

FCC Encyclopedia



AM Broadcast Station Classes; Clear, Regional, and Local Channels

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Introduction

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There are two fields in the CDBS database and the AM Query which involve the class of station. They are:

- The **Domestic Class** (or class of the station with respect to other U.S. stations), which is generally the class of station defined in Section 73.21
- The **Region 2 Class**, which is generally the class of station as defined in the Region 2 [Western Hemisphere] AM Agreement. This class also corresponds to the class in the 1984 U.S.-Canadian AM Agreement and the 1986 U.S.-Mexican Agreement.

Classes for U.S. AM Broadcast Stations

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In MM Docket 87-267, the Commission reclassified all domestic [United States] AM stations. These classes are **A, B, C, and D**. Generally, all U.S. records will have both a Domestic Class and a Region 2 Class. For U.S. stations, the Region 2 Class can be derived from the Domestic Class. Therefore, we explain how to derive the Domestic Class first.

The AM band frequencies are divided into three categories: **Clear, Regional, and Local** channels. The allowable classes depend on a station's frequency, in addition to other variables. On the Clear channels certain stations are specifically classified as Class A stations or as Class B stations. The other stations have their class determined by their frequency.

Classes of AM stations are defined as follows:

- **Class A Station.** A Class A station is an unlimited time station (that is, it can broadcast 24 hours per day) that operates on a clear channel. The operating power shall not be less than 10 kilowatts (kW) or more than 50 kW.
- **Class B Station.** A Class B station is an unlimited time station. Class B stations are authorized to operate with a minimum power of 0.250 kW (250 watts) and a maximum power of 50 kW. (If a Class B station operates with less than 0.250 kW, the RMS must be equal to or greater than 141 mV/m at 1 km for the actual power.) If the station is authorized to operate in the expanded band (1610 to 1700 kHz), the maximum power is 10 kW.
- **Class C Station.** A Class C station is an unlimited time station that operates on a local channel. The power shall not be less than 0.25 kW nor more than 1 kW. Class C stations that are licensed to operate with 0.100 kW may continue to operate as licensed.
- **Class D Station.** A Class D station operates either *daytime, limited time, or unlimited time with a nighttime power less than 0.250 kW* and an equivalent RMS antenna field less than 141 mV/m at 1 km for the actual power. Class D stations shall operate with *daytime* powers not less than 0.250 kW nor more than 50 kW. NOTE: If a station is an existing daytime-only station, its class will be Class D.

Clear, Regional, and Local Channels

Steps to Follow to Determine the Domestic Class

If you don't want to use the easy way to determine the station's domestic class (via the AM Query), here's the steps to follow to determine the class. A table of which frequencies are *Clear*, *Regional*, or *Local* is included below.

- o Determine which frequency the station is on (or is proposing) and also determine whether the station is one of the ones with a specifically defined class (see the right column in the table below). Following is a list, by frequency, which lists the specific Class A or Class B stations, along with the available classes for the other stations:

Channel Type	Frequency (kHz)	Available Classes	Assignment Old class designation in ()
----	530	----	In the USA, reserved for low power AM Travellers' Information Stations
Clear	540	A,B,D	
Regional	550	B,D	
Regional	560	B,D	
Regional	570	B,D	
Regional	580	B,D	
Regional	590	B,D	
Regional	600	B,D	
Regional	610	B,D	
Regional	620	B,D	
Regional	630	B,D	
Clear	640	A,B,D	KFI, Los Angeles, CA: Class A (I-A) KYUK, Bethel, AK: Class A (I-N)
Clear	650	A,B,D	WSM, Nashville, TN: Class A (I-A) KENY, Anchorage, AK: Class A (I-N)
Clear	660	A,B,D	WFAN, New York, NY: Class A (I-A) KFAR, Fairbanks, AK: Class A (I-N)
Clear	670	A,B,D	WMAQ, Chicago, IL: Class A (I-A) KDLG, Dillingham, AK: Class (I-N) KBOI, Boise, Idaho: Class B (II-A)
Clear	680	A,B,D	KNBR, San Francisco, CA: Class A (I-B) KBRW, Barrow, AK: Class A (I-N)
Clear	690	A,B,D	
Clear	700	A,B,D	WLW, Cincinnati, OH: Class A (I-A) KBYR, Anchorage, AK: Class A (I-N)
Clear	710	A,B,D	WOR, New York, NY: Class A (I-B) KIRO, Seattle, WA: Class A (I-B)
Clear	720	A,B,D	WGN, Chicago, IL: Class A (I-A) KOTZ, Kotzebue, AK: Class A (I-N) KDWN, Las Vegas, NV: Class B (II-A)
Clear	730	A,B,D	
Clear	740	A,B,D	
Clear	750	A,B,D	WSB, Atlanta, GA: Class A (I-A) KFQD, Anchorage, AK: Class A (I-N)
Clear	760	A,B,D	WJR, Detroit, MI: Class A (I-A)
Clear	770	A,B,D	WABC, New York, NY: Class A (I-A) KKOB, Albuquerque, NM: Class B (II-A)
Clear	780	A,B,D	WBBM, Chicago, IL: Class A (I-A) KNOM, Nome, AK: Class A (I-N) KKOH, Reno, NV: Class B (II-A)
Regional	790	B,D	
Clear	800	A,B,D	
Clear	810	A,B,D	KGO, San Francisco, CA: Class A (I-B) WGY, Schenectady, NY: Class A (I-B)

Clear	820	A,B,D	WBAP, Fort Worth, TX: Class A (I-A) KCBF, Fairbanks, AK: Class A (I-N)
Clear	830	A,B,D	WCCO, Minneapolis, MN: Class A (I-A)
Clear	840	A,B,D	WHAS, Louisville, KY: Class A (I-A) KABN, Long Island, AK: Class A (I-N)
Clear	850	A,B,D	KOA, Denver, CO: Class A (I-B) KICY, Nome, AK: Class A (I-N)
Clear	860	A,B,D	
Clear	870	A,B,D	WWL, New Orleans, LA: Class A (I-A) KSKO, McGrath, AK: Class A (I-N)
Clear	880	A,B,D	WCBS, New York, NY: Class A (I-A) KRVN, Lexington, NE: Class B (II-A)
Clear	890	A,B,D	WLS, Chicago, IL: Class A (I-A) KBBI, Homer, AK: Class A (I-N) KDXU, St. George, UT: Class B (II-A)
Clear	900	A,B,D	
Regional	910	B,D	
Regional	920	B,D	
Regional	930	B,D	
Clear	940	A,B,D	
Regional	950	B,D	
Regional	960	B,D	
Regional	970	B,D	
Regional	980	B,D	
Clear	990	A,B,D	
Clear	1000	A,B,D	WLUP, Chicago, IL: Class A (I-A) KOMO, Seattle, WA: Class A (I-B)
Clear	1010	A,B,D	
Clear	1020	A,B,D	KDKA, Pittsburgh, PA: Class A (I-A) KCKN, Roswell, NM: Class B (II-A) KAXX, Eagle River, AK: Class A (I-N)
Clear	1030	A,B,D	WBZ, Boston, MA: Class A (I-A) KTWO, Casper, WY: Class B (II-A)
Clear	1040	A,B,D	WHO, Des Moines, IA: Class A (I-A)
Clear	1050	A,B,D	
Clear	1060	A,B,D	KYW, Philadelphia, PA: Class A (I-B)
Clear	1070	A,B,D	KNX, Los Angeles, CA: Class A (I-B)
Clear	1080	A,B,D	WTIC, Hartford, CT: Class A (I-B) KRLD, Dallas, TX: Class A (I-B) KASH, Anchorage, AK: Class A (I-N)
Clear	1090	A,B,D	KAAZ, Little Rock, AR: Class A (I-B) WBAL, Baltimore, MD: Class A (I-B)
Clear	1100	A,B,D	WTAM, Cleveland, OH: Class A (I-A) KNZZ, Grand Junction, CO: Class B (II-A)
Clear	1110	A,B,D	WBT, Charlotte, NC: Class A (I-B) KFAB, Omaha, NE: Class A (I-B)
Clear	1120	A,B,D	KMOX, St. Louis, MO: Class A (I-A) KPNW, Eugene, OR: Class B (II-A)
Clear	1130	A,B,D	KWKH, Shreveport, LA: Class A (I-B) WNEW, New York, NY: Class A (I-B)
Clear	1140	A,B,D	WRVA, Richmond, VA: Class A (I-B)
Regional	1150	B,D	
Clear	1160	A,B,D	KSL, Salt Lake City, UT: Class A (I-A)

Clear	1170	A,B,D	KVOO, Tulsa, OK: Class A (I-B) WWVA, Wheeling, WV: Class A (I-B) KJNP, North Pole, AK: Class A (I-N)
Clear	1180	A,B,D	WHAM, Rochester, NY: Class A (I-A) KOFI, Kalispell, MT: Class B (II-A)
Clear	1190	A,B,D	KEX, Portland, OR: Class A (I-B)
Clear	1200	A,B,D	WOAI, San Antonio, TX: Class A (I-A)
Clear	1210	A,B,D	WPHT, Philadelphia, PA: Class A (I-A) KGYN, Guymon, OK: Class B (II-A)
Clear	1220	A,B,D	
Regional	1230	B	Stations in AK, HI, PR, and the U.S. VI
Local	1230	C	Stations in coterminous 48 states
Regional	1240	B	Stations in AK, HI, PR and the U.S. VI
Local	1240	C	Stations in coterminous 48 states
Regional	1250	B,D	
Regional	1260	B,D	
Regional	1270	B,D	
Regional	1280	B,D	
Regional	1290	B,D	
Regional	1300	B,D	
Regional	1310	B,D	
Regional	1320	B,D	
Regional	1330	B,D	
Regional	1340	B	Stations in AK, HI, PR, and the U.S. VI
Local	1340	C	Stations in the coterminous 48 states
Regional	1350	B,D	
Regional	1360	B,D	
Regional	1370	B,D	
Regional	1380	B,D	
Regional	1390	B,D	
Regional	1400	B	Stations in AK, HI, PR, and the U.S. VI
Local	1400	C	Stations in the coterminous 48 states
Regional	1410	B,D	
Regional	1420	B,D	
Regional	1430	B,D	
Regional	1440	B,D	
Regional	1450	B	Stations in AK, HI, PR, and the U.S. VI
Local	1450	C	Stations in the coterminous 48 states
Regional	1460	B,D	
Regional	1470	B,D	
Regional	1480	B,D	
Regional	1490	B	Stations in AK, HI, PR, and the U.S. VI
Local	1490	C	Stations in the conterminous 48 states
Clear	1500	A,B,D	WTOP, Washington, DC: Class A (I-B) KSTP, St. Paul, MN: Class A (I-B)
Clear	1510	A,B,D	WLAC, Nashville, TN: Class A (I-B) KGA, Spokane, WA: Class A (I-B)
Clear	1520	A,B,D	WWKB, Buffalo, NY: Class A (I-B) KOMA, Oklahoma City, OK: Class A (I-B)
Clear	1530	A,B,D	KFBK, Sacramento, CA: Class A (I-B) WCKY, Cincinnati, OH: Class A (I-B)
Clear	1540	A,B,D	KXEL, Waterloo, IA: Class A (I-B)
Clear	1550	A,B,D	

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Clear	1560	A,B,D	KNZR, Bakersfield, CA: Class A (I-B) WQEW, New York, NY: Class A (I-B)
Clear	1570	A,B,D	
Clear	1580	A,B,D	
Regional	1590	B,D	
Regional	1600	B,D	
Regional	1610	B,D	
Regional	1620	B,D	
Regional	1630	B,D	
Regional	1640	B,D	
Regional	1650	B,D	
Regional	1660	B,D	
Regional	1670	B,D	
Regional	1680	B,D	
Regional	1690	B,D	
Regional	1700	B,D	

2. If the station is specifically listed in the table on the actual frequency in the actual city, then the Domestic Class for the station is defined on the above list. (Call sign changes don't matter, the classification remains with the *station*, not the call sign.)

Note that all the former Class I-N stations are located in Alaska, while all the former Class I-A and former Class I-B stations are located only in the coterminous 48 states. Only in Alaska might it be possible to assign new Class A stations.

3. If the station of interest is not specifically listed above on the actual frequency in the actual city, the Domestic Class must be determined from the available classes for the frequency:

- If the available classes are A, B, and D, then the Domestic Class will be Class B. It cannot be Class A because all of the Class A stations are listed above. It cannot be Class D because the Commission will not authorize new Class D stations (unless the station had been previously licensed as Class B and the station is downgrading to its *nighttime* operation to Class D.)

If the station is an existing daytime-only station, the class will be Class D.

- If the available classes are B and D, then the Domestic Class will be Class B. It cannot be Class D because the Commission will not authorize new Class D stations (unless the station had been previously licensed as Class B and the station is downgrading to its *nighttime* operation to Class D.)

If the station is an existing daytime-only station, the class will be Class D.

- If the available classes are B and C, then the Domestic Class will generally be Class C. However, if the station is in Alaska, Hawaii, Puerto Rico or the U.S. Virgin Islands, then the Domestic Class is Class B.

4. The rules adopted in MM Docket 87-267 allow existing unlimited-time Class B (formerly Class II and III) stations to voluntarily reclassify their *nighttime* operations to Class D if they find it advantageous to do so. This is the ONLY instance where new Class D stations are allowed. [Existing Class D daytime-only stations will remain so classified.]

An AM station can have only one licensed class. The licensed daytime class cannot be different than the licensed nighttime class. If the station is downgrading its *nighttime* operation to Class D, then the construction permit will have a different class than the license. Once the construction permit becomes licensed as Class D, then any licensed daytime record will be changed to Class D also.

The Region 2 Class

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Once the Domestic Class has been obtained, the Region 2 Class is easily determined:

Domestic Class	Region 2 Class
A	A
B	B
C	C
D	B

Old to New Class Conversions

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Because the old classifications for AM broadcast stations will be encountered in older documents pertaining to AM radio, we have provided this conversion table for your convenience:

Old Domestic Class	New Domestic Class
I	A
II	B
III	B
IV	C
II-S	D
III-S	D
II-D (Daytime only)	D

Questions on AM Broadcast Stations may be directed to the Audio Division at (202) 418-2700.

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