



PUBLIC NOTICE

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OFFICE OF ENGINEERING AND TECHNOLOGY ANNOUNCES ACCEPTANCE OF APPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAM EXPERIMENTAL LICENSES

The FCC Office of Engineering and Technology announces that parties may now apply for new program experimental licenses permitting license holders to register proposed experiments on a new FCC license notification system and proceed with proposed experiments if no objections are received. The notification system is available at <https://apps2.fcc.gov/ELSExperiments/pages/login.htm>. This new type of experimental license allows greater flexibility for parties—including universities, research labs, health care facilities, and manufacturers of radio frequency equipment—to develop new technologies and services while protecting incumbent services against harmful interference. The program license registration system continues the FCC's commitment to encouraging research and development.

The Commission's Part 5 experimental licensing program has existed for many years and has been successful in enabling parties to conduct experiments for a variety of purposes. For example, parties conduct experiments to evaluate the performance of new radio transmission technologies, investigate radio propagation characteristics, and develop potential radio interference mitigation techniques. Under the existing program, experimenters are limited to a single experiment or a series of closely related experiments. Licensees wishing to vary any of their authorized parameters are required to apply for new or modified licenses.

In 2013, the Commission adopted rules establishing new program licenses to further encourage experimentation and innovation by simplifying the application and management of experimental radio service (ERS) licenses—specifically the program license, the medical testing license, and the compliance testing license.¹ Qualified institutions may conduct testing for multiple non-related experiments under a single authorization within a defined geographic area under control of the licensee and where the licensee has institutional processes to manage and oversee experiments. Institutions benefit by the elimination of regulatory delay and uncertainty thereby expediting introduction of new products to the marketplace.

How to Apply for a Program License

Parties may apply for an experimental program license using the existing Form 442 application for experimental licenses at <https://apps.fcc.gov/oetcf/els/forms/442Dashboard.cfm>. Once approved, licensees may go on the new "Experiments Notification System" website and begin registering new program experiments. The website is available at <https://apps2.fcc.gov/ELSExperiments/pages/login.htm>.

¹ Promoting Expanded Opportunities for Radio Experimentation and Market Trials under Part 5 of the Commission's Rules and Streamlining Other Related Rules, ET Docket Nos. 06-155, 10-236, *Report and Order*, FCC 13-15, 28 FCC Rcd 758 (rel. Jan. 31, 2013).

Qualified parties with experience in RF technology such as colleges, research laboratories, and manufacturers may apply for the new “program license”, testing laboratories may apply for the new “compliance license” and health care facilities may apply for the new “medical testing license.” The web-based registration system announced today eases the burden for licensees managing their experiments while at the same time allows all spectrum users and stakeholders to track experiments undertaken under these new licenses. Details of proposed experiments must be posted on the website 10 days (when exclusively using non-federal spectrum) or 15 days (when using federal spectrum) prior to the planned start date of the experiment. The posting must also include a narrative statement including a general description of the experiment, the technical details of the experiment, and a contact point for additional information about the experiment. The narrative statement must include a “stop buzzer” contact so that any urgent concerns of other potentially affected spectrum users can be addressed.

Interested stakeholders can be automatically notified regarding planned experiments of interest by registering for such notifications via the website. Valid stakeholders such as licensed spectrum users who may be potentially impacted by a proposed experiment may raise objections to the experiment for cause. If no objections are received for a proposed experiment within the 10 to 15 day waiting period, the innovator is permitted to proceed. This is a significant streamlining over the typical 4 to 6 week processing period for a conventional experimental license.

Within 30 days of completion of each posted experiment, program licensees must file, on the public website, a narrative statement describing the results of the experiment. Medical testing licensees must file a yearly report detailing the activity that has been performed under its license. The availability of this new web-based system eliminates and otherwise streamlines unnecessary administrative burdens, freeing innovators to focus on the critical engineering and development work facilitated by the ERS.

New “Innovation Zones”

The program and medical license rules also permit the use of “Innovation Zones,” which are geographic areas defined by the Commission on its initiative or in response to public requests and announced via Commission Public Notice. “Innovation Zones” could include designated areas designed for testing of specific types of systems (e.g. drones or automated vehicles) or could permit the designation of entire cities to permit testing advanced radio technologies for “smart city” concepts.

Institutional cooperation

OET staff are particularly grateful for the contributions of New York University and the University of Colorado, Boulder in the beta testing of the new website.

Applicants and licensees may contact Anthony Serafini at 202-418-2456 or Anthony.Serafini@fcc.gov or Walter Johnston at 202-418-0807 or Walter.Johnston@fcc.gov with questions regarding this public notice or the ERS program license website.

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