: contact@ofcom.org.uk

For restricted radio services contact:

C&S Radio & Multimedia

Riverside House
2a Southwark Bridge Road
London
SE1 9HA

Tel: 020 7783 4394/4389

For restricted television services contact:

TV Broadcasting Planning and Licensing team

Riverside House
2a Southwark Bridge Road
London
SE1 9HA

Tel: 020 7783 4323

The body representing suppliers of radio equipment and providers of short-term hire and other radio facilities is:

Federation of Communication Services

Keswick House
207 Anerley Road
London
SE20 8ER

Tel: 020 8778 5656

Ofcom produces a wide range of information sheets, application forms and other publications. These are available free of charge on our website (www.ofcom.org.uk), or hard copies can be obtained from the Ofcom Contact Centre (see above).



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