

IS THE FCC IGNORING BPL COMPLAINTS?

The ARRL has charged BPL equipment maker Ambient Corporation and the FCC with being unwilling or unable to effectively deal with harmful interference stemming from a New York BPL pilot project. The League also asked the Commission for the fourth time to shut down Ambient's Briarcliff Manor "non-compliant system without further delay" until Ambient addresses interference complaints. The League's latest salvo in the Briarcliff Manor BPL battle was in response to a February 10 letter from Bruce Franca, deputy chief of the FCC Office of Engineering and Technology (OET). Franca's letter concluded that FCC measurements in response to Amateur Radio complaints of harmful interference showed no changes were required to the BPL system.

"The Commission's failure to conduct a thorough investigation of this matter, and the tenor of your February 10, 2005, letter, lead to speculation that the Commission is really not interested in finding the interference that exists at Briarcliff Manor or at other BPL test sites or in enforcing the Part 15 rules," the ARRL responded. "Ambient's apparent tactic of making changes in the system after receiving interference complaints and then denying that the interference problems complained of ever existed is not helpful." Nor did it help, the League's filing continued, that Ambient's engineer refused last December to participate with ARRL in a demonstration of the interference. The League said it's no longer possible for the Commission or Ambient "to deny the ongoing, serious interference problems at Briarcliff Manor."

The League pointed out that a member of the FCC Enforcement Bureau's staff personally witnessed the interference from the Briarcliff Manor system at two locations that were the focus of complaints last December. Franca's February letter failed to acknowledge video documenting the visit and uploaded to the League's Web site, even though the ARRL has provided him with the URL <http://www.arrl.org/tis/info/HTML/plc/aud-vid.htm>>. At that time, ARRL Laboratory staff members took measurements at various points in the system to document problems.

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While subsequent ARRL measurements did turn up a reduction of BPL emissions in some areas, emissions that would "substantially preclude Amateur communications" remain, the ARRL said, and along Dalmeny Road, interference is still at levels essentially unchanged from those measured last December and appears throughout the 20-meter band.

ARRL Laboratory staff members most recently visited Briarcliff Manor on March 11, and the League's filing to the FCC and Ambient March 17 included a summary of their measurements and observations. At one point, RF emission levels from the BPL system exceeded the FCC's Part 15 permitted levels by up to 20 dB, the League said.

Elsewhere, emissions along Dalmeny Road--which the FCC did not revisit earlier this year--"continue to contribute 14 dB of degradation of ambient noise" on 20 meters, the ARRL said. BPL interference also has been reported on 80 meters. The ARRL further faulted the FCC for not contacting the complainant, Westchester County ARES Emergency Coordinator Alan Crosswell, N2YGK, who routinely travels the roads in question and has experienced interference. Crosswell, who's also Westchester County RACES Officer, has documented BPL interference, complaints and related information on his "BPL in Briarcliff Manor" Web site <http://www.columbia.edu/~alan/bpl/>>.

The League said the FCC's continued refusal to shut down the Ambient Corporation's BPL system in Briarcliff Manor "highlights the completely arbitrary and baseless findings in the Commission's Report and Order in Docket 04-37, adopted last October 14."

In early January, the ARRL questioned Ambient's veracity and technical competence and criticized the FCC for not shutting the system down. The League requested then that the FCC rescind Ambient's WD2XEQ Part 5 Experimental license for the BPL pilot project.

AIR SECURITY TIGHTENED AFTER RADIO TRANSMISSION

BY SYLVIA ADCOCK

STAFF WRITER

March 15, 2005

Military jets were scrambled over New York skies Sunday night after the pilot of a Boston-bound commuter jet reported he had heard a radio transmission that sounded like a hijacking involving planes headed to LaGuardia Airport.

The transmission -- overheard by pilots on a radio frequency used by pilots and air traffic controllers -- turned out to be a hoax, but it kept security officials hopping, federal sources said. Before the night was over, air traffic controllers on Long Island asked all pilots landing at LaGuardia to confirm that their cockpit doors were secure, fighters jets were sent to patrol in a 25-mile radius of the Manhattan, and the Coast Guard had issued an alert to boaters to look for aircraft in distress.

Pilots of other aircraft, including a charter flight, also heard the suspicious transmission, federal sources said. To aviation officials, it sounded like the transmission came from another pilot, although aviation experts said it was possible for someone on the ground using a hand-held transmitter to break into the frequency.

Officials at North American Aerospace Defense Command, or NORAD, confirmed that fighter jets were scrambled and patrolled over the city until it was clear there was no threat. The pilots of three aircraft who overheard the transmission were interviewed by the TSA when they landed.

At the New York Terminal Approach Radar Control, or TRACON in Westbury, controllers guiding jets landing at LaGuardia asked each one to "verify cockpit door is secure." And at the New York Air Route Traffic Control center in Ronkonkoma, controllers were told to immediately clear out a slice of airspace around the city for the F-15s and F-16s. Clearing out space for the fighters is something frequently done for high-security events like a presidential visit, but it's rarely done with no warning.

And Finally...

Sources tell me that beginning the week of May 16 the NJ State Troopers will be out in force for TRAFFIC CONTROL. It should last for about 1 month. Troopers are going on overtime for TRAFFIC CONTROL and unmarked cars will be

patrolling Routes 1,130, 280, 80, 78, 24, the G.S. Parkway and the NJ Turnpike for speeders.

They will be looking for speeders during commuting periods. Troopers are being paid overtime to participate and are expected to write a lot of tickets. Do not speed!

Urban DX'er would like to thank all those who contributed to this month's issue!

Charlie - N2NOV, Dave, KE2SL, Bob, N1MLZ,

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