



Changes to Part 95 Rules Affecting GMRS/FRS (Sept 2017)

The FCC implemented several changes to the Part 95 rules impacting GMRS/FRS channels and power levels, apparently to address the problem of commercial GMRS/FRS radio packaging and weak compliance with GMRS licensing rules. (They also dropped several CB laws. For example, CB DXing will now be OK!)

In our humble opinion, as a result of these changes, GMRS users step backwards and FRS users step forward. Here's the whole [Personal Radio Service Reform](#) as published in the Federal Register on September 28, 2017. The Part 95 Reforms, covering [FRS](#) and [GMRS](#) [start here](#). You can also download the whole enchilada (a discussion of the reforms, as well as the complete revised Part 95 Rules) [as a PDF](#).

The graphic shown to the right (click for larger view) gives my own take on the changes, as they impact the channel assignments and new allowed power levels. I combined the before/after graphics from the *Report and Order*, clarified them a bit, and added some additional helpful labels.

The **positive** changes, from a GMRS viewpoint:

- The **467 MHz Interstitial frequencies** (formerly exclusive to FRS) are **added for GMRS handheld units** (with rubber-duck antennas), although limited to 1/2 watt, bandwidth of 12.5 kHz.
- Brief, infrequent, and manually initiated **digital data transmissions** (e.g., APRS position reports and text messages) are **now permitted** from **handheld units** in either GMRS or FRS on **462 MHz channels**.
- **Applications for NEW combination GMRS/FRS radios** will **no longer be accepted** (after the first 90 days of this revision). Since all 22 channels available to existing GMRS/FRS radios will now be legal FRS channels, all these old walkie-talkie units will effectively become "FRS radios."
- The **antenna height restriction** is **eliminated** for GMRS base station antennas (formerly 20 feet maximum).

The **negative** changes, from a GMRS viewpoint:

- GMRS users of the **462 MHz interstitial frequencies** are now **limited to 5 watts** (previously 50W!), and still **share them with FRS users**, who can **now transmit up to 2 watts** (previously 1/2 watt). At least GMRS users are still allowed twice the deviation (i.e., volume level) of FRS users.
- GMRS users of the **newly permitted 467 MHz interstitial frequencies** can **only use handheld units transmitting up to 1/2 watt**. Base and mobile stations—**not allowed**. As for all interstitial frequencies, these are **shared with FRS users**, who are also limited to only 1/2 watt on these channels.
- The only **exclusively GMRS frequencies** are now the repeater input frequencies (aka "467 MHz main channels"). All other "channels" are now **shared with FRS**: all the 462 MHz frequencies (channels 1-7, 15-22) at 2 watts (up from 1/2 watt), and the 467 MHz interstitial frequencies (FRS channels 8-12), limited to 1/2 watt. A glimmer of light here is that **GMRS repeaters can output up to 50 watts on the "462 MHz main channels"** shared with FRS (channels 15-22, limited to 2 watts).

You may see other positives and negatives. Again, as I see it: for FRS users, there are several reasons to cheer. GMRS users—not so much.

John AC5JC

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Contact us: hamradio@hotarc.org

