

SENATE STAFF ANALYSIS AND ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT

(This document is based only on the provisions contained in the legislation as of the latest date listed below.)

BILL: SB 874

SPONSOR: Senator Bronson

SUBJECT: Telecommunications Frequencies

DATE: March 11, 1999 REVISED: _____

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	<u>Wimsett</u>	<u>Guthrie</u>	<u>RI</u>	<u>Favorable</u>
2.	_____	_____	_____	_____
3.	_____	_____	_____	_____
4.	_____	_____	_____	_____
5.	_____	_____	_____	_____

I. Summary:

The bill clarifies current law regarding unauthorized transmissions on government agency and emergency services provider radio frequencies. The bill also makes it a first degree misdemeanor to knowingly obstruct, jam or interfere with volunteers providing communications support at the request of a government agency during tests, drills, field operations, or emergency events.

This bill substantially amends section 843.165, Florida Statutes.

II. Present Situation:

Government agencies and emergency medical services providers use designated radio frequencies to communicate vital information. Florida law currently prohibits unauthorized transmissions on police or fire radio frequencies. However, other government agencies and emergency medical providers' radio frequencies are not similarly protected, and there have been reports of interference with radio frequencies that have compromised the effectiveness of communications.

Moreover, amateur radio services have been obstructed during critical emergencies. Amateur radio services, particularly "Skywarn", provide valuable information to the National Weather Service and to local communities during severe weather.

Federal law prohibits unlawful interference with government radio frequencies and the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has promulgated rules that regulate the amateur radio industry. However, the local nature of the problem and the scarcity of FCC resources makes federal enforcement difficult.

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

The bill extends the interference provisions in section 843.165, F.S., to include radio frequencies used by government agencies and emergency services providers. The bill exempts persons

authorized in writing, authorized employees of the agency, and those persons holding a valid station license assigned by the Federal Communications Commission to transmit on such frequencies.

The bill also makes it a first degree misdemeanor to knowingly obstruct, jam, or interfere with radio transmissions made by volunteer communications personnel when volunteers are providing communications support upon request of a governmental agency during tests, drills, field operations, or emergency events.

The bill exempts from the provisions of this section radio technicians and installers responsible for testing, repairing, or installing radio equipment at the request of a state, county, or municipal government agency or licensed public or private emergency services provider.

IV. Constitutional Issues:

A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

None.

B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

None.

C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

V. Economic Impact and Fiscal Note:

A. Tax/Fee Issues:

None.

B. Private Sector Impact:

None.

C. Government Sector Impact:

None.

VI. Technical Deficiencies:

None.

VII. Related Issues:

None.

VIII. Amendments:

None.

This Senate staff analysis does not reflect the intent or official position of the bill's sponsor or the Florida Senate.
