

# *The Source* Information Radio Newsletter

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## Can you hear me now?

### High water convinces Texas safety officials of the need to flood community with additional radio signal.

LAGO VISTA, TX: In a town whose name means “lake view” in Spanish, some residents got more of a “lake view” than they had bargained for in October. Some residents of Lago Vista, Texas, a shoreline community 40 miles northwest of Austin, were given evacuation orders due to rising water from intense rainfall. Flood warnings were issued by the National Weather Service. The Army Corps of Engineers stated that nearby Lake Travis was “131% full” due to a release of water from Buchanan Dam, upstream on the Lower Colorado River. (See [the full article](#) by Luz Moreno-Lozano in *Statesman*, Oct 17, 2018.)

“As the lake rose quickly to over 30 feet above flood stage, the City’s Information Radio Station was able to direct victims to aid and shelter,” recalls Fran Lehman. “Further, there are only two ways into and out of our town; so when those roads flood - as they both did - Lago Vista effectively becomes an island!”

Lehmann operates the town’s Information Radio Station on AM frequency 1670. Station programming kept residents advised of aid shelters, evacuation details and the status of local facilities and roadways.

In the aftermath of the event, Lago Vista safety officials are considering additional signal coverage for the station and are investigating the addition of a signal booster. A booster would allow the City’s antenna system to deliver additional range and intensity. But because the station is already achieving its maximum allowed signal levels with only 40% of its transmitter capacity, a waiver of the [FCC rules](#) is required to go to 100% power.

Waivers of the standard signal limitation (2.0 mV/m at 1.5 km) have been granted to numerous communities recently, including Aurora, Illinois; Avon Grove, Pennsylvania and Mentor, Ohio. According to consultant [Information Station Specialists](#), the application is straightforward. “The application merely requires a showing that the station is utilized for public safety and that the additional signal will not cause interference to nearby broadcast stations,” states company representative Bill Baker.

Baker tells *The Source* that even though the process is rather simple, not all communities and agencies can take advantage of it due to local frequency spacing. [Email Baker](#) to learn whether a field-intensity waiver can benefit your agency or community.

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# Bainbridge Island, WA: Preparing for "But When"

## How will this island's 25,000 residents stay informed when a major incident severs power and compromises communications??

BAINBRIDGE ISLAND, WA: Just a stone's throw across the water from Seattle, Bainbridge Islanders are fully cognizant that when it all goes south someday, help may be a very long time in coming. The community's emergency preparedness webpage advises, "...make sure you are ready to survive two weeks or more without outside help."

A single ferry route – the Winslow Ferry - and one two-lane highway bridge tenuously link Bainbridge Island to the mainland. It is just a matter of time before an incident such as a storm or an earthquake/tsunami isolate the Island's 25,000 residents and make an orderly response – and especially an evacuation - challenging.

The community originally considered obtaining a low power FM station as a means of emergency communication. But issues with partial coverage and inflexible content rules rendered the plan impractical. In addition, FM antennas, which must be positioned high above the ground on towers, are especially vulnerable to high winds and seismic events.

It was during that investigation that island leaders learned of the ready availability of local AM channels for an Information Radio service. AM's relatively long wavelengths made total island coverage possible and because AM antennas are mounted nearer to the ground, their vulnerability profile is substantially minimized. The City of Bainbridge Island petitioned the FCC for a waiver of signal intensity and received its grant in 2017. The community anticipates commencing the construction phase this spring.

In the words of Emergency Management Coordinator Anne LeSage, "The AM radio will serve as a means to provide effective emergency communication to residents and visitors on the island. During an emergency, we will broadcast evacuation orders, road closures, power outage information and other critical updates."

Watch future editions of *The Source* for details on the Bainbridge Island [ALERT AM](#) project. [Subscribe by email.](#)

## Shutdown Showdown Produces FCC Slowdown

WASHINGTON, DC: Federal agencies, as a whole, are not known for speed and efficiency; and the recent "partial government shutdown" certainly did not help that perception. A hearing had been scheduled for the House Energy and Commerce Committee January 31st to take up the issue of how the Federal Communications Commission's off-line status was affecting the country as a whole.

Committee Chairman Frank Pallone spoke for many when he said, "When this shutdown began, I never imagined that it would have lasted this long."

For licensed Information Radio Station operators, the impact was invisible. If a licensee needed to

do a standard license renewal, he was able to do so through the Universal Licensing System (ULS), which remained open during the closure. If an operator was running on a temporary license that expired during the closure, it was automatically extended until the day after the Commission reopened. And, new applicants were able to file as usual.

The real impact of the shutdown has been on the granting of applications. New filers and those whose applications were "in the pipe" when the Commission closed shop in December, now find themselves in a queue of unpredictable length. But it is important to note that the FCC will grant emergency temporary licenses [STAs] for applications with critical needs where the protection of life and property is at stake.

Jim Zoss, Interim Emergency Manager for the Nottawaseppi Huron Band of Potawatomi (Tribe) in Michigan was waiting for his station's license grant, when the partial shutdown kicked in. "Of course, if we have a serious emergency and the Tribe really needs the service, that [Emergency STA] would be the way we would go."

To petition the FCC for an emergency temporary license, you may call their operations center at 202.418.1122.

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## **FCC Determines that the Need to Post Has Passed**

WASHINGTON, DC: A federal requirement going back to the days of the "radio telegraph" is the posting of an operator license - typically at the station's transmitter site. The authorities began requiring it in 1912, even before there was a Federal Communications Commission.

Now, after more than 100 years, the FCC has determined that license posting is passé, due to the ubiquitous internet. Indeed, copies of FCC licenses can be viewed day and night from the convenience of one's smartphone. So why fell more trees to persist in a practice whose pertinence has passed?

The FCC proposed the regulatory realignment late last year. At their monthly meeting on December 12th, with no comments being received from the public, the motion carried.

You still need to have a license to broadcast, of course. It's just that now the license only needs to be "on-line" for your station to be "on-air."

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**Emails to *The Source***

"At our Biennial Organizational Meeting on 1 January, the Borough Council of North Plainfield [NJ] adopted a Radon Awareness Resolution. As a community awareness project supported in part by a grant from the [New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection](#), our town is distributing radon testing kits to its residents free of charge; and our Information Radio Station is carrying the message.

They're listening to us in their vehicles and at home. Residents are responding to our campaign to test for radon. We remind residents to 'tell them you heard it here on 1630-AM Radio;' and the feedback is positive."

**Rich Phoenix**  
**Clerk & Station Operator**  
**North Plainfield Borough, NJ**

**#end**