



Federal Communications Commission

About the FCC:



A Consumer Guide to our Organization, Functions and Procedures



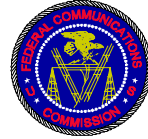
A Consumer & Governmental Affairs
Bureau Publication

CGB

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About The FCC



Whether you're listening to the radio, watching TV, talking on the phone, or using your pager – you're involved in communications. The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) is working to make sure the nation's communications systems are working seamlessly and competitively in your best interest. The Commission realizes that to serve you well we must be efficient, effective, and responsive.

Background

The FCC was established by the Communications Act of 1934 as a U.S. government agency independent of the Executive Branch and directly responsible to Congress. The FCC regulates television, radio, wire, satellite and cable in all of the 50 states and U.S. territories.

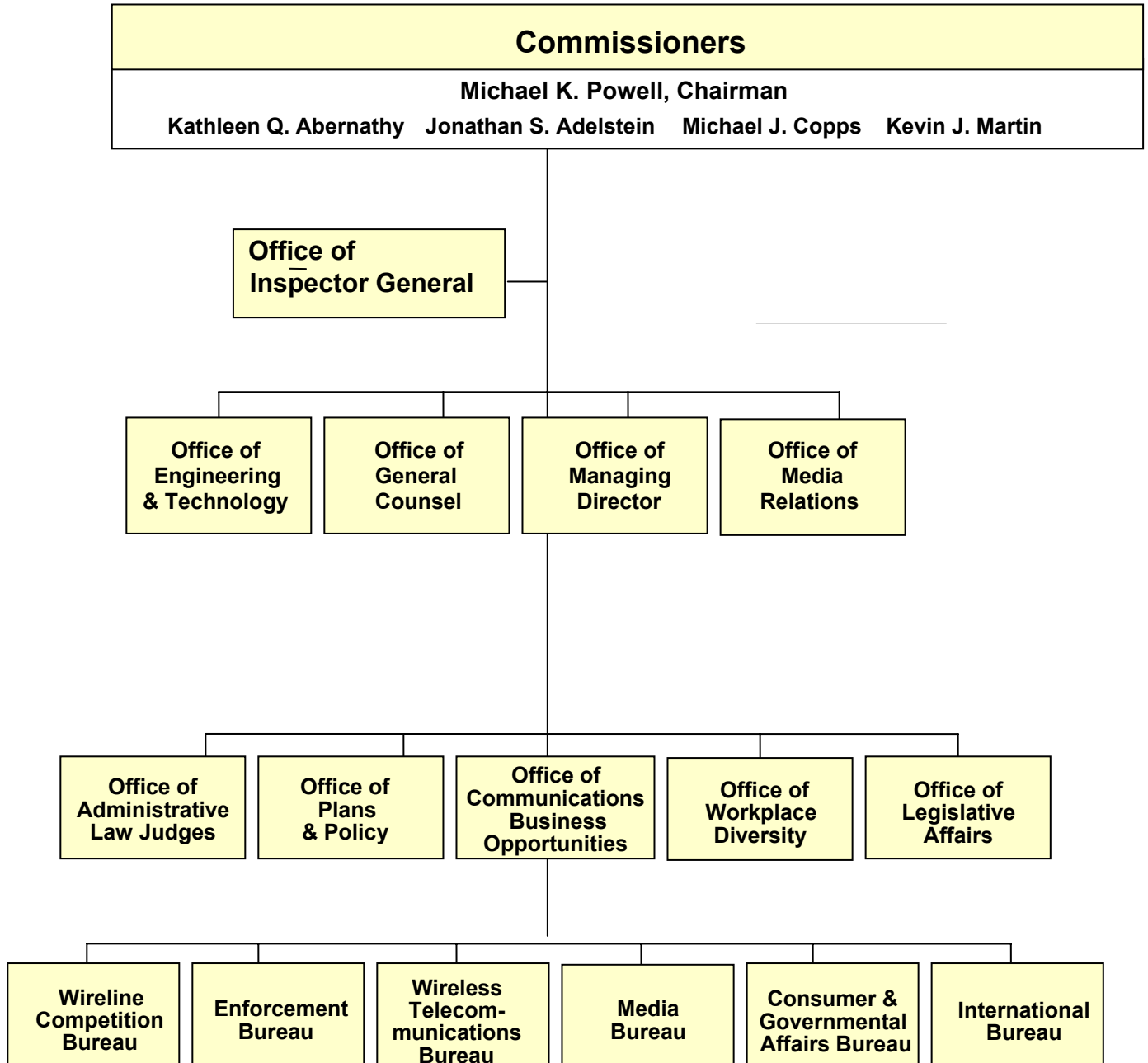
There are five Commissioners who direct the FCC. They are appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate. Only three Commissioners can be of the same political party at any given time and none can have a financial interest in any Commission-related business. The President selects one of the Commissioners to serve as Chairperson. All Commissioners, including the Chairperson, have five-year terms, except when filling an unexpired term.

The Chairperson delegates management and administrative responsibilities to the Managing Director. The Commissioners supervise all FCC activities, delegating responsibilities to Commission Bureaus and Offices.

The FCC's staff is organized by function. There are six Bureaus and 10 staff Offices. The Bureaus and the Office of Engineering and Technology process applications for licenses and other filings, analyze complaints, conduct investigations, develop and implement regulatory programs and rules, and participate in hearings, among other things. Generally, the Offices provide specialized support services. Bureaus and Offices regularly join forces and share expertise in addressing FCC-related issues.



FCC Organizational Chart





How We're Organized

The Bureaus

Consumer & Governmental Affairs Bureau – interacts with consumers by responding directly to their inquiries and complaints and by conducting information and education campaigns. The Bureau is responsible for the consumer and governmental affairs policies to enhance the public's understanding of the FCC's work and increasing the FCC's relationship with other governmental agencies.

Enforcement Bureau – is responsible for enforcing the Communications Act, as well as the FCC's rules, orders and authorizations.

International Bureau – works on international policy and spectrum rulemaking functions.

Media Bureau – oversees the policy and licensing functions for media services, including cable television, broadcast television and radio.

Wireless Telecommunications Bureau – oversees cellular and PCS phones, pagers and two-way radios. This Bureau also regulates the use of radio spectrum to fulfill the communications needs to business, local and state governments, public safety service providers, aircraft and ship operators, and individuals.

Wireline Competition Bureau – is responsible for the policy and programs relating to telephones and telephone-related services.

The Staff Offices

The **Office of Administrative Law Judges** is composed of judges who preside over hearings and issue initial decisions.

The **Office of Communications Business Opportunities** promotes telecommunications business opportunities for small, minority, and female-owned businesses.

The **Office of Engineering and Technology** advises the FCC on technical and engineering matters, and manages the radio spectrum to encourage the growth of new technologies.

The **Office of General Counsel** is the FCC's chief legal advisor.

The **Office of Inspector General** conducts and supervises audits and investigations relating to FCC programs and operations.

The **Office of Legislative Affairs** is the liaison between the FCC and Congress, other federal agencies, state, and local governments.

The **Office of the Managing Director** is responsible for activities involving the administration and management of the FCC.

The **Office of Media Relations** informs the media of FCC decisions and serves as the FCC's main point of contact with the media.

The **Office of Plans and Policy** assists, advises, and makes recommendations to the FCC regarding the development and implementation of communications policies.

The **Office of Workplace Diversity** promotes and ensures that the FCC provides employment opportunities for all persons regardless of race, color, sex, national origin, religion, age, disability or sexual preference.



Keeping Consumers Informed

The Consumer & Governmental Affairs Bureau (CGB):

- distributes information to enable consumers to make wise choices and find the best rates for telecommunications services and products;
- conducts consumer-related rulemakings and orders;
- interacts with the public, federal, state, local, tribal and other governmental agencies;
- handles informal wireless and wireline phone billing and cable-related complaints; and
- provides assistance to people with hearing, visual, speech and other disabilities to allow their participation in Commission actions and ensure their opportunity to communicate.

The Consumer & Governmental Affairs Bureau includes:

- ***Consumer Affairs and Outreach Division*** - works with consumers to increase awareness about the FCC's rules, regulations and policies.
- ***Consumer Inquiries and Complaints Division*** - responds to inquiries and complaints regarding wireless and wireline phones and cable, radio and television services, and helps consumers file informal complaints on a variety of issues.
- ***Disability Rights Office (DRO)*** - ensures that FCC actions and policies enable people with disabilities to have the same access to telecommunications as everyone else.
- ***Information Access and Privacy Office*** - reviews matters arising under the Freedom of Information Act, performs due diligence and handles other requests for information.
- ***Policy Division*** - responsible for consumer-related rulemakings and orders. This office also analyzes consumer complaints and industry trends.
- ***Reference Information Center (RIC)*** - the principal point of contact with the public seeking FCC records and documents in person.
- ***Consumer Publications Branch*** - provides factsheets, consumer alerts and other publications to help inform consumers about telecommunications issues.



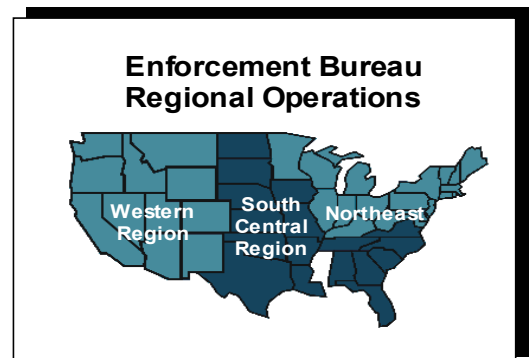
Enforcing Our Rules and Regulations

The Enforcement Bureau (EB):

- enforces FCC rules, orders and license authorizations;
- promotes telephone service competition;
- protects consumers; and
- fosters efficient use of the spectrum while furthering public safety goals.

The Enforcement Bureau includes:

- ***Investigations and Hearings Division*** - responsible for investigations of common carriers involving market issues. Also responsible for resolution of complaints against broadcast stations on matters like indecency, broadcast station content, broadcast of telephone calls and false information.
- ***Market Disputes Resolution Division*** - resolves complaints involving market issues made against common carriers.
- ***Technical and Public Safety Division*** - administers the Emergency Alert System, which is used to notify the public of national, state and local emergencies, and handles complaints of interference to public safety communications operations that impact the ability of public safety entities, such as police and fire departments, to respond to emergencies and cable technical enforcement.
- ***Telecommunications Consumers Division*** - oversees the enforcement of consumer-related obligations of common carriers and other telephone-related matters, like prohibitions against slamming, unsolicited faxes, truth-in-billing, truth-in-advertising for long distance services and the accessibility of telecommunications services and equipment by persons with disabilities.
- ***Field Offices*** -The Enforcement Bureau also has several regional and district field offices across the country. These offices conduct on-site investigations and inspections of possible FCC violations at broadcast stations and other operations regulated by the FCC.





International Communications

The International Bureau (IB):

- serves U.S. consumers by promoting a competitive and innovative domestic and global communications marketplace;
- acts as the focal point for international activities and satellite services, and advises the FCC on worldwide communications;
- coordinates agreements between U.S. and international satellite systems to prevent harmful interference to satellite operators and consumers;
- protects U.S. consumers and licensees from radio interference along U.S. borders;
- leads the Commission's international communications and spectrum policy activities, and advocates U.S. interests in international fora; and
- reviews foreign ownership of companies who provide service to U.S. consumers.

The International Bureau includes:

- ***Policy Division*** - conducts international spectrum rulemakings, develops international telecommunications policy, and licenses international telecommunications facilities, including submarine cables.
- ***Satellite Division*** - promotes a competitive and innovative domestic and global telecommunications marketplace by authorizing as many satellite systems as possible, both in space and on earth.
- ***Strategic Analysis and Negotiations Division*** - is responsible for all intergovernmental and regional leadership, negotiating, and planning functions.



Radio and Television

The Media Bureau (MB):

- implements rules and policies to spur the transition to digital television and radio;
- implements the Satellite Home Viewer Improvement Act (SHVIA) which gives consumers more choices in their selection of video service providers;
- implements rules for closed captioning and video described programming to provide service to all segments of the listening and viewing public;
- implements Low Power FM radio service which provides new noncommercial educational and governmental broadcasting services to local communities; and
- implements the provisions of the Children's Television Act which requires broadcasters to serve the educational and informational needs of children.

The Media Bureau includes:

- ***Office of Broadcast License Policy*** - develops, recommends, and administers policies and programs for the regulation of analog and digital broadcast services.
- ***Video Division*** - licenses commercial and noncommercial educational TV, Low Power TV, Class A TV, TV translators, and TV Booster broadcast services.
- ***Audio Division*** - licenses commercial and noncommercial educational AM, FM, FM Translator, and FM Booster radio services, and also the noncommercial educational Low Power FM radio service.
- ***Policy Division*** - conducts rulemakings concerning broadcast, cable, and post-licensing Direct Broadcast Satellite issues, including SHVIA, Over-the-Air-Reception Devices, digital transition, customer premises equipment, access to programming and distribution platforms, and other related matters.
- ***Industry Analysis Division*** - conducts and participates in proceedings regarding media ownership and the economic aspects of existing and proposed rules and policies.
- ***Engineering Division*** - conducts technical reviews of media-related matters, processes Cable Television Relay Service applications, special relief and show cause petitions involving technical matters, requests for ruling on technical matters and requests for waivers of the rules.
- ***Office of Communications and Industry Information*** - responds to inquiries from members of Congress and their staffs, prepares material for FCC staff participating in Congressional hearings and meetings, and provides analysis of legislative proposals concerning specific matters.



Wireless Telecommunications

The Wireless Telecommunications Bureau (WTB):

- develops, recommends and administers all FCC domestic wireless telecommunications programs and policies, including cellular telephone, paging, personal communications services, public safety, and other commercial and private radio services (except those involving satellite communications or broadcasting functions);
- is responsible for implementing the competitive bidding authority for spectrum auctions given to the Commission by the 1993 Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act;
- oversees spectrum auctions and handling instructional television fixed services and multipoint distribution services matters; and
- fosters economic growth by promoting efficiency and innovation in the allocation, licensing, and use of electromagnetic spectrum.

The Wireless Telecommunications Bureau includes:

- ***Auctions and Industry Analysis Division*** - develops and implements policy and rulemakings necessary to conduct auctions. Also responsible for developing spectrum auction procedures, scheduling and conducting auctions. Analyzes legal, economic and market data and produces the FCC's yearly CMRS Competition Report.
- ***Commercial Wireless Division*** - responsible for licensing rulemakings and deregulatory matters concerning Commercial Mobile Radio Services such as Personal Communications Services (PCS), paging, Specialized Mobile Radio (SMR), and Air-to-Ground communications.
- ***Data Management Division*** - responsible for all data automation initiatives within the Bureau, including electronic filing, auto grant, public access, auction processing, network maintenance, automated and manual FCC processing, and WTB's Web site development and maintenance.
- ***Policy Division*** - proposes and develops communications rules and policies to govern wireless telecommunications services and equipment, based on major technical, economic, and regulatory developments, legislative actions, and Commission and court decisions. Monitors developments in new wireless technologies and develops long term assessments to provide a policy framework for spectrum management and regulation of developing technologies.
- ***Public Safety and Private Wireless Division*** - responsible for rulemaking, regulatory and policy matters concerning public safety, industrial, land transportation, and other private mobile radio services; aviation, marine, and amateur radio services; personal radio services including interactive video and data service; microwave services including local multi-point distribution services, and certain other video and two-way services; antenna structure registration; and the radio operator program. Works with representatives of the Public Safety community to implement rulemaking and policy changes to foster a partnership to address public safety communications issues and implement the National Public Safety Plan.



Wireline Telecommunications

The Wireline Competition Bureau (WCB):

- promotes universal phone service;
- promotes local telephone service competition;
- promotes broadband access;
- analyzes wireline telecommunications service trends; and
- is responsible for administering the FCC's policies concerning telephone companies that provide wireline long distance and local service to consumers, ensuring that all consumers have rapid, efficient, nationwide, and worldwide access to these services at reasonable rates.

The Wireline Competition Bureau includes:

- ***Competition Policy Division*** - implements the non-pricing aspects of the local competition requirements of the Telecommunications Act of 1996.
- ***Industry Analysis and Technology Division*** - provides economic, financial, and technical analyses of telecommunications markets to the Bureau and the Commission.
- ***Pricing Policy Division*** - ensures compliance with the FCC's pricing rules and conducts formal or informal investigations of carrier charges, practices, classifications and regulations, and recommends appropriate action.
- ***Telecommunications Access Policy Division*** - responsible for advancing the goals of universal service of the Communications Act and developing rules and policies relating to numbering.



Our Decision-Making Processes

The Commission often adopts rules to implement the laws Congress passes affecting telecommunications. The Commission takes various steps in developing any new rules. These steps offer consumers an opportunity to submit both comments and reply comments to the FCC.

Following is a quick guide to help you understand the FCC's decision-making processes.

Notice of Inquiry (NOI): The Commission releases an NOI to gather information about a broad subject or as a means of generating ideas on a specific issue. NOIs are initiated by the FCC following an internal study or an outside request.

Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM): After reviewing comments from the public in response to an NOI or as the first step in the rulemaking process, the FCC may issue an NPRM. An NPRM contains proposed changes to the FCC's rules and seeks public comment on these proposals.

Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (FNPRM): After reviewing comments to the NPRM, the FCC may choose to issue an FNPRM regarding specific issues raised in the comments. The FNPRM provides an opportunity for the public to comment further on a related or specific proposal.

Report and Order (R&O): After considering comments to an NPRM or FNPRM, the FCC issues a Report and Order. The R&O may develop new rules, amend existing rules or make a decision not to do so. Summaries of the R&O are published in the *Federal Register*. The *Federal Register* summary will tell you when a rule change will become effective.

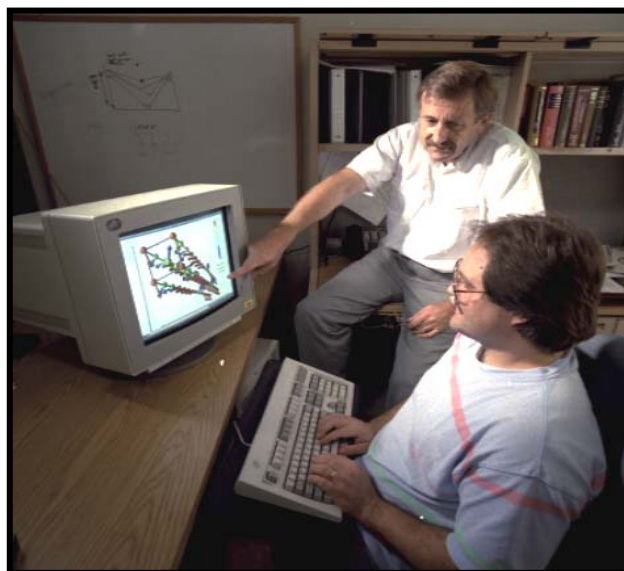
Petitions for Reconsideration: If you are not satisfied with the way an issue is resolved in the rulemaking R&O, you can file a Petition for Reconsideration within 30 days from the date the R&O appears in the *Federal Register*.

Memorandum Opinion and Order (MO&O): In response to a Petition for Reconsideration, the FCC issues a Memorandum Opinion and Order or an Order on Reconsideration amending the new rules or stating that the rules will not be changed.

Public Notice (PN): A PN is issued to notify the public of an action taken or an upcoming event. If comments are requested, a PN will generally have filing information within the notice, like where to send your comments and a closing date for comments.

En Banc: An en banc is a meeting of the FCC to hear various presentations on specific topics, usually using panel groups. Specific witnesses are asked to present information at an en banc hearing, following issuance of a Public Notice announcing the hearing. The FCC questions the presenters. Comments and presentations can be used by the FCC when it makes rules or proposes rulemakings.

Ex Parte: Ex parte rules ensure that all participants in an FCC proceeding are given fair opportunity to present information and evidence in support of their positions. An ex parte presentation in a rulemaking proceeding is any oral or written presentation made to decision-making personnel after an NPRM is used other than the party's formal comments. There are specific rules governing these presentations. The rules are available by calling 202-418-0300, or 202-418-2960 (TTY).





Filing Comments

When the FCC proposes new rules, a time period is established for the public to comment on these proposed rules. Anyone can file comments. You don't need to be an attorney or to hire an attorney. Each of the Commission's documents containing proposed rules clearly details the specific dates, deadlines and locations for filing comments and reply comments.

Comments from the public play an important part in Commission decisions because they tell us what people think about our proposals and why they support or oppose them.

After initial comments are filed, there is an additional period for responding to the first set of comments. During this second phase, you can file reply comments. People file reply comments to support or disagree with what others have said in their initial comments.

How Do I File Comments with the Commission?

Comments may be filed with the Commission electronically or on paper. **If you have access to the Internet, we encourage you to file your comments electronically.** It's fast and it will save you the cost of postage or messenger fees and the trouble of making the multiple copies required for comments filed on paper.

Filing Comments Electronically

You can file documents with the FCC for all docketed and rulemaking proceedings through our Electronic Comment Filing System (ECFS) on the Internet at www.fcc.gov/e-file/ecfs.html, with the exception of Hearing Cases and Table of Allotments. You may obtain the instructions for doing so by sending an e-mail to ecfs@fcc.gov with the following words noted in the body of the message: "get form jsmith@domain.com." ECFS accepts documents 24 hours a day with a midnight filing deadline. The official receipt for electronic filings will reflect Monday through Friday dates, except legal holidays.

If you are unable to file your comments electronically, or if you prefer to file your comments on paper, please keep the following in mind:

- ***Docket Number:*** Rulemaking proceedings at the FCC are assigned docket numbers. Each docket number lists a Bureau, a year and a specific number assigned to the proceeding (e.g., MM #02-001 = 2002 Media Proceeding Number 1). If you are submitting a document that pertains to a docketed proceeding, you must put the docket number on your filing.
- ***Copies:*** Generally, you must file only one original plus four copies of comments, reply comments or petitions. If you want the Commissioners to receive copies, file one original plus nine copies. The original is always to be UNSTAPLED, while the copies should be STAPLED. Additionally, use the following guidelines for other types of proceedings:

Ex Parte Presentations:

Informal Comments—original and one copy

Pleadings, Briefs, Petitions, etc.—original and four copies

Table of Allotments—original and four copies

Other:

Before Administrative Law Judges—original and six copies

Before Full Commission—original and 14 copies

Depositions—original and three copies

Interrogatories—original and three copies

Notices of Appearance—original and two copies

- ***Type Size:*** All filings must be in 10 or 12 point type, or legibly written.
- ***Contact Name:*** You must include a contact name, address and telephone number on your document.
- ***Signatures:*** You need to place an original signature above your typed or clearly printed name.
- ***Hand-Delivered Filings:*** You, or the person making the delivery, should remove the filing package from its box or envelope before submission. The FCC will either sign for receipt of the filing or provide a stamped receipt copy, BUT NOT BOTH. Hand-delivered documents are accepted Monday through Friday, except legal holidays, during the hours of 8:00 AM and 7:00 PM Eastern Time. You can direct questions to the Office of the Secretary by phone at (202) 418-0300 (voice), (202) 418-2970 (TTY) or through our Web site, www.fcc.gov/osec. Rulemaking comments may also be filed by e-mail.
- ***Notifications:*** If your document contains information you want withheld from public inspection, you must write “**Confidential, Not for Public Inspection**” on the upper right hand corner of each page. The documents should then be placed in an envelope also marked “**Confidential, Not for Public Inspection.**” There are specific rules regarding requests for confidentiality in a rulemaking proceeding.
- ***Filings Sent by Mail:*** You can mail in your filing in a rulemaking proceeding. If you want the FCC to acknowledge receipt of your package, include an extra copy of the first page of your filing and enclose a postage stamped, self-addressed envelope. The FCC will then stamp the page and return it to you. U.S Postal Service First-Class Mail, Express Mail and Priority mail should be sent:

Hand-delivered or messenger-delivered paper filings for the Commission’s Secretary

236 Massachusetts Ave., N.E. Suite 110
Washington, DC 20002

Other messenger-delivered documents, including documents sent by overnight mail (other than U.S. Postal Service Express Mail and Priority Mail

9300 East Hampton Drive
Capitol Heights, MD 20743 between the hours of
8 a.m. and 5:30 p.m.

U.S. Postal Service first-class mail, Express Mail, and Priority Mail

445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554



Filing Complaints

***Complaints Regarding Telecommunications
or Cable Service, Service Provider or Billing***

If you have a problem or complaint regarding a telecommunications or cable service, provider service, or bill, you should first try to resolve your complaint with that company or the company that bills you for the service.

If you are not successful in resolving the problem on your own, you may file a complaint with the FCC by:

- ◆ e-mail (fccinfo@fcc.gov),
- ◆ the Internet (www.fcc.gov/cgb/complaints.html),
- ◆ telephone
 1-888-CALL-FCC (1-888-225-5322) voice,
 1-888-TELL-FCC (1-888-835-5322) TTY,
- ◆ mail (see below).

Your complaint letter should include your name, address and telephone number where you can be reached during the business day, the telephone number involved with the complaint, as much specific information about the complaint as possible, a description of the steps you took to resolve the complaint, names and telephone numbers of the company employees that you talked to in an effort to resolve the complaint, and the dates that you talked to these employees, copies of bills listing the disputed charges (circle the disputed charges on the copies of the bills), and relief that you are requesting (such as an adjustment of charges).

If you are mailing in your complaint, send it to:

**Federal Communications Commission
Consumer & Governmental Affairs Bureau
Consumer Inquiries and Complaints Division
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554**



Learning About Activities

Keeping you up-to-date is an FCC priority. Following are several ways to learn about the FCC's activities and rulemakings and activities.

The FCC's Web site

The FCC's Web site, www.fcc.gov, provides information for anyone interested in our activities. It contains information about FCC-proposed and final rules, reports, Public Notices and virtually all of the FCC's proceedings. You can obtain all FCC documents through this site free of charge. To find a document on the FCC's Web site, you may look under the appropriate Bureau or use the "search" button. The site also features special topic-oriented pages, including pages on Tribal issues, enhanced 911(E911), digital television and saving money on your long distance bill.

If you cannot find a document, e-mail the FCC at fccinfo@fcc.gov or call 1-888-CALL-FCC (1-888-225-5322) voice or 1-888-TELL-FCC (1-888-835-5322) TTY.

The Daily Digest

Another way to keep informed about ongoing FCC activities is by reading the FCC's "Daily Digest." At approximately noon each weekday, the Daily Digest provides a listing of every rulemaking document, report, news release and Public Notice, as well as Commission speeches released for the day. You can obtain a copy of the Daily Digest via:

Internet: The FCC can automatically send you the Daily Digest each day by e-mail. Simply log on to the FCC's home page at www.fcc.gov, click on "Daily Digest," and follow the instructions for using the "listserver." You can also download the Daily Digest from this same Web site.

In Person: Copies of the Daily Digest are available for viewing each day in the Office of Media Relations, 445 12th Street, SW, Courtyard Level, Washington, DC.

For Purchase: The Daily Digest is also available for purchase from the FCC's duplicating contractor, Qualex International.

**Qualex International
Portals II
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554
202-863-2893 (voice) 202-863-2897 (TTY)
202-863-2898 (fax)**

You can obtain most of the documents released by the FCC and listed in the Daily Digest by accessing our Web site at www.fcc.gov. Complete texts of the FCC's decisions are also available from Qualex, and you can find summaries of FCC rulemakings in the *Federal Register*.

All FCC documents are available in other formats for persons with disabilities. These formats include documents in large print, Braille and audiotapes. For more information about other formats, please contact the FCC's Consumer & Governmental Affairs Bureau, Disability Rights Office at 202-418-7426 (voice), 202-418-7365 (TTY), or write us at 445 12th Street, SW, Washington, DC 20554. You can also reach us by sending an e-mail to fcc504@fcc.gov or by calling 1-888-CALL-FCC (voice) or 1-888-TELL-FCC (TTY).



Open Meetings

Many of the FCC's priority and high-profile rulemakings are decided at "open meetings." At these meetings, FCC Commissioners discuss and vote on various FCC matters. The FCC announces open meetings seven days in advance under the heading "Sunshine Notice" in the Daily Digest. The Notice is subsequently published in the Federal Register. Each Sunshine Notice contains an agenda of the topics to be discussed at the upcoming meeting. Open meetings are held at least once a month at the FCC's headquarters at 445 12th Street, SW, Washington, DC. A yearly schedule of open meetings can be found on the FCC's Web site, www.fcc.gov under "Agenda/Audio."

The Capitol Connection provides live television coverage of the FCC's open meetings. Its annual program fee entitles you to an unlimited number of TV outlets. The cost of installation is based on time and materials and free site surveys are provided. For further information contact:

**The Capitol Connection
George Mason University
4400 University Drive/Kelley Drive
Mail Stop 1D2
Fairfax, VA 22030-4444
703-993-3100 (phone) 703-993-3115 (fax)**

The FCC Library

The FCC Library contains a wide variety of legal and technical information on telecommunications and related subjects. The legal collection includes: federal and statutory histories, reference works, treatises, loose-leaf services, and a collection of cross-indexed legislative histories dating back to the beginning of communications law.

The Library has been closed to the public since December 5, 2001, because part of the Library is being used temporarily to house FCC employees. Members of the public who wish to have access to material in the Library may present their request to the staff of the FCC Reference Info Center, located on the 12th Street level of the FCC's headquarters at 445 12th Street, SW in Washington, DC.

Glossary of Telecommunications Terms

Access Charge - A fee charged subscribers or other telephone companies by a local exchange carrier for the use of its local exchange networks.

Analog Signal - A signaling method that uses continuous changes in the amplitude or frequency of a radio transmission to convey information.

Bandwidth - The capacity of a telecom line to carry signals. The necessary bandwidth is the amount of spectrum required to transmit the signal without distortion or loss of information. FCC rules require suppression of the signal outside the band to prevent interference.

Broadband - Broadband is a descriptive term for evolving digital technologies that provide consumers a signal switched facility offering integrated access to voice, high-speed data service, video-demand services, and interactive delivery services.

Calling Party Pays - A billing method in which a wireless phone caller pays only for making calls and not for receiving them. The standard American billing system requires wireless phone customers to pay for all calls made and received on a wireless phone.

Cellular Technology - This term, often used for all wireless phones regardless of the technology they use, derives from cellular base stations that receive and transmit calls. Both cellular and PCS phones use cellular technology.

Closed Captioning - A service for persons with hearing disabilities that translates television program dialog into written words on the television screen.

Commercial Leased Access - Manner through which independent video producers can access cable capacity for a fee.

Common Carrier - In the telecommunications arena, the term used to describe a telephone company.

Communications Assistant - A person who facilitates telephone conversation between text telephone users, users of sign language or individuals with speech disabilities through a Telecommunications Relay Service (TRS). This service allows a person with hearing or speech disabilities to communicate with anyone else via telephone at no additional cost.

Community Antenna Television (CATV) - A service through which subscribers pay to have local television stations and additional programs brought into their homes from an antenna via a coaxial cable.

Cramming - A practice in which customers are billed for enhanced features such as voice mail, caller-ID and call-waiting that they have not ordered.

Dial-Around - Long distance services that require consumers to dial a long distance provider's access code (like a "10-10" number) before dialing a long distance number to bypass or "dial around" the consumer's chosen long distance carrier in order to get a better rate.

Digital Television - A new technology for transmitting and receiving broadcast television signals. DTV provides clearer resolution and improved sound quality.

Direct Broadcast Satellite (DBS/DISH) - A high-powered satellite that transmits or retransmits signals which are intended for direct reception by the public. The signal is transmitted to a small earth station or dish (usually the size of an 18-inch pizza pan) mounted on homes or other buildings.

E-Mail - Also called electronic mail, refers to messages sent over the Internet. E-mail can be sent and received via newer types of wireless phones, but you generally need to have a specific e-mail account.

Enhanced Service Providers - A for-profit business that offers to transmit voice and data messages and simultaneously adds value to the messages it transmits. Examples include telephone answering services, alarm/security companies and transaction processing companies.

En Banc - An informal meeting held by the FCC to hear presentations on specific topics by diverse parties. The Commissioners, or other officials, question presenters and use their comments in considering FCC rules and policies on the subject matter that is under consideration.

Frequency Modulation (FM) - A signaling method that varies the carrier frequency in proportion to the amplitude of the modulating signal.

Global Positioning System (GPS) - A US satellite system that lets those on the ground, on the water or in the air determine their position with extreme accuracy using GPS receivers.

High Definition Television (HDTV) - An improved television system which provides approximately twice the vertical and horizontal resolution of existing television standards. It also provides audio quality approaching that of compact discs.

Interactive Video Data Service (IVDS) - A communication system, operating over a short distance, that allows nearly instantaneous two-way responses by using a hand-held device at a fixed location. Viewer participation in game shows, distance learning and e-mail on computer networks are examples.

Instructional Television Fixed Service (ITFS) - A service provided by one or more fixed microwave stations operated by an educational organization and used to transmit instructional information to fixed locations.

Landline - Traditional wired phone service.

Land Mobile Service - A public or private radio service providing two-way communication, paging and radio signaling on land.

Low Power FM Radio (LPFM) - A broadcast service that permits the licensing of 50-100 watt FM radio stations within a service radius of up to 3.5 miles and 1-10 watt FM radio stations within a service radius of 1 to 2 miles.

Low Power Television (LPTV) - A broadcast service that permits program origination, subscription service or both via low powered television translators. LPTV service includes the existing translator service and operates on a secondary basis to regular television stations. Transmitter output is limited to 1,000 watts for normal VHF stations and 100 watts when a VHF operation is on an allocated channel.

Must-Carry (Retransmission) - A 1992 Cable Act term requiring a cable system to carry signals of both commercial and noncommercial television broadcast stations that are "local" to the area served by the cable system.

Network - Any connection of two or more computers that enables them to communicate. Networks may include transmission devices, servers, cables, routers and satellites. The phone network is the total system for transmitting phone messages.

Number Portability - A term used to describe the capability of individuals, businesses and organizations to retain their existing telephone number(s) -- and the same quality of service - - when switching to a new local service provider.

Open Video Systems - An alternative method to provide cable-like video service to subscribers.

Operator Service Provider (OSP) - A common carrier that provides services from public phones, including payphones and those in hotels/motels.

Paging System - A one-way mobile radio service where a user carries a small, lightweight miniature radio receiver capable of responding to coded signals. These devices, called "pagers," emit an audible signal, vibrate or do both when activated by an incoming message.

Personal Communications Service (PCS) - Any of several types of wireless, voice and/or data communications systems, typically incorporating digital technology. PCS licenses are most often used to provide services similar to advanced cellular mobile or paging services. However, PCS can also be used to provide other wireless communications services, including services that allow people to place and receive communications while away from their home or office, as well as wireless communications to homes, office buildings and other fixed locations.

Presubscribed Interexchange Carrier Charge - The charge the local exchange company assesses the long distance company when a consumer picks it as his or her long distance carrier.

Roaming - The use of a wireless phone outside of the "home" service area defined by a service provider. Higher per-minute rates are usually charged for calls made or received while roaming. Long distance rates and a daily access fee may also apply.

Satellite - A radio relay station that orbits the earth. A complete satellite communications system also includes earth stations that communicate with each other via the satellite. The satellite receives a signal transmitted by an originating earth station and retransmits that signal to the destination earth station(s). Satellites are used to transmit telephone, television, and data signals originated by common carriers, broadcasters, and distributors of cable TV program material.

Satellite Home Viewer Improvement Act of 1999 (SHVIA) - An Act modifying the Satellite Home Viewer Act of 1988, SHVIA permits satellite companies to provide local broadcast TV signals to all subscribers who reside in the local TV station's market. SHVIA also permits satellite companies to provide "distant" network broadcast stations to eligible satellite subscribers.

Satellite Master Antenna Television (SMATV) - A satellite dish system used to deliver signals to multiple dwelling units (e.g., apartment buildings and trailer parks.)

Scanner - A radio receiver that moves across a wide range of radio frequencies and allows audiences to listen to any of the frequencies.

Service Plan - The rate plan you select when choosing a wireless phone service. A service plan typically consists of a monthly base rate for access to the system and a fixed amount of minutes per month.

Service Provider - A telecommunications provider that owns circuit switching equipment.

Slamming - The term used to describe what occurs when a customer's long distance service is switched from one long distance company to another without the customer's permission. Such unauthorized switching violates FCC rules.

Spectrum - The range of electromagnetic radio frequencies used in the transmission of sound, data, and television.

Subscriber Line Charge (SLC) - A monthly fee paid by telephone subscribers that is used to compensate the local telephone company for part of the cost of installation and maintenance of the telephone wire, poles and other facilities that link your home to the telephone network.

These wires, poles and other facilities are referred to as the "local loop." The SLC is one component of access charges.

Tariff - The documents filed by a carrier describing their services and the payments to be charged for such services.

Telecommunications Relay Service (TRS) - A free service that enables people with TTYs, individuals who use sign language and people who have speech disabilities to use telecommunications services by having a third party transmit and translate the call.

Telephony - The word used to describe the science of transmitting voice over a telecommunications network.

TTY - A type of machine that allows people with hearing or speech disabilities to communicate over the phone using a keyboard and a viewing screen. It is sometimes called a TDD.

Unbundling - The term used to describe the access provided by local exchange carriers so that other service providers can buy or lease portions of its network elements, such as interconnection loops, to serve subscribers.

Universal Service - The financial mechanism which helps compensate telephone companies or other communications entities for providing access to telecommunications services at reasonable and affordable rates throughout the country, including rural, insular and high costs areas, and to public institutions. Companies, not consumers, are required by law to contribute to this fund. The law does not prohibit companies from passing this charge on to customers.

Very High Frequency (VHF) - The part of the radio spectrum from 30 to 300 megahertz, which includes TV Channels 2-13, the FM broadcast band and some marine, aviation and land mobile services.

Video Description - An audio narration for television viewers who are blind or visually disabled, which consists of verbal descriptions of key visual elements in a television program, such as settings and actions not reflected in the dialog. Narrations are inserted into the program's natural pauses, and are typically provided through the Secondary Audio Programming channel.

The FCC glossary is also available online at: www.fcc.gov/glossary.html

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