

Before the
Federal Communications Commission
Washington, D.C. 20554

In the Matter of)	
)	
Northland Cable Properties, Inc.)	File No. EB-02-TS-471
)	
Operator of Cable Systems in:)	
)	
Dixie, Smith County, Texas)	
Tarkington, Texas)	
Ace, Texas)	
Cut & Shoot, Texas)	
Prairie View, Texas)	
Clark Fork, Idaho)	
)	
Request for Waiver of Section 11.11(a) of the Commission’s Rules)	

ORDER

Adopted: October 10, 2002

Released: October 16, 2002

By the Chief, Technical and Public Safety Division, Enforcement Bureau:

1. In this *Order*, we grant Northland Cable Properties, Inc. (“Northland”) temporary, 36-month waivers of Section 11.11(a) of the Commission’s Rules (“Rules”) for the six above-captioned cable television systems. Section 11.11(a) requires cable systems serving fewer than 5,000 subscribers from a headend to either provide national level Emergency Alert System (“EAS”) messages on all programmed channels or install EAS equipment and provide a video interrupt and audio alert on all programmed channels and EAS audio and video messages on at least one programmed channel by October 1, 2002.¹

2. The Cable Act of 1992 added new Section 624(g) to the Communications Act of 1934 (“Act”), which requires that cable systems be capable of providing EAS alerts to their subscribers.² In 1994, the Commission adopted rules requiring cable systems to participate in EAS.³ In 1997, the

¹ 47 C.F.R. § 11.11(a).

² Cable Television Consumer Protection and Competition Act of 1992, Pub. L. No. 102-385, § 16(b), 106 Stat. 1460, 1490 (1992). Section 624(g) provides that “each cable operator shall comply with such standards as the Commission shall prescribe to ensure that viewers of video programming on cable systems are afforded the same emergency information as is afforded by the emergency broadcasting system pursuant to Commission regulations” 47 U.S.C. § 544(g).

³ *Amendment of Part 73, Subpart G, of the Commission’s Rules Regarding the Emergency Broadcast System, Report and Order and Further Notice of Proposed Rule Making*, FO Docket Nos. 91-171/91-301, 10 FCC Rcd 1786 (1994) (“*First Report and Order*”), *reconsideration granted in part, denied in part*, 10 FCC Rcd 11494 (1995).

Commission amended the EAS rules to provide financial relief for small cable systems.⁴ The Commission declined to exempt small cable systems from the EAS requirements, concluding that such an exemption would be inconsistent with the statutory mandate of Section 624(g).⁵ However, the Commission extended the deadline for cable systems serving fewer than 10,000 subscribers to begin complying with the EAS rules to October 1, 2002, and provided cable systems serving fewer than 5,000 subscribers the option of either providing national level EAS messages on all programmed channels or installing EAS equipment and providing a video interrupt and audio alert on all programmed channels and EAS audio and video messages on at least one programmed channel.⁶ In addition, the Commission stated that it would grant waivers of the EAS rules to small cable systems on a case-by-case basis upon a showing of financial hardship.⁷ The Commission indicated that waiver requests must contain at least the following information: (1) justification for the waiver, with reference to the particular rule sections for which a waiver is sought; (2) information about the financial status of the requesting entity, such as a balance sheet and income statement for the two previous years (audited, if possible); (3) the number of other entities that serve the requesting entity's coverage area and that have or are expected to install EAS equipment; and (4) the likelihood (such as proximity or frequency) of hazardous risks to the requesting entity's audience.⁸

3. Northland filed a request for a permanent waiver or a five-year waiver of Section 11.11(a) for the six captioned cable systems on August 27, 2002. In support of its waiver request, Northland states that the six small, rural cable systems serve between 72 and 694 subscribers. Based on price estimates provided by EAS equipment vendors, Northland estimates that EAS equipment and installation would cost approximately \$42,000. Northland asserts that the cost of installing EAS equipment at the system will impose a substantial financial hardship on it and submits its financial statements for 2001 in support of this assertion. In addition, Northland submits that its subscribers will continue to have ready access to national EAS information from other sources, including its cable systems. In this regard, Northland notes that its subscribers currently have access to national EAS messages on at least one-third of all programmed channels. Northland also asserts that its subscribers will have access to EAS information through over-the-air reception of broadcast television and radio stations.

4. Based upon our review of the financial data and other information submitted by Northland, we find that a permanent waiver or a five-year waiver of Section 11.11(a) is not warranted. However, we conclude that a temporary 36-month waiver of Section 11.11(a) for each of the six captioned cable systems is warranted.⁹ In particular, we find that the estimated cost approximately of \$42,000 of EAS equipment for this small cable system could impose financial hardship on Northland.

⁴ *Amendment of Part 73, Subpart G, of the Commission's Rules Regarding the Emergency Broadcast System, Second Report and Order*, FO Docket Nos. 91-171/91-301, 12 FCC Rcd 15503 (1997) ("*Second Report and Order*").

⁵ *Id.* at 15512-13.

⁶ *Id.* at 15516-15518.

⁷ *Id.* at 15513.

⁸ *Id.* at 15513, n. 59.

⁹ The waivers will extend 36 months from October 1, 2002, until October 1, 2005. We clarify that the waivers we are granting also encompasses the EAS testing and monitoring requirements.

5. We note that the Commission recently amended the EAS rules to permit cable systems serving fewer than 5,000 subscribers to install FCC-certified decoder-only units, rather than both encoders and decoders, if such a device becomes available.¹⁰ Based on comments from equipment manufacturers, we anticipate that such a decoder-only system could result in significant cost savings to small cable systems.¹¹

6. Accordingly, **IT IS ORDERED** that, pursuant to Sections 0.111, 0.204(b) and 0.311 of the Rules,¹² Northland Cable Properties, Inc. **IS GRANTED** a waiver of Section 11.11(a) of the Rules until October 1, 2005 for the six captioned cable systems.

7. **IT IS FURTHER ORDERED** that Northland Cable Properties, Inc., place a copy of this waiver in its system files.

8. **IT IS FURTHER ORDERED** that a copy of this *Order* shall be sent by Certified Mail Return Receipt Requested to counsel for Northland Cable Properties, K. E. Love, Esq., COLE, RAYWID & BRAVERMAN, LLP, 1919 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Suite 200, Washington, DC 20006.

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION

Joseph P. Casey
Chief, Technical and Public Safety Division
Enforcement Bureau

¹⁰ *Amendment of Part 11 of the Commission's Rules Regarding the Emergency Alert System*, EB Docket 01-66, FCC 02-64 at ¶ 71 (released February 26, 2002).

¹¹ One manufacturer estimated that an EAS decoder-only system can reduce the cost by 64% over what a cable operator would spend for an encoder/decoder unit. *Id.* at ¶ 70.

¹² 47 C.F.R. §§ 0.111, 0.204(b) and 0.311.