ETMY RADIO • BUSINESS COMMUNICATION GUIDE

Do Businesses Need an FCC License for Two-Way Radios?

FRS, GMRS, MURS, and Part 90 Explained



A practical U.S. FCC overview for business teams
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If your U.S. business wants to use two-way radios, the answer depends on the radio service and the frequencies programmed into the radios. Some services, including FRS and MURS, generally operate under FCC rules without an individual station license. GMRS requires an individual license, which is usually a poor fit for a company team. Many business radio systems use Part 90 frequencies and require an FCC station authorization.

The key is to identify the service and operating frequencies before buying or transmitting. A radio's FCC equipment certification is a separate matter: it does not by itself authorize your business to use every frequency the radio can tune. The FCC's personal radio services rules generally authorize eligible people to operate without individual licenses, subject to each service's specific rules; GMRS is an exception that requires an individual license.

The short answer

• FRS: No individual FCC license is generally required when using compliant FRS radios on FRS channels and within the service rules. FRS rules include business activities.

• GMRS: An individual FCC license is required. New licenses are issued to individuals, and the license's operating privileges are limited; it generally does not function as a company-wide license for unrelated employees.

• MURS: No individual FCC license is generally required when using compliant MURS equipment on MURS channels and within the service rules. MURS rules include business activities.

• Part 90 Industrial/Business Pool: A station authorization is generally required for the system, with eligibility, frequency, coordination, and technical requirements depending on the proposed operation.

These are general starting points. The correct answer for a particular radio depends on its exact model, configuration, frequencies, and intended use.

Three different things people call an "FCC license"

It helps to separate three questions:

1. Is the radio equipment authorized? FCC equipment authorization concerns whether the device meets applicable technical requirements for marketing and use. Check the exact FCC ID and the radio's approved operating conditions.

2. Is the station or system authorized to transmit on those frequencies? This is the central licensing question. Some services are licensed by rule; others require an FCC station license.

3. Does an individual operator need a separate license? For ordinary business land-mobile operation under Part 90, the authorization is generally associated with the station/licensee. Do not assume every radio user needs a personal operator permit, but the licensee is responsible for compliant operation.

An FCC ID or a seller's statement that a radio is "FCC certified" does not give a business permission to transmit on arbitrary frequencies. Likewise, having a Part 90 license does not make an uncertified or improperly programmed radio compliant.

FRS, GMRS, MURS, and Part 90 compared

Radio service	Individual FCC license?	Can it support business activity?	Main point to verify
FRS	Generally no; licensed by rule	Yes, for compliant short-distance uses	Radio is FRS-certified, uses permitted channels and power, and has not been improperly modified

Radio service	Individual FCC license?	Can it support business activity?	Main point to verify
GMRS	Yes; individual license required	Rules include certain activities, but a personal license is not a general company license	License holder, eligible users, exact GMRS channels, and equipment certification
MURS	Generally no; licensed by rule	Yes	MURS-compliant radio, one of the five MURS frequencies, and MURS power/antenna restrictions
Part 90 Industrial/Business Pool	Generally yes, a station authorization	Yes; commonly used for business systems	Business eligibility, licensed frequencies, coordination where applicable, coverage, and radio programming

FRS: a simple option for limited, short-distance needs

FRS is a Personal Radio Service intended for short-distance, two-way voice communications and limited data applications. The FCC definition expressly includes business activities. FRS stations generally operate under the rules without a separate individual license application.

That does not mean any handheld radio can be used on FRS channels. Use a radio authorized for FRS operation, follow the channel and power limits, and avoid radios or programming that allow transmissions outside the device's authorized configuration. FRS may be suitable for a small team with modest range needs, but buildings, terrain, interference, and the radio's approved power affect real-world coverage.

GMRS: an individual license, not usually a company-wide solution

GMRS requires a valid individual FCC license. Current rules make individuals eligible for new individual GMRS licenses. A license authorizes the license holder and specified family members; there is a narrow grandfathering provision for certain non-individual licensees that held a GMRS license before July 31, 1987.

For that reason, a business should not assume that one employee's GMRS license covers all staff. If you are considering GMRS for a workplace, verify that the proposed users and use fit the current rules. In many commercial deployments, an appropriately licensed Part 90 system is the more relevant path.

MURS: license-by-rule operation with specific limits

MURS is a short-distance voice or data service for personal or business activities. It is generally licensed by rule, so a separate individual FCC station license is not usually required. MURS has five designated frequencies and specific equipment, power, antenna, and operating rules.

MURS is not a general-purpose business frequency pool. Do not program radios to arbitrary VHF frequencies and assume that the no-individual-license rule applies. Check the radio's MURS authorization and confirm its configuration complies with the current Part 95 rules.

Part 90: a common route for business radio systems

The FCC's Industrial/Business Pool under Part 90 provides for eligible business operations on assigned frequencies. A business generally needs FCC station authorization before operating a Part 90 system. The right frequencies and application process depend on the business's eligibility, location, system design, and the frequencies requested. Frequency coordination may be required for the selected frequencies.

The license identifies the authorized station or system and its operating parameters. The business must ensure every radio is programmed and used consistently with that authorization. A radio that can tune to a Part 90 frequency is not itself permission to transmit there.

For an existing system, confirm that the license is current and covers the relevant locations, frequencies, emission designators, and station configuration. FCC's Universal Licensing System (ULS) can be used to search license records. For a new system or a material change, consult the FCC application requirements and, where appropriate, a qualified frequency coordinator.

How to identify what your radio is approved to do

Before buying, programming, or using radios, gather these details:

1. Exact brand and model number. Similar-looking models may have different approvals or frequency ranges.

2. FCC ID and label. Search the exact FCC ID in the FCC equipment authorization database and compare the listed grant with the device and manual.

3. Transmit frequencies. Check the manual, programming file, and actual configuration. A broad frequency range in a listing is not proof that your business may transmit across that range.

4. Radio service and equipment type. Confirm whether it is specifically approved for FRS, MURS, GMRS, or the intended Part 90 operation.

5. License or rule conditions. Match the users, locations, channels, power, antenna, and operating mode to the applicable authorization and rules.

If the equipment label, programming, sales listing, and FCC record do not agree, pause before transmitting and ask the manufacturer or a qualified radio professional to clarify.

A practical pre-purchase checklist

• Describe where the team will use radios: indoors, across a site, between buildings, or over a wider area.

• Estimate how many radios and locations need to communicate.

• Decide whether a no-individual-license service can meet the operating needs and rules.

• If considering GMRS, confirm who may lawfully operate under the individual license.

• If considering Part 90, confirm eligibility and get help identifying frequencies and coordination requirements before purchasing a fleet.

• Verify the exact model's FCC authorization and intended service.

• Have radios programmed only for frequencies and settings the business is authorized to use.

• Keep the license, programming records, manuals, and equipment details accessible to the person responsible for compliance.

Common mistakes to avoid

• Treating "FCC certified" as a station license. Equipment authorization and authority to transmit are separate.

• Using a business radio on whatever channel is quiet. A quiet channel is not necessarily an authorized channel.

• Assuming a GMRS license belongs to the company. New individual GMRS licenses are issued to individuals, and operating privileges have defined limits.

• Buying radios first and asking about frequencies later. The service and frequencies should guide the equipment choice.

• Reprogramming a radio beyond its approved service. Hardware capability does not establish legal permission.

• Assuming “license-free” means rule-free. License-by-rule services still have equipment, channel, power, antenna, and operating requirements.

Frequently asked questions

Can employees use FRS radios at work?

FRS rules include business activities, and a separate individual FCC license is generally not required. Employees still need to use compliant FRS equipment on permitted channels and follow all applicable operating limits.

Can a company use GMRS radios?

GMRS requires an individual license. A personal GMRS license is not generally a company-wide authorization for all employees. Check current eligibility and user rules before choosing GMRS for a workplace.

Is MURS license-free for businesses?

MURS is generally licensed by rule and its definition includes business activities. Users must still use compliant radios on the designated MURS frequencies and follow the service’s technical and operating limits.

Does a Part 90 radio require every employee to get a personal FCC license?

For a typical Part 90 business system, the relevant FCC authorization is generally the station/system license. The licensee remains responsible for the system’s compliant operation. Confirm the exact requirements for your service and authorization.

If a radio has an FCC ID, can we transmit on its listed frequencies?

Not automatically. The FCC ID helps identify the equipment authorization and conditions. Your business must also have authority to use the specific radio service and frequencies, and the radio must be operated within its approved configuration.

Bottom line

Many U.S. businesses can use compliant FRS or MURS radios without applying for an individual station license, while GMRS requires an individual license and Part 90 business systems generally need station authorization. Start with the exact frequencies and intended users, then verify the radio’s equipment authorization and the operating rules before transmitting.

For an overview of radio selection factors, see How to Choose a Business Walkie-Talkie.

This article provides general information about U.S. FCC rules and is not legal advice. Regulations and individual circumstances may change the answer. Verify current FCC rules and license records for your specific equipment and operation.

Sources

• 47 CFR § 95.305 — License requirements, Personal Radio Services

• 47 CFR § 95.503 — Definitions, FRS

- 47 CFR § 95.1705 — Individual licensing, GMRS
- 47 CFR § 95.2703 — Definitions, MURS
- 47 CFR Part 90, Subpart B — Licensing requirements and procedures
- 47 CFR § 2.803 — Marketing of radio frequency devices prior to equipment authorization
- FCC Universal Licensing System