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TV TechCheck

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FCC Lets Part 101 Licensees Share the 7 and 13 GHz BAS Bands

On August 9, the FCC released a decision that will allow Fixed-Service Point-to-Point microwave (FS) users licensed under Part 101 of the Rules to share certain spectrum bands currently used by the Broadcast Auxiliary Service (BAS). This *Report and Order, Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking and Memorandum Opinion and Order* in WT Docket No. 10-153 permits FS Operations to share the 6875 – 7125 MHz (7 GHz) band and the 12700 – 13200 MHz (13 GHz) band which broadcasters use for mobile and temporary fixed TV pick-up operations (Electronic News Gathering).

The Commission began this proceeding in August 2010 when it released a *Notice of Proposed Rulemaking and Notice of Inquiry (NPRM/NOI*) in this docket. (See *TV TechCheck* from August 30, 2010). NAB along with MSTV filed comments on October 25, 2010, and reply comments on November 22, 2010. In addition, on June 7, 2011, the FCC issued a Public Notice that provided additional analysis of the existing BAS operations in the 7 and 13 GHz bands and requested supplemental comment on issues relating to FS sharing in those bands. NAB filed comments on the public notice on June 27, 2011.

After evaluating all the comments in this proceeding, the FCC concluded that it is feasible to authorize Part 101 fixed stations in 650 megahertz in the 7 and 13 GHz bands, so long as they do not conflict with TV pickup stations. But the FCC also concluded that it is not feasible to allow FS to share spectrum with mobile and temporary fixed TV pickup operations in areas where TV pickup stations are licensed. That is, in order to avoid interference between FS operations and TV pickup operations, the new rules prohibit FS paths from crossing the service areas of TV pickup authorizations and require FS to coordinate with all relevant licensees in the 7 and 13 GHz bands, including TV pickup licensees.

However, for areas where there are no TV pickup licenses, the FCC has concluded that sharing between Part 101 FS and fixed BAS operations is feasible. The FCC states that this will permit FS operations in rural areas where the band is not currently licensed to TV pickup stations.

Regarding TV pickup stations that operate under the so called “720 Hour Rule” (under FCC Rule 74.24, broadcasters can operate certain BAS stations on a short-term, secondary basis without prior authorization for up to 720 hours a year subject to various limitations). The FCC has reserved two 25-megahertz channels each in the 7 GHz band (6975 – 7025 MHz) and the 13 GHz band (13150 – 13200 MHz) nationwide which FS facilities cannot use. The Commission believes that excluding FS from that spectrum nationwide will accommodate TV pickup stations covering events that occur outside the license areas of local BAS and CARS operations

Specifically, the new rules now allow Part 101 FS stations to share the 7 and 13 GHz bands subject to the following conditions:

- FS stations in the 7 and 13 GHz bands are not allowed to locate their paths within the service areas of any previously licensed co-channel TV pickup stations.
- FS operators are required to coordinate any new fixed links with TV pickup stations within the appropriate coordination zones of any new fixed links.
- All fixed BAS and Part 101 FS stations in the 7 and 13 GHz bands are required to engage in the same frequency coordination process that’s required of all Part 101 services.
- Two 25-megahertz channels are reserved for BAS each in the 7 and 13 GHz bands nationwide to accommodate TV pickup stations covering events that occur outside the license areas of local BAS operations.

- Licensees of TV pickup stations in the 6875 – 7125 MHz and 12700 – 13200 MHz bands are now required to register their stationary receive sites using the Commission's Universal Licensing System (ULS).

Finally, the FCC has eliminated the Final Link Rule. This will grant broadcasters greater access to Part 101 microwave spectrum by eliminating the "final link" rule that prohibited broadcasters from using FS stations as the final RF link in the chain of distribution of program material to broadcast stations (e.g. an STL).

The Report and Order is available here. NAB comments, reply comments and the petition, as well as the submissions of other parties are available on the FCC's Electronic Comment Filing System. Type 10-153 in the proceeding number box to view all the submissions in the docket.

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If you feel qualified to speak at the NAB Broadcast Engineering Conference, we invite you to submit a technical paper proposal. The deadline for submitting your proposal is October 21. If you have any questions, contact John Marino, vice president, NAB Science and Technology at 202 429 5346.