

Federal Communications Commission Changes for Wireless Microphones June, 2014

Part 74 Licenses for Live Productions

- Part 74 licenses are available for
 - o Venue Owners
 - o Venue Operators
 - o Professional Sound Companies.
- A license specifies the geographic area for which it is valid and a sound-company licensee may serve multiple clients within that area.
- A qualified licensee must routinely use 50 or more devices in an event or production.
 - o “Routinely” means “most” events or productions.
 - o Devices can be aggregated with more than one theatre or stage in the same location.
- Licenses will be available as soon as the Office of Management and Budget reviews the paperwork requirements.
- The Commission will conduct a new proceeding for long-term wireless microphone use, including consideration of a new frequency band.
- There will be no compensation for equipment that must be replaced because of rule changes.

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Continuation of Existing Uses

- Licensed and unlicensed users may continue current practices until one of these events occurs:
 - A winner of the 600 MHz forward auction begins operations that microphones would interfere with. This will vary by area, a “Partial Economic Area” or PEA. By example, the New York City PEA includes 42 counties in New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, and Pennsylvania.
 - The new proceeding on a long-term home for wireless microphones is concluded and new rules are effective.
 - 39 months after the FCC issues new TV channel assignments.
 - The FCC hopes to conduct the auctions in late 2015.
 - Adding 39 months, the hard termination date would be in about five years: Spring 2019.

- The FCC intends to make improvements to the TV Band database, including:
 - Easier access and operations;
 - Real-time sharing among databases;
 - More frequent access by TV Band Devices.

- The FCC will allow wireless microphones to operate on a co-channel basis with TV stations.
 - Operations are authorized beginning 4 kilometers from a TV station’s predicted service contour and
 - Closer to the TV station if the microphone user coordinates with the stations.
 - This authorizes the practice currently used by Broadway sound engineers.

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After TV Stations are Repacked

- There will be no “reserved” channels for wireless microphones.
- Wireless microphones will be able to operate co-channel and on first-adjacent channels with TV stations, protected from TV Band devices, which cannot use those channels.
 - Wireless microphones can share channels with TV Band Devices, subject to protection through the database in these frequencies:
 - o Any unused TV channel except first-adjacent channels;
 - o One vacant channel in each PEA that the FCC expects to reserve for sharing by microphones and TV Band devices;
 - o Channel 37, now used only by Wireless Medical Telemetry Services (must be coordinated with nearby hospitals) and Radio Astronomy Services (only in remote areas searching for extra-terrestrial intelligence: e.g., Arecibo, Puerto Rico, Green Bank, West Virginia, Kitt Peak, Arizona).

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After TV Stations are Repacked

- Wireless microphones and TV Band Devices can share use of the new Guard Bands:
 - o Locations will depend on the number of TV stations that surrender spectrum rights in the Reverse Auction.
 - o 7 MHz to 11 MHz wide between auctioned wireless and repacked TV broadcasting, anywhere from channel 27 (548 MHz) to channel 45 (662 MHz);
 - o An 11 MHz “Duplex Gap” in the middle of the auctioned spectrum, somewhere between channel 40 (626 MHz) and channel 49 (686 MHz);
 - o Part of the Duplex Gap will be reserved for exclusive use of licensed wireless microphones for on-the-spot newsgathering.
 - o Possibly 3 MHz either side of Channel 37, depending on the amount of auctioned spectrum.

