



Do You Know?

21 February 2019

1. Do you know that in 2018 the Laurel VEC uploaded more applications for new licenses and upgrades than the W5YI VEC?

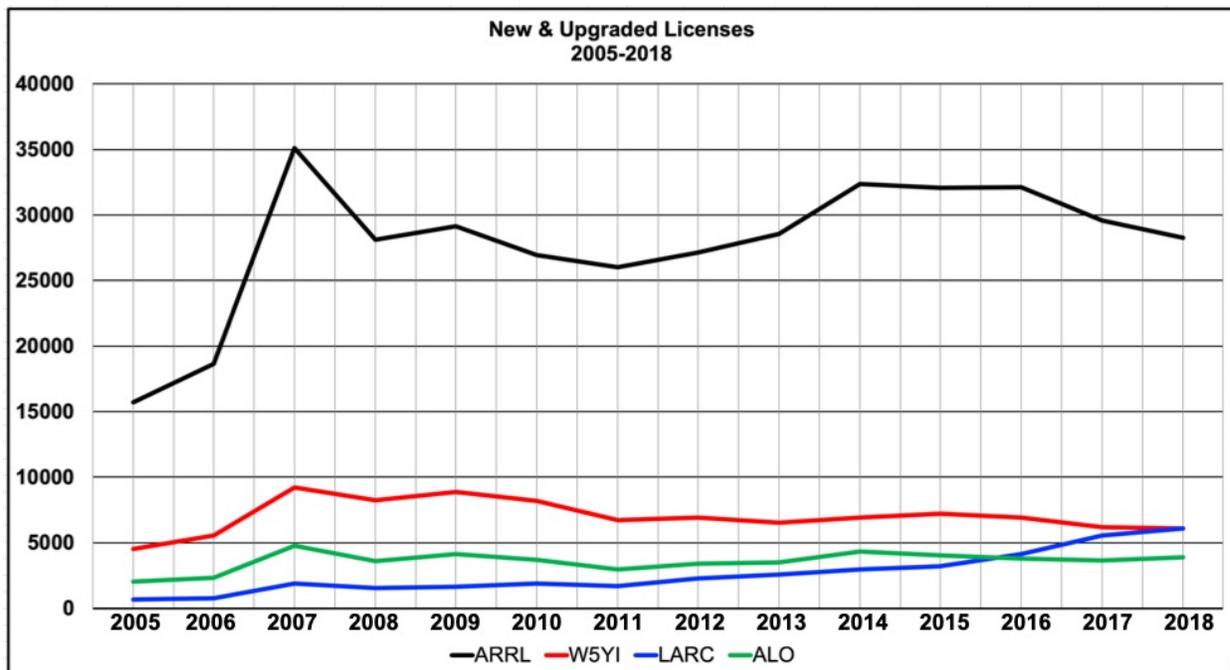
Notes:

All of the data used in this article is from the Universal Licensing System (ULS) or from historical applicant and session data from the Anne Arundel Radio Club VE Team in Davidsonville, MD. Your author collected the data from January 2000 through December 2013 while serving as the team leader.

The term "Upgraded Licenses" is used to indicate a Modified license which, by FCC definition, requires (1) an upgrade to the license class and/or (2) a systematic change of call sign. The overwhelming number of Modifications are due to a license upgrade.

ALO means "All Others" and refers to the other 11 VECs not specifically mentioned in this article.

The graphic below provides an interesting glimpse into the productivity of the "big three" VECs (ARRL, W5YI and LARC) and the other 11 VECs (ALO), as a single group, over the past 14 years.



2. Discussion about the above graphic. Since the VECs were created to primarily administer exams, the focus of this article is on the number of exams that resulted in a grant of a new license or an upgrade of an existing license.

- **ARRL VEC** (Black line) – The biggest and the busiest VEC. As the graphic indicates, the number of new licenses and upgraded licenses uploaded by the ARRL peaked in 2007 and again in 2014. Since 2014 the number of new licenses and upgrades has been declining. I can find no specific reason for the decline.
- **W5YI VEC** (Red line) – Through 2017, the W5YI VEC was the second largest and second busiest VEC. After peaking in 2007, the number of new and upgraded licenses uploaded by this VEC has been on a steady decline. I can find no specific reason for the decline.
- **LARC VEC** (Blue line) – Since 2005 the number of new and upgraded licenses uploaded by the VEC has steadily increased. In 2007 the Laurel VEC took over administering exams during the Dayton Hamvention® and in 2010 implemented its Regional Coordinators. Between 2010 and 2018, the number of teams increased, and our presence was expanded into new states. **During 2018 the Laurel VEC uploaded 6111 new and upgraded licenses compared to the W5YI VEC which uploaded 6090 new and upgraded licenses.**
- **ALO VECs** (Green line) - Since 2005, the number of new and upgraded licenses uploaded by the other 11 VECs (ALO) has been up and down year-to-year but consistently has stayed below 5000 new and upgraded licenses each year.

Note: In February 2007, the FCC dropped Element 1 (5 WPM CW) as a required exam element.

3. So why is the LARC VEC the only VEC with steadily increasing numbers of uploaded new and upgraded licenses? I think there are three primary factors:

- The steady addition of new teams and expansion into other states beginning in 2010.

However, in some cases the addition of new teams has not been an overwhelming success. For example, in some cases, the new teams we've added have conducted only three exams per year with only 1-3 applicants per session or even per **year**.

- Increased advertising on the ARRL website.

Listing non-ARRL exam sessions on the ARRL website is easy and it's free.

When searching for "Ham license exams" or "Amateur radio exams" or some variation of both search phrases, the first website listed is always [Find an Amateur Radio License Exam in Your Area - www.arrl.org/find-an-amateur-radio-license-exam-session](http://www.arrl.org/find-an-amateur-radio-license-exam-session)

Hams and non-hams can enter their zip code and a search range (e.g., 25 miles, 50 miles, 100 miles) and find list of exam sessions within that range for the next several months.

You will find lots of clubs listed who offer exams including some Laurel VEC teams in the first 100 returns, but you will not see a specific listing for the Laurel VEC website in the first 100 returns.

- Word of mouth advertising.

An applicant shows up to an exam session, learns that is free and they get their results fairly fast and they tell people about their experience. One thing leads to another and

Regional Coordinators are contacted about creating a new team or transferring an existing team from another VEC to Laurel.

4. How about the number of applicants we served?

It's difficult to get an accurate count of the number of applicants the VECs served because:

- Some VECs double count applicants (e.g., Timmy goes to an ARRL session and fails on his first attempt, pays to try again and is counted as a new applicant for his second attempt).
- While VECs provide information in our session uploads (e.g., Number of applicants, applicants who passed, Applicants who failed), it's open to interpretation and I cannot find a way to retrieve that data.

Note: The applicant counts, etc. that we provide in our uploads is at the request of the VECs. The FCC does not use that information for any purpose. The FCC is able to extract that data and provide it to the VECs every year.

In theory each application for a new license, a modified license, a renewal and modification, Administrative update, and renewal represents one applicant. Unfortunately, it's a flawed theory due in part to how the FCC wants applications for renewals to be submitted.

As a team leader in Maryland, I collected exam session results for every applicant for 14 years. The data indicates that for the number applicants who earned a new license or upgraded a license, an average of 13% additional applicants failed to earn a new license or upgrade an existing license and did not apply for any other action.

My assumption is that the people who came to my exam sessions are no different than those who appear at any other exam session at any other location. They were neither better or less prepared than applicants in VA, NY, OH, IN, CA, etc., regardless of which VECs' exam session they attended. Therefore, I feel comfortable using 13% to estimate the number of failed applicants.

I estimate that in 2005, the Laurel VEC serviced about 773 applicants.

- 660 applicants earned a new or upgraded license
- Zero applicants submitted an application for Administrative Updates
- 21 applicants submitted a Renewal Only application
- 6 applicants submitted an application for Renewal and Modifications applicants
- An estimated 86 applicants (13% of 660) failed to earn a new license or upgrade an existing license and did not submit an application for any other purpose

I estimate that we serviced about 6,962 applicants in 2018.

- 6111 applicants earned a new or upgraded license
- 52 applicants submitted an Administrative Update application (Not counted – see note below)
- 52 applicants submitted a Renewal Only application
- 5 applicants submitted a Renewal and Modification application
- An estimated 794 applicants failed to earn a new license or upgrade an existing license and did not submit an application for any other purpose

Note: Beginning in 2018 and in accordance with FCC direction, the Laurel VEC began uploading applications to renew a license that include administrative updates as two

applications (Renewal Only and Administrative Update) even though a single applicant appeared to renew their license. In terms of applicants, this procedure leads to “double counting”.

5. **Now you know.**

Questions or comments? Contact Bob/AA3RR (410) 353-0174 or aa3rr@cableone.net