OUTLINE OF AMATEUR RADIO LICENSE IN JAPAN

1. Introduction

In Japan, the radio regulatory administration is a function of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (MIC). The MIC is responsible for the supervision of radio communications on the basis of the Radio Law enacted in 1950.

Japan has enacted Radio Law and those of the related Cabinet Orders and MIC ordinances in line with the International Radio Regulations and international agreements on radio communications.

The main points of authority and function are:
- to grant radio station licenses,
- to inspect radio stations,
- to monitor and regulate the use of radio frequencies,
- to grant licenses to radio operator,
- to set the technical standard for radio equipment, and
- to foster and promote the utilization of radio waves.

Procedures and operating requirement of amateur radio stations are similar to those of other kind of radio stations.

2. Licensing system

2.1 Radio station license

Any person who intends to establish a radio station should obtain a licence from the Minister of Internal Affairs and Communications (Article 4 of the Radio Law), whereas no radio station licence is granted to any person who does not have the Japanese nationality (Article 5 of the Radio Law). With regard to an amateur radio station*, however, the aliens are able to obtain its licence in this country (same Article as the latter).

*The term "amateur radio station" means a station in the amateur radio service.
*The term "amateur radio service" means a radio communication service for the purpose of self-training, intercommunication and technical investigations carried out by duly authorized persons interested in radio technique solely with a personal aim and without pecuniary interest (Article 3 of the Ordinance for Executing the Radio Law), as defined in the Radio Regulations of the International Telecommunication Union.

2.2 Persons permitted to operate a radio station

No other persons than "radio operators"* are in a position to operate amateur radio stations in Japan (Article 39-3 of the Radio Law); however, any person who holds a qualification, recognized as being equivalent to one of a Japanese Amateur Radio Operator's Certificate, issued by one of the countries having reciprocal agreement with Japan, may be permitted to do so, even if he is not a "radio operator" defined in the Radio Law (Same Article as above, and Article 33 of the Ordinance for Executing the Radio Law).

*The term "radio operators" means the persons who have been granted a licence to operate radio stations from the MIC (Article 2 of the Radio Law).

2.3 Forms for performing the amateur radio service

Radio amateurs may perform the amateur radio service in Japan in any form given in paragraph 2.3.1 or 2.3.2 below.

2.3.1 A radio amateur establishes a radio station of his own fixed or mobile, under a license from the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications and operates the radio equipment installed therein (Article 6-2 of the Ordinance for Fixing the Essential Standards for Establishment of Radio Stations).

2.3.2 Instead of establishing his own radio station, a radio amateur utilizes radio installations of an amateur radio station, fixed or mobile, of an incorporated body to which the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications has granted a license for the amateur radio purpose (Article 6-2 of the Ordinance for Fixing the Essential Standards for Establishment of Radio Stations).

2.4 Radio operators and radio installations for the amateur radio service

2.4.1 Various classes of amateur radio operators

The qualification of radio operators for the amateur radio service are stipulated as follows according to the technical faculties (Article 40 of the Radio Law):
- Amateur First-Class Radio Operator;
- Amateur Second-Class Radio Operator;
- Amateur Third-Class Radio Operator;
- Amateur Fourth-Class Radio Operator.
Anyone can obtain the radio operator's qualification(s) by passing the state
examinations for radio operators' certificates conducted for each qualification and,
otherwise, as to the qualifications of Third and Fourth classes of amateur radio
operators, by taking one of the formally authorized radio operators training courses
held for conferring these amateur radio operators' qualifications (Article 41 of the
Radio Law). Since any radio operator's qualification may be bestowed not only to
the Japanese citizens but also to the foreign citizens, it is possible for a foreign
citizens to become a "radio operator" prescribed in the Radio Law. In this case, a
fee should be paid which is fixed according to the class of qualification under the
pertinent Order effective at that time.

As regards the technical faculties, the amateur radio operators are esteemed to
have at least the qualities sufficient for passing those state examinations the
contents of which (Article 4 of the Ordinance of Radio Operators) are given in
Attachment 1.

2.4.2 Frequency bands, class of emissions, maximum antenna power
The frequency bands, class of emissions and maximum antenna power available for
the amateur radio service in this country are listed in Table in Attachment 2.

2.4.3 Scope of operation of a radio station allowed for radio operators to
perform the amateur radio service
The scope of operation within which a radio operator is permitted to operate a radio
station for performing the amateur radio service is defined according to the
technical faculties, namely, to the classes of qualifications. It is also recognized that
any person who holds the qualification(s) of a professional radio operator and/or
technical radio operator may perform the amateur radio service corresponding to
his technical faculties. The frequency bands and maximum antenna power for each
class of amateur radio operators as well as for other professional radio operators to
perform the amateur radio service (Article 2 of the Order for Delimiting the Scope
of Operation of Radio Installations Permitted for Radio Operators) are listed in
Attachment 3.

2.5 License term
2.5.1 Amateur radio station licenses to the Japanese, and the aliens who are
authorized by Minister of Justice to reside permanently in Japan are valid for a
period of five years from the date of a license granted.
2.5.2 Amateur radio station licenses to the aliens other than referred to in the
preceding item are valid for a period of one year from the date of a license granted.
2.5.3 Amateur radio operator licenses are valid without renewal throughout the
holder's life.

As from April, 1993, a Radio User Fee System, effecting all radio stations, was
introduced and henceforth a fee of 300 yen per license (last modified in October 2008) was imposed. Radio operators including radio amateurs receive their bills
every year from the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications after the
date of the issuing of licenses.