



PRESS RELEASE

9 September 2024

OfReg announces Land Mobile Radio device amnesty to address public health and safety concerns

Utilities regulator OfReg, has announced an amnesty period for businesses using professional land mobile radio devices that are not currently complying with Cayman’s licensing legislation. The move comes to address public health and safety concerns due to their potential for interference with other radio networks and other essential radio enabled services and devices including pacemakers.

The regulator stressed that the issue is serious but one of unintended consequences for the most part, with businesses such as construction and hospitality companies unknowingly importing handheld radio devices with factory pre-set frequencies that are the same as other, existing radio enabled services.

Richard Womersley, Spectrum Manager at OfReg says there are serious public health and safety concerns and potential consequences of unlicensed mobile radios in use, “This is a well-known problem in other countries around the world. There are documented incidents in the construction industry such as two different crane operators unknowingly operating on the same radio channel and one acting on instructions intended for the other. There are even recorded incidents of interference with life-saving medical devices such as pacemakers or critical national infrastructure frequencies such air traffic control. Thankfully we have not had any serious incidents in Cayman yet and we are acting in the public interest to ensure that remains the case.

“We have introduced this amnesty period for anyone who is using these types of professional land radio devices to come forward and check with us if they require a licence to operate them. We’ve been working with a number of companies who already use these devices, to adapt the frequencies in use to avoid any interference with other users and to bring them up to date with any licensing requirements.”

Not all handheld radio devices require a license to use and operate, notably basic ‘walkie-talkies’ – often referred to as ‘Family Radio’ devices.

OfReg recently made many of these basic radio devices exempt from licensing and said they are quite easily identifiable from professional land mobile radios. Mr. Womersley continued, “There is a simple general difference between a Family Radio type device and a professional land radio device which requires a licence to operate. Family radio walkie-talkies that many people have for fun have an integrated antenna, or aerial which cannot be removed. Professional land mobile radio devices, on the other hand, usually have antennas that can be detached.

“There are other ways to distinguish them such as detachable battery packs, but we ask that if any business is not sure what type of device they have or whether they need a licence, to get in touch with us and we will work with them to ensure they are operating them legally and most importantly safely.”



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UTILITY REGULATION AND COMPETITION OFFICE

The Land Mobile Radio Amnesty runs until the end of 2024 and the spectrum team at OfReg can be contacted by email at spectrum@ofreg.ky or calling +1-345-946-4282.

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ATTACHED FOR EDITORS: Land Mobile Radio Factsheet

ABOUT OFREG

The Utility Regulation and Competition Office ('OfReg' or the 'Office') is the independent regulator established by section 4 of the Utility Regulation and Competition Act (as revised) (the 'URC Act') for the electricity, information, and communications technology, water, wastewater, and fuel sectors in the Cayman Islands.

OfReg provides the opportunity for consistency and collaboration in regulation across the energy, fuel, ICT, and water sectors; better utilisation of skills and resources resulting in more efficient and effective regulatory processes; encouraging competition where appropriate and feasible; championing sustainability and innovation across markets, contributing to the economic and social goals of the Cayman Islands.

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