

## ARLB022 FCC Grants Temporary Waiver to Permit Higher Symbol Rate Data Transmissions for Hurricane Ida Traffic

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From ARRL Headquarters

Newington CT August 30, 2021

To all radio amateurs

SB QST ARL ARLB022

ARLB022 FCC Grants Temporary Waiver to Permit Higher Symbol Rate Data Transmissions for Hurricane Ida Traffic

The FCC has granted an ARRL emergency request for a temporary waiver intended to facilitate relief communications in the wake of Hurricane Ida. The waiver was orally granted on Saturday, August 28, and immediately permitted amateur data transmissions related to Hurricane Ida traffic to employ a higher symbol rate for data transmissions than the current limit of 300 baud.

ARRL pointed out in its request that Amateur Radio Emergency Service (ARES) members are working with federal, state, and local emergency management officials to assist with disaster relief. Many use radio modems and personal computers capable of using digital protocols and modes that would permit faster messaging rates than normally permitted under the FCC's rules. ARRL pointed out that higher data rates can be critical to timely transmission of relief communications, such as lists of needed and distributed supplies.

In 2016, in response to an ARRL petition for rulemaking, the FCC proposed to remove the symbol rate limitations, which it tentatively concluded had become unnecessary due to advances in modulation techniques and no longer served a useful purpose. That proceeding, WT Docket 16-239, is still pending. ARRL sought the waiver for radio amateurs directly involved with hurricane relief on HF using high-speed data transmissions, and the FCC orally granted the emergency temporary waiver for traffic related to Hurricane Ida. The temporary waiver is good until a written decision is made on ARRL's request that would cover the remainder of the hurricane season.

Pursuant to ARRL's request and similar to written waivers granted by the FCC in earlier years, to qualify, a protocol or mode exceeding the 300 baud symbol rate limit must (1) be publicly documented, (2) use no more bandwidth than the currently permissible slower protocols (generally accepted to be the bandwidth of an SSB signal, or 2.8 kHz), and (3) be used solely for communications related to Hurricane Ida. ARRL is hopeful that the FCC will grant a longer-term

waiver this week to enable planning and communications for any additional hurricanes this season.

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