

Noncom FM Station Totals Continue to Boom

Does the NCE band feel more crowded to you? It's not your imagination

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The number of noncommercial FM stations in the United States continues to break records.

In the latest totals from the Federal Communications Commission, there are 4,806 noncom FMs as of June 30. That is 177 more than a year ago and up by a whopping 622 stations from four years ago.

The FCC conducted an application window for new noncom FM stations in late 2021.

The ongoing decline in AM station totals has continued. The report came out even as broadcasters [met this week on Capitol Hill](#) to lobby Congress to mandate AM's inclusion in new vehicles.

At mid-year there were 4,300 AM stations, down by 60 from this time last year and down by 198 stations from four years ago. The AM category peaked in the early 1990s at around 5,000 licenses, according to FCC data.

(When was the number of AM stations last so low? It's not clear from the FCC public report because of a gap in annual reporting; but it probably was the 1970s. Its report pauses in 1969 when there were 4,269 AMs, and resumes in 1990 with 4,978 AMs.)

Also continuing a more recent decline is the number of commercial FMs. There were 6,560 at mid-year, down by 42 from last year and by 129 over four years.

The category of FM translators and boosters meanwhile stands at 8,846; that's down just a bit from last year, but the category will get a boost soon after the FCC opens its first-ever window for noncom FM translators later this year.

And there are now 2,013 low-power FMs, up slightly from a year ago. LPFM should continue to grow after a window for applications in 2023.