



# Consumer Guide

## Unauthorized Radio Operation

Federal law generally prohibits the "use or operation of any apparatus for the transmission of energy or communications or signals by radio" without a license issued by the FCC. Anyone found operating a radio station without an FCC authorization can be subject to a variety of enforcement actions, including seizure of equipment, imposition of monetary forfeitures and criminal penalties.

### Authorized exceptions

There are certain limited exceptions to this rule: FCC rules authorize operation of Citizens Band (CB) radios, domestic ship and aircraft radios, radio control stations and certain other types of devices without obtaining individual station licenses. These devices must be operated in a manner consistent with the FCC's operational and technical rules. Failure to do so could be considered an unauthorized radio operation. For further information, see the FCC's consumer guide at <https://consumercomplaints.fcc.gov/hc/en-us/articles/202928924-Personal-Radio-Services-for-Keeping-in-Touch>.

### Filing a complaint

If you are suspicious of or are aware of unauthorized radio operations, please notify the FCC. You have multiple options for filing a complaint:

- File a complaint online at <https://consumercomplaints.fcc.gov>
- By phone: 1-888-CALL-FCC (1-888-225-5322); TTY: 1-888-TELL-FCC (1-888-835-5322)
- By mail (please include your name, address, contact information and as much detail about your complaint as possible):

Federal Communications Commission  
Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau  
Consumer Inquiries and Complaints Division  
445 12th Street, S.W.  
Washington, DC 20554

### Accessible formats

To request this article in an accessible format - braille, large print, Word or text document or audio - write or call us at the address or phone number above, or send an email to [fcc504@fcc.gov](mailto:fcc504@fcc.gov).

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*This document is for consumer education purposes only and is not intended to affect any proceedings or cases involving this subject matter or related issues.*

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