FCC and FAA Announce Intention to Streamline NOTAM System

On December 8, the FCC's Wireless Telecommunications Bureau released a public notice announcing plans in coordination with the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to streamline the processes for issuing Notices to Airmen (NOTAMs), which identify towers with extinguished or faulty lighting.

Under FCC rules, tower owners (or operators) must notify the FAA within 30 minutes of discovering a lighting outage or malfunction, and they must take steps to repair the faulty lighting as rapidly as practicable. (See 47 C.F.R. § 17.48). Under the current system, tower owners notify the FAA of outages via a web-based form maintained by the FAA's US NOTAM Office. NOTAMs issued as a result of completing the online form expire after 15 days. However, 15 days is often not enough time to repair the tower lighting problem that prompted the NOTAM. As a result, tower companies must repeatedly cancel and resubmit NOTAMs if the repairs are not completed within 15 days.

The notice stated that this process creates additional burdens for FAA and FCC staff who process and monitor the submissions. The proliferation of electronic submissions could hamper aviation efficiency and, at extreme levels, raise concerns for aviation safety.

The notice states that in order to address these issues the FAA's US NOTAM Office intends to revise its web-based NOTAM submission system to enable the self-selection of the amount of time needed to repair a faulty light. This change will relieve tower owners of the obligation to cancel and resubmit NOTAMs. This change is expected to take effect in mid-January 2015.

The notice also mentions that, even though users will be able to self-select the repair deadline, every outage should be corrected as soon as possible, and that the FCC and FAA will respond aggressively if they discover tower owners are abusing a system designed to protect aviation safety. In addition, the FCC staff will continue to monitor the NOTAM referrals they receive from the FAA, and may investigate cases where a tower owner selects an unusually long time period to make a repair, where multiple NOTAMs appear to have been submitted for a single tower within a relatively short period of time, where a tower owner repeatedly fails to cancel NOTAMs after repairs are complete, or where other circumstances suggest a need for closer scrutiny.

A copy of the Public Notice is available on the FCCs Wireless Telecommunications Bureau web page.

NAB Webcast: Cybersecurity for Broadcasters

Sony, Target, AT&T and the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission are only a few of the major enterprises to suffer high-profile cyber-attacks in recent months. In fact, a host of radio stations in Arkansas, Virginia and elsewhere have recently suffered "ransomware" attacks that locked up their data servers and music files. Don't be next. As the primary outlet for Americans' access to news, emergency updates and live entertainment and sports, it is critical that broadcasters diligently protect their operations from digital intrusions.

Radio and television stations must increase their awareness of hacking, spoofing and other cyber breaches that could disrupt programming and advertising, undermine the Emergency Alert System (EAS), or even compromise your employees' privacy.

This webcast provides up-to-date guidance on government and industry initiatives concerning cybersecurity and discuss recommendations for reducing your operation's cyber risks.

Presenters:
Clete Johnson, chief counsel for Cybersecurity, Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau, Federal Communications Commission
Chris Homer, vice president, Operations and Engineering, Public Broadcasting Service
Kelly Williams, senior director of engineering and technology policy, National Association of Broadcasters
Larry Walke, associate general counsel, National Association of Broadcasters

Click here to watch for free.

NABEF Technology Apprenticeship Program

Do you know a rising star interested in broadcast engineering technology? Help them build a successful career with the NAB Education Foundation's free, six-month Technology Apprenticeship Program. Participants create networks with industry professionals, receive admission to NAB Show, complete a two-month internship and have the opportunity to become a certified broadcast technologist. Deadline to apply is January 15, 2015. For questions, please contact Adaora Otiji or call (202) 429-5424.

Important Dates and Upcoming Events

Hollywood Post Alliance (HPA) Tech Retreat

February 9 - 13, 2015

Indian Wells, Calif.

Audio Engineering Society (AES) 57th Conference: The Future of Audio Entertainment Technology

March 6 - 8, 2015

Hollywood, Calif.

2015 NAB Show

April 11 - 16, 2015

Las Vegas, Nev.