



The Ofcom Procedure for the Measurement of the Field-Strength of Amateur Stations



From time to time radio amateurs have to contend with complaints that their transmission are interfering with other services, even though there is nothing wrong with the transmitter. In recent years the situation has become more serious due to the large number of radio and electronic devices in use in the typical family home.

The regulation of radio transmitting stations and the investigating of interference to radio services is the responsibility of Ofcom.

The RSGB advises its members to operate their stations with the avoidance of interference in mind. In fact this is a requirement of the licence (BR68 Section 4 and "Notes and Terms" paragraph I). This has been called our "good radio housekeeping" policy, and is covered in detail in The RSGB Guide to EMC and somewhat more briefly in RSGB EMC leaflet 10.

Where a neighbour reports that they are suffering interference the problem can usually be solved by co-operation between the amateur and the neighbour. This is by far the best course of action and should always be tried first. In a few instances this may not be possible and the neighbour may call in Ofcom to investigate the interference. It should be noted that Ofcom will only investigate interference to radio and TV services.

Ofcom Policy in cases of dispute.

When Ofcom is called in to investigate a case of alleged interference from an

amateur transmitter their general procedure will be as follows.

- They will ascertain that the interference is related to the amateur station.
- They will check that the amateur station is operating correctly and that there are no spurious emissions such as harmonics.

Assuming a positive outcome Ofcom will take a view on the situation, weighing up the complainants position and the operating practice of the amateur station. They will then advise both parties as to how the interference problem can be overcome. A neighbour may be told that their installation is defective or for some other reason has insufficient immunity. They may suggest improvements that can be made to mitigate the problem. Ofcom will charge the complainant for the investigation if the interference is due to deficiencies within the affected TV or radio installation (the charge includes the supply and fitting of any necessary filters).

On the other hand Ofcom may decide that, after considering all the facts, the amateur station is not being operated reasonably. Ofcom may request the amateur to modify his/her operating practice. This might entail changing the antenna arrangement or location, avoiding high power in a certain direction, or reducing the power on certain bands. The request may initially be informal in which case the amateur does not have to comply, but would be

well advised to do so, bearing in mind the requirements of their licence.

If the amateur does not co-operate, Ofcom may decide to measure the amateur's field-strength and if this is found to be excessive they may enforce a restriction by issuing a Notice of Variation (NoV). In practice this is likely to be more restrictive than the informal request. Since the NoV is legally enforceable, it will be more difficult to change or remove than a "request", whether formal or informal, should the circumstances change.

The Ofcom measurement procedure.

In assessing the field-strength of an amateur station Ofcom measures the field-strength on the boundary of the of the amateur's property closest to the complainant's property. This enables a simple procedure to be used in all cases, since it does not involve access to any property other than that of the amateur under investigation. (In some instances Ofcom may not be able to gain access to the neighbour's property). As this does not relate directly to the situation at the complainant's house, Ofcom make an allowance for the distance from the boundary to the affected equipment and for attenuation by walls etc. By this means it is intended that the measurements will enable Ofcom to determine whether the field-strength from the amateur station is reasonable at the place where the affected equipment is located.

It goes without saying that it is in everyone's interest to solve any interference problems by direct co-operation with the neighbour if possible, or by following any voluntary restrictions or recommendations requested by Ofcom. In practice most cases are resolved without recourse to field-strength measurements and the number of NoVs issued is very small.

In cases of dispute the Society will take-up a member's case with Ofcom with a view to achieving the most satisfactory solution. However the Society cannot support actions and activities, which are clearly unreasonable. To do so would weaken our position in genuine cases.

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