



**FOR SHORT TERM HIRE OF  
BUSINESS RADIO EQUIPMENT**

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FOR THE BUSINESS RADIO INDUSTRY**



*Representing the Communications Services Industry*

## FOREWORD

### CODE OF PRACTICE FOR BUSINESS RADIO SHORT TERM HIRE

This Code of Practice has been produced from an update of the 1994 FCS Short Term Hire Code of Practice by a special working group under the auspices of the Radiocommunications Quality Council (RQC). The RQC is comprised of representatives from the Office of Communications (Ofcom), the Federation of Communication Services (FCS) and other representatives from the telecommunications industry.

Members of industry participating in the Short Term Hire business may apply to the FCS, who act as administrator, for membership of the RQC Silver Award Scheme and will be accepted subject to conformity to this Code of Practice.

With the Silver Award Scheme certificate prominently displayed, a member is recognised as being of high calibre and integrity, thus attracting customers.

By observing this Code members of the Scheme will also demonstrate commitment to the principles of good management of the radio spectrum, as required by the Communications Act 2003, for the benefit of all Business Radio hire users.



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## **1. GENERAL**

### **1.1 Scope**

This code of practice provides guidance for companies hiring Business Radio equipment on a short term period, of a year or less.

The code refers to the licence conditions and the requirements for preparation, support and return of hire equipment, the control of stock licenced for hire, and technical back-up.

The code also gives recommendations for instructing customers in the efficient use of radio equipment.

The code does not cover hire of equipment operating on:

- a. other Business Radio frequencies;
- b. marine frequencies;
- c. aeronautical frequencies.

### **1.2 Explanations of Short Term Hire**

Short Term Hire (STH) is a business activity whereby a group of radio channels is made available to companies offering STH. The customers for this service are businesses or organisations who have an ongoing need for radio communications and wish to hire, as opposed to purchase, for short periods of less than one year.

## **2. GENERAL AND LICENCE CONDITIONS**

### **2.1 General Conditions**

All radio hire activities shall comply with the requirements of the Ofcom Business Radio Suppliers Licence conditions: further information can be found in Ofwl 15

An Ofcom licence must be in held by the business offering STH.

Where a major event is being held at a single location, and/or if a large number of hirers are anticipated on various frequencies on a single site, special arrangements for STH should be sought in advance from the Ofcom regional office.

### **2.2 Intrinsically Safe Equipment**

If the STH Company wishes to offer Intrinsically Safe items of radio equipment and appropriate accessories for hire it is the responsibility of such a company to:

- a. ensure the status of the certification of such items, and make available the relevant documentation for customers scrutiny if so requested;
- b. have written authority from the holders of certified equipment to both hire on and service such items;
- c. ensure that composite items of Intrinsically Safe equipment offered for hire have been suitably certified to be supplied as such.

### **2.3 'Hiring in' Short Term Hire Equipment (a.k.a. Cross-hire)**

STH companies may occasionally need to hire in equipment from other suppliers to meet peaks in demand.

STH companies who obtain equipment from other organisations are responsible for ensuring that such apparatus meets the conditions of their licence. Provided that the hire agreement with the customer is under the hirer's own licence, the owners of the equipment need take no action.

## 2.4 Licensing

All STH activity must be under and in accordance with the Suppliers Licence.

In addition the hiring company must take account of the following:

- a. All equipment must comply with the requirements of the RTTE Directive, or in the case of 'legacy' equipment manufactured before the Directive came into force, must have been type approved to the relevant MPT specification.
- b. STH radio equipment can only be hired; it cannot be sold operating on the STH hire frequencies.
- c. STH Hirers can apply for an extended hire period for a customer of over one year by writing to their local Ofcom office. The request will only be granted in exceptional circumstances. If an extension is not allowed the customer may apply for a permanent Business Radio licence.

## 2.5 Local Trade and Working Practices

Where it is required to visit a customer-owned or a third party site for the purpose of installing, commissioning, repairing, maintaining or un-installing short term hire radio communications equipment, it is important that good work practices are employed for all activities undertaken.

Due regard should be taken of:

- a. **Industrial Relations:** the observance of local trade or union rules.
- b. **Security:** compliance with local security procedures. Special arrangements may exist regarding access to premises.
- c. **Correct Working Practices:** cleanliness of the workplace, checking for discrepancies before commencing work, ensuring continuity of operation of existing equipment and checking for non-interference should be integral to the completion of work.
- d. **Method Statements:** Where appropriate a method statement annotating details of the work plan for installation of the system should be prepared and agreed with the customer.

## 2.6 Health & Safety and Risk Assessment

Health & Safety at work is based on good work practice embodied in Health and Safety legislation and site regulations, which are usually prepared and controlled by the Site Safety Officer.

Preparations by the STH Company should be made when visiting a site to carry out a risk assessment, including a check with the site manager on Health and Safety requirements for visiting contractors.

These safety requirements may include:

- a. wearing of safety headgear throughout the site;

- b. protective clothing and/or safety goggles;
- c. safety equipment for work at heights;
- d. use of low voltage electrical apparatus and/or individual safety trip protection;
- e. no entry for contractors vehicles on the site or certain sectors of the site;
- f. intrinsic safety regulations in force on all or part of the site;
- g. specific fire regulations to be followed on all or part of the site;
- h. specific insurance regulations which preclude certain operations unless undertaken or supervised by the site owner's specific staff.

### **3. PREPARATION OF EQUIPMENT AND INFORMATION TO BE EXCHANGED BY THE STH HIRER**

#### **3.1 Supporting Customers**

The STH Company will operate a system for the processing of customer enquiries. It is required that staff employed by the company for this purpose will have been provided with suitable training.

The STH Company will advise all prospective customers at the time of quotation of the regulatory conditions which will subsequently govern the use of the equipment to be supplied. This will include informing the customer in writing:

- a. of the Suppliers Licence terms and conditions governing the use of the equipment
- b. that failure to meet these terms and conditions may cause the equipment to be closed down
- c. of the penalties for improper use of the equipment
- d. of the procedures for the service/repair of the equipment by the STH hirer
- e. that if the customer wishes to use the equipment beyond the specified time limits, they must apply for a permanent licence.

Customers taking out a contract must be given a copy of the hire agreement, its terms and conditions and the procedures for repair and maintenance prior to or on delivery of the equipment.

#### **3.2 Administration of Equipment Hire**

The STH Company shall have a procedure for the provision of radio communication equipment and associated accessories for hire by its customers. It may be advantageous that these procedures be segregated from those necessary for conducting other business activities in which the company may be engaged, such as the sale of similar equipment.

Procedures will include:

- a. recording the customer order details including the type and quantity of equipment involved;

- b. ensuring that equipment stock is made available on the date required by the customer;
- c. All matters relating to the hire contract are clarified with the customer;
- d. monitoring the progress of each contract and to ensure it is not extended beyond the maximum approved hire period as stipulated by the hirers licence;

### **3.3 Conditions of use for the customer**

To ensure the customer complies with his obligation to comply with Licence conditions the following points should be advised to the customer.

- a. The customer shall ensure that the business radio equipment is operated by authorised persons only, and users are aware of these conditions. Unauthorised persons must be prevented from obtaining access to the equipment.
- b. The equipment is licensed for business use only. Conversations must be kept strictly to business-related issues.
- c. The equipment must be operated solely on the frequencies specified in the licence schedule.
- d. The transmission of music or broadcast programmes, or the use of obscene or offensive language, is forbidden.
- e. All licences and services are authorised on the condition of non-interference to other users. Ofcom reserves the right to revoke any licence or service that causes undue interference. Ofcom will not become involved in interference or channel-sharing disputes between users of PMR446 equipment.
- f. If there is any breach of licence conditions Ofcom is obliged, under the Communications Act 2003, to serve a Conformity Notice to the licensee or persons authorised to use the radio system by the licensee. In certain circumstances this may result in the immediate seizure of equipment.

#### **Private Business Radio (PBR) equipment only**

- g. Prior to transmission, the user shall ensure that the channel is not already being used. Never interrupt another user on the channel except in an emergency (which, for this purpose, is construed as safety of human life in an emergency).
- h. The use of the call sign specified in the licence schedule or in the customer's PBR licence application form, is obligatory for PBR transmissions and must be announced at the beginning of transmissions.
- i. The customer shall ensure that transmissions are kept to a minimum. A pause to allow other stations to use the channel should normally be observed if the transmission is likely to last longer than 30 seconds.
- j. There must be no persistent calling to unmanned stations.
- k. In poor reception areas, the station should be asked to change to an alternative authorised frequency rather than occupy the frequency with broken transmissions.

#### **PBR (including trunked PBR) and business radio paging hire equipment only**

Hired equipment may not be re-hired unless the hire customer is also a holder of a Business Radio Suppliers licence.

### **3.4 Equipment Pre-delivery Inspection and Test**

The STH Company is required to implement procedures which will ensure that the equipment provided for each contract meets the terms and conditions of that contract.

It is the responsibility of the STH Company wherever possible to restrict the range of transmitting equipment to that required by the customer and to ensure that all relevant

technical requirements of the STH licensing criteria are adhered to in this respect. Such procedures shall be designed in accordance with good engineering practice.

An inspection procedure shall be performed prior to the equipment being despatched to ensure that:-

- a. the equipment provided for hire to the customer is in a mechanically and electrically sound condition. This will include an equipment check prior to despatch;
- b. all the required accessories and ancillary items as detailed on the hire contract such as battery chargers, spare batteries, remote microphones, mains power units, and antennas are supplied as required.
- c. supporting contract documentation is made available and that equipment is suitably labelled or engraved with owner identification, taking care not to obliterate any original labels or markings.

### **3.5 Installation of Equipment**

All installations of mobile radio equipment in vehicles should comply with the requirement of the 'MPT1362 Code of Practice for the installation of mobile radio and related ancillary equipment in land based vehicles'. Installers should not knowingly contravene any statutory condition of any legislation.

## **4. REGISTER OF STOCK: LOST OR DAMAGED STOCK**

### **4.1 Stock control, Identification and Segregation**

The following should be adhered to:

- a. Categories of equipment should be clearly defined eg base station, vehicle fitted mobiles, hand portables and clearly marked as being short term hire equipment with a stock number.
- b. Storage will be clearly identified, subdivided and labelled for various categories of stock. Hire stock in transit will always be segregated into 'Hire in', 'Hire out' and 'Hire Equipment for repair'.
- c. Each item or batch of items will be accompanied by a document clearly indicating its purpose or status.
- d. Separate storage arrangements should exist for non-short term hire frequency equipment. This equipment should be labelled and clearly identified to reflect this status.

### **4.2 Lost/damaged stock**

When a customer notifies lost, stolen or damaged equipment (which he should do as soon as is practicable) replacement equipment should be issued as in (5.3) below:

- a. Status for the equipment should be recorded in the customer file centrally and the appropriate commercial and legal action taken.
- b. In the event of lost or stolen equipment the STH Company should inform the regional Ofcom office in which the equipment has been operating.

- e. Short Term Hire companies must, on disposing of ex STH equipment, erase or remove all STH frequency settings and any STH hirers licence numbers, or render the equipment unusable.

## **5. SUPPORTING CURRENT HIRE EQUIPMENT AND BACK-UP STOCK**

### **5.1 Supporting current hire equipment and back-up stock.**

Current hire equipment must be supported by an administrative system containing the following minimum information:

- a. hire contract with site information, user contact name and telephone number plus details of equipment on hire, and frequencies and any signalling tone frequencies, together with
- b. a valid Business Radio Suppliers Licence issued by the Office of Communications (Ofcom).

This information should be clearly categorised by customer/contract number and will be sufficient for staff to support current hire customers.

### **5.2 Technical Back-up**

The STH Company is required to provide a level of technical support to its customer commensurate with the range of equipment and facilities which it offers.

The STH Company shall be able to demonstrate when required that it can access suitably experienced and qualified staff to meet these obligations together with the availability of suitable engineering facilities.

If base stations and vehicle unit equipments are offered for hire, any technical back up should include an on-site support where appropriate. A procedure for providing this support is required to be implemented by the STH Company and this procedure will be stated in the terms and conditions of the contract made available to the customer prior to the commencement of the equipment hire.

Faulty items of equipment may be repaired on site, repaired in depot within a maximum quoted period of time, or replaced accordingly. Whichever mechanism of repair and maintenance is adopted by the company, it must be supported by an adequate stock level of spare parts and/or replacement items specifically maintained for such eventualities.

### **5.3 Repair, Maintenance and Back-up stock**

In the event of faulty equipment being returned by the customer, the STH Company should (taking into account contractual obligations):

- a. Check returned equipment for physical damage and assess for:
  - i. Return to service if no fault found; or
  - ii. Immediate repair and return; or
  - iii. Replacement.
- b. Amend the customer record to reflect any change of equipment.
- c. Enter faulty items suitably labelled into segregated repair area.

- d. Maintain sufficient stock levels to support current hire equipment with replacement units to meet foreseeable workloads.

Any STH company which offers base and vehicle units for hire should be able to provide to on-site maintenance and repair facilities to support customers as necessary.

## **6. RETURN OF HIRE EQUIPMENT**

### **6.1 Return of Hire Equipment**

Equipment being returned “off hire” the STH Company must have procedures which will provide for:

- a. Entering equipment into appropriate segregated storage area
- b. “Logging in” return equipment
- c. Noting discrepancies, damage and loss
- d. Informing customers of such discrepancies
- e. Checking to specification, cleaning and returning satisfactory equipment to stock for re-hire
- f. Entering faulty equipment into appropriate segregated storage area having clearly labelled the equipment as to the nature of the defect.
- g. Returning to stock or otherwise repaired items for re-hire as appropriate.

## **7. AUDIT**

### **7.1 Preparation and Presentation of Internal Audit**

The STH Company shall operate a procedure for producing regular internal technical and administrative audits.

These audits are to be designed primarily to ensure that standards of equipment preparation and support are maintained at a constant level. Such audit will ensure that:-

- a. all test equipment employed in the equipment preparation and repair is maintained with an appropriate calibration procedure;
- b. the hire equipment stock levels and scheduling are adequate to meet the level of hiring activities of the company;
- c. the stocking of spare parts necessary for the support of the equipment made available for hire is adequate;
- d. items of hire equipment stock continue to meet manufacturer’s specification and are recorded accordingly.

It is expected that such audits will be conducted in accordance with the requirements of a quality management system such as those laid down in the RQC Silver Award Scheme.

## ANNEX

### 8.1 Legal and Safety Regulations

Wireless Telegraphy Act 1949 and subsequent legislative orders  
Appropriate Planning Regulations  
Relevant technical specifications and guides  
Health & Safety at Work Act  
Road Traffic Act  
Specific Inherently Safe Specifications  
Electricity at Work Regulations

### 8.2 Other Reference documents

Ofwl 15 Short Term Hire Information Sheet (part of Ofcom Business Suppliers Licence)  
MPT 1361 Fixed Sites (superseded by ETSI – EN 300 220-1)  
MPT 1362 Installation and Commission and Test of LMR equipment into vehicles (FCS)  
MPT 1367 Installation of Radio Apparatus and Other Apparatus Generating Radio Frequency Emission (withdrawn 1995 - not superseded)  
MPT 1372 for Field Maintenance and Repair of Civil Business Radio (not superseded)

### 8.3 Type Approvals

‘Legacy’ equipment, which predates implementation of the RTTE Directive and is still in the market, must have been type approved to the appropriate specifications below:

MPT 1301	Base & Mobile VHF and UHF Angle Modulated
MPT 1302	Base & Mobile VHF Amplitude Modulated
MPT 1303	Portable VHF and UHF Angle Modulated
MPT 1326	Base, Mobile and Portable VHF and UHF Angle Modulated

## 9. GLOSSARY OF TERMS

FCS	Federation of Communication Services - <a href="http://www.fcs.org.uk">www.fcs.org.uk</a>
MPT	Ministry of Post and Telecommunications (the regulator pre-1980s)
PMR	Private Mobile Radio
PBR	Private Business Radio
QA	Quality Assurance
RQC	Radiocommunications Quality Council
RTTE	Radio and Telecommunications Terminal Equipment
STH	Short Term Hire
WT	Wireless Telegraphy
ETSI	European Telecommunications Standards Institute – <a href="http://www.etsi.org">www.etsi.org</a>
LMR	Land Mobile Radio