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FCC Provides Guidance for State License Deadline of June 13 (4/7/14)

The FCC provided guidance to licensees of state channels in the 700 MHz narrowband spectrum (769 – 775/799 – 805 MHz), regarding their upcoming interim substantial service benchmark showing. The state licensees must demonstrate by June 13 that they are providing or prepared to provide "substantial service" to one-third of their population or territory.

The notice includes recommended details to include with the interim benchmark filing. State licensees that don't meet the interim substantial service benchmark, because they failed to construct or receive funding for any facilities by the deadline, will be subject to license cancellation or modification, and recovered state license spectrum will revert to general use subject to regional planning, the commission said.

"Bureau staff will issue subsequent guidance to regional planning committees to facilitate the licensing of any recovered state license spectrum," the notice said.

The co mmission designated 96 channel pairs (12.5-kilohertz bandwidth) in the 700 MHz narrowband spectrum for use by states, the District of Columbia and U.S. territories. Each state licensee received a geographic area license covering the geopolitical boundaries of its jurisdiction.

The commission established a five-year interim benchmark and a 10-year final benchmark for state licensees to establish specified levels of substantial service within their statewide license areas. The due date for the five-year interim benchmark showing is June 13.

The full notice is here.

http://www.mccmag.com/onlyonline.cfm?OnlyOnlineID=428

The first buildout deadline for the state 700 MHz licenses is fast approaching — June 13, 2014.

In 2002, the FCC granted a geographic license for 2.4 megahertz of 700 MHz narrowband spectrum to each state, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. Under the license requirements, by June 13, each state licensee must provide or be "prepared to provide" substantial service to one-third of the state population or territory.

States must provide a certification to the FCC that they have met this buildout requirement. Failure to do so could result in the state's licensed narrowband spectrum reverting to the control of the relevant regional planning committee (RPC).

By June 13, 2019, the state must provide or be prepared to provide substantial service to two-thirds of the state's population or territory.

"Population-based buildout benchmarks are traditionally applied to commercial carriers, but it is a new approach for public safety," said Stu Overby, vice chair of the spectrum management committee for the National Public Safety Telecommunications Council (NPSTC).

Maryland began building out a Project 25 (P25) Phase 2 700 MHz network in 2010 and is well beyond the one-third population and territory metric, said Ray Lehr, Maryland statewide interoperability director. "We completed the first phase of our statewide system in December 2012, and that area includes nearly half of the state's population," he said. "In addition, we completed the entire Eastern Shore of Maryland this past December, so we are close to the two-thirds benchmark. Our current deployment of phase three will add more of central Maryland, which includes some densely populated portions of the state."

“We are well underway in building out our P25 statewide system, which will initially be 700 MHz but will become 700/800 MHz after we shut off t he current Motorola 800 MHz 3.5 system,” said Darryl Anderson, program director for the Ohio MARCS statewide network. “We are well past the one-third point already.”

In 1998, the commission established the initial band plan and service rules for the 24 megahertz of public-safety spectrum in the 700 MHz band that was reallocated from television broadcast use as a result of the DTV transition. The FCC designated 2.4 megahertz of the 700 MHz narrowband spectrum for statewide geographic licensing. The commission also established substantial service performance requirements for the statewide licenses, including five- and 10-year deadlines.

The DTV transition was completed June 12, 2009. However, the language of the o riginal rule indicated Jan. 1, 2012, and Jan. 1, 2017, respectively, as the benchmark dates. In 2011, the FCC moved back the deadlines to June 13, 2014, and June 13, 2019, respectively. The FCC revised the language in 2012.

The NSPTC Spectrum Committee developed a sample buildout certificat ion filing and a frequently asked questions (FAQ) document, both of which are posted on the NPSTC website.

Overby said that within the 700 MHz narrowband spectrum, the FCC designated wide-area channels for states, general use channels under the RPCs and interoperability channels.

“The TV clearing was delayed, and the FCC delayed the rollout deadlines for states,” he said. “If you’ve built out, the NSPTC resources help you show what the FCC is looking for.”

700 MHz Narrowbanding

Separately, all 700 MHz public-safety networks must be narrowbanded by Jan. 1, 2017, which has several states,including Arizona, concerned. Arkansas and a Baltimore regional network asked the FCC for extensions.&nb sp;Louisiana received a deadline extension until 2024.

In May, the FCC implemented and proposed changes to the rules governing the 700 MHz public-safety narrowband spectrum (769 – 775/799 – 805 MHz) and asked for comment on whether to extend the narrowbanding deadline.

“The proposed 2016 700 MHz narrowbanding edict is neither necessary or proper, given the number of radio handsets paid for by the feds over the last several years that are not Phase 2 capable,” said Anderson. “Plus there is no indication of the need for more frequencies, at least here in Ohio, where we are aggressively sharing our system with many others.”

“We designed the Maryland First responder Interoperable Radio System Team (FiRST) with the narrowbanding requirement already included in the plans,” Lehr said. “We are fully compliant, so no need for upgrades.”