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**RULES FOR FIRST CONTACT: LEGAL AND POLICY ISSUES ARISING  
FROM ESTABLISHING AND MAINTAINING COMMUNICATIONS WITH  
EXTRATERRESTRIALS**

**Abstract**

Ever the basis of the vast majority of science fiction presently in existence, potential contact between humans on Earth and extraterrestrial intelligence has long fascinated human imagination and has catalysed a large number of popular fictional novels and films. The continuing development of the Allen Telescope Array by the SETI Institute has again sparked interest in the space community, though not necessarily among legal and policy commentators, to the possibility of discovering both intelligent and non-intelligent extraterrestrial life.

This paper considers the existing international legal principles that may apply to contact with extraterrestrial life. The paper will also review the existing “SETI Principles” and consider their adequacy in addressing the possible legal and policy concerns of the international community if such a civilisation-changing event does occur in the near future.