

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

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| In the Matter of |) | File No.: EB-SED-13-00006159 |
| |) | |
| Northeast Telephone Services, Inc. |) | NAL/Acct. No.: 201332100019 |
| |) | |
| |) | FRN: 0003758588 |

NOTICE OF APPARENT LIABILITY FOR FORFEITURE

Adopted: September 24, 2013

Released: September 24, 2013

By the Chief, Spectrum Enforcement Division, Enforcement Bureau:

I. INTRODUCTION

1. In this Notice of Apparent Liability for Forfeiture, we propose a forfeiture in the amount of five thousand four hundred dollars (\$5,400) against Northeast Telephone Services, Inc. (Northeast).¹ We find that Northeast apparently willfully and repeatedly violated the digital wireless handset hearing aid compatibility status report filing requirements set forth in Section 20.19(i)(1) of the Commission's rules (Rules).²

II. BACKGROUND

2. In the 2003 *Hearing Aid Compatibility Order*, the Commission adopted several measures to enhance the ability of consumers with hearing loss to access digital wireless telecommunications.³ The Commission established technical standards that digital wireless handsets must meet to be considered compatible with hearing aids operating in acoustic coupling and inductive coupling (telecoil) modes.⁴

¹ Northeast Telephone Services, Inc. (formerly Northeast Telecom, Inc.) is a Tier III mobile virtual network operator (MVNO) that resells wireless telecommunications services for Telispire PCS (Telispire). Telispire, in turn, is an MVNO for, and is wholly-owned by, the National Rural Telecommunications Cooperative. Tier III carriers are non-nationwide wireless radio service providers with 500,000 or fewer subscribers as of the end of 2001. *See Revision of the Commission's Rules to Ensure Compatibility with Enhanced 911 Emergency Calling Systems, Phase II Compliance Deadlines for Non-Nationwide CMRS Carriers*, Order to Stay, 17 FCC Rcd 14841, 14847-48, paras. 22-24 (2002). Northeast also holds a Section 214 authorization for the resale of international long distance service. *See* File No. ITC-214-19991029-00671 (granted Nov. 26, 1999).

² 47 C.F.R. § 20.19(i)(1).

³ *See Section 68.4(a) of the Commission's Rules Governing Hearing Aid-Compatible Telephones*, Report and Order, 18 FCC Rcd 16753 (2003), Erratum, 18 FCC Rcd 18047 (2003), Order on Reconsideration and Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, 20 FCC Rcd 11221 (2005) (*Hearing Aid Compatibility Order*). The Commission adopted these requirements for digital wireless telephones under the authority of the Hearing Aid Compatibility Act of 1988, Pub. L. No. 100-394, 102 Stat. 976 (codified at 47 U.S.C. §§ 609 note, 610, 610 note).

⁴ *See Hearing Aid Compatibility Order*, 18 FCC Rcd at 16777, 16779, paras. 56, 63; *see also* 47 C.F.R. § 20.19(b)(1)-(2). The *Hearing Aid Compatibility Order* described the acoustic coupling and inductive coupling (telecoil) modes as follows:

In acoustic coupling mode, the microphone picks up surrounding sounds, desired and undesired, and converts them into electrical signals. The electrical signals are amplified as needed and then (continued....)

Specifically, the Commission adopted a standard for radio frequency interference (the M3 rating) to enable acoustic coupling between digital wireless phones and hearing aids operating in acoustic coupling mode, and a separate standard (the T3 rating) to enable inductive coupling with hearing aids operating in telecoil mode.⁵ In the 2008 *Hearing Aid Compatibility First Report and Order*, the Commission established various deadlines by which manufacturers and service providers were required to offer specified numbers of digital wireless handset models rated hearing aid-compatible.⁶

3. The Commission also adopted reporting requirements to ensure that it could monitor the availability of hearing aid-compatible handsets and to provide valuable information to the public concerning the technical testing and commercial availability of these handsets.⁷ The Commission initially required manufacturers and digital wireless service providers to report every six months on efforts toward compliance with the hearing aid compatibility requirements for the first three years of implementation, and then annually thereafter through the fifth year of implementation.⁸ In its 2008 *Hearing Aid Compatibility First Report and Order*, the Commission indefinitely extended these reporting requirements with certain modifications.⁹

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converted back into sound by the hearing aid speaker. In telecoil mode, with the microphone turned off, the telecoil picks up the audio signal-based magnetic field generated by the voice coil of a dynamic speaker in hearing aid-compatible telephones, audio loop systems, or powered neck loops. The hearing aid converts the magnetic field into electrical signals, amplifies them as needed, and converts them back into sound via the speaker. Using a telecoil avoids the feedback that often results from putting a hearing aid up against a telephone earpiece, can help prevent exposure to over amplification, and eliminates background noise, providing improved access to the telephone.

18 FCC Rcd at 16763, para. 22.

⁵ See 47 C.F.R. § 20.19(b). As subsequently amended, Section 20.19(b)(1) of the Rules provided that, for the period beginning January 1, 2010, a wireless handset is deemed hearing aid-compatible for radio frequency interference if, at a minimum, it meets the M3 rating associated with the technical standard set forth in the standard document, “American National Standard Methods of Measurement of Compatibility between Wireless Communication Devices and Hearing Aids,” ANSI C63.19-2007 (June 8, 2007) (ANSI C63.19-2007), except that grants of certification issued before January 1, 2010, under earlier versions of ANSI C63.19 remain valid for hearing aid compatibility purposes. 47 C.F.R. § 20.19(b)(1). Section 20.19(b)(2) provided that, for the period beginning January 1, 2010, a wireless handset is deemed hearing aid-compatible for inductive coupling if, at minimum, it meets the T3 rating associated with the technical standard set forth in ANSI C63.19-2007, except that grants of certification issued before January 1, 2010, under earlier versions of ANSI C63.19 remain valid for hearing aid compatibility purposes. 47 C.F.R. § 20.19(b)(2). Effective August 16, 2012, a further amendment to Section 20.19(b) permits manufacturers to test handsets for hearing aid compatibility using the 2011 version of the ANSI standard, ANSI C63.19-2011, as an alternative to ANSI C63.19-2007. See *Amendment of the Commission’s Rules Governing Hearing Aid-Compatible Mobile Handsets*, Third Report and Order, 27 FCC Rcd 3732 (WTB/OET 2012).

⁶ See *Amendment of the Commission’s Rules Governing Hearing Aid-Compatible Mobile Handsets*, First Report and Order, 23 FCC Rcd 3406, 3418–20, paras. 35–36 (2008), Order on Reconsideration and Erratum, 23 FCC Rcd 7249 (2008) (*Hearing Aid Compatibility First Report and Order*).

⁷ See *id.* at 3443, para. 91; see also 47 C.F.R. § 20.19(i).

⁸ See *Hearing Aid Compatibility Order*, 18 FCC Rcd at 16787, para. 89; see also *Wireless Telecommunications Bureau Announces Hearing Aid Compatibility Reporting Dates for Wireless Carriers and Handset Manufacturers*, Public Notice, 19 FCC Rcd 4097 (Wireless Tel. Bur. 2004).

⁹ See *Hearing Compatibility First Report and Order*, 23 FCC Rcd at 3444–46, paras. 97–99, 101. The extensions of these reporting requirements became effective on December 13, 2011. See 76 Fed. Reg. 77,415 (Dec. 13, 2011).

4. Northeast failed to timely file its hearing aid compatibility status report for the period January 1, 2011, through December 31, 2011. The required report was due on January 17, 2012.¹⁰ On or about September 20, 2012, Northeast, through its counsel, disclosed to the Commission's Wireless Telecommunications Bureau (Wireless Bureau) that Northeast had not met the January 17 deadline, and requested that the Wireless Bureau open a filing window to permit the late filing of that report. The Wireless Bureau opened a filing window on September 25, 2012, at which time Northeast filed its status report for 2011.¹¹ The Wireless Bureau subsequently referred Northeast's apparent violation of the hearing aid compatibility status report filing requirement to the Enforcement Bureau (Bureau).

5. On May 1, 2013, the Bureau's Spectrum Enforcement Division issued a letter of inquiry (LOI) to Northeast, directing the company to submit a sworn written response to a series of questions relating to Northeast's failure to timely file its hearing aid compatibility status report by the January 17, 2012 deadline.¹² Northeast responded on May 20, 2013.¹³ In its LOI Response, Northeast contends that its failure to submit the report in a timely fashion was due to "inadvertent oversight," and that it immediately addressed the problem as soon as it was discovered.¹⁴

III. DISCUSSION

A. Failure to Timely File Hearing Aid Compatibility Status Report

6. Section 20.19(i)(1) of the Rules requires service providers to file hearing aid compatibility status reports.¹⁵ These reports are necessary to enable the Commission to perform its enforcement function and to evaluate whether Northeast is in compliance with Commission mandates that were adopted to facilitate the accessibility of hearing aid-compatible wireless handsets. These reports also provide valuable information to the public concerning the technical testing and commercial availability of hearing aid-compatible handsets.¹⁶ As the record in this case reflects, Northeast failed to

¹⁰ Service providers are required to file their hearing aid compatibility status reports on January 15th of each year. See 47 C.F.R. § 20.19(i)(1). However, because January 15, 2012 fell on a Sunday and January 16, 2012 was a federal holiday, the report was due the next business day, January 17, 2012. See *id.* § 1.4(e)(1) (defining "holiday" to include Sunday and federal holidays); *Id.* § 1.4(j) (when a deadline falls on a holiday, the deadline is extended until the next business day); see also Hearing Aid Compatibility Status Reporting, <http://wireless.fcc.gov/hac>.

¹¹ See *Northeast Telephone Services, Inc.*, Hearing Aid Compatibility Report (Sept. 25, 2012), http://wireless.fcc.gov/hac_documents/120307/5416263_NorthEastTele.PDF.

¹² See Letter from John D. Poutasse, Chief, Spectrum Enforcement Division, FCC Enforcement Bureau, to Michael George, Chief Executive Officer, Northeast Telephone Services, Inc. (May 1, 2013) (on file in EB-SED-13-00006159).

¹³ See Letter from Harold Mordkofsky, Blooston, Mordkofsky, Dickens, Duffy & Prendergast, LLP, Counsel to Northeast Telephone Services, Inc., to Marlene H. Dortch, Secretary, Federal Communications Commission (May 20, 2013) (on file in EB-SED-13-00006159) (LOI Response).

¹⁴ *Id.*, Attachment at 1–2. Northeast also includes in its LOI response a request—pursuant to Sections 1.3 and 1.925(b) of the Rules, 47 C.F.R. §§ 1.3, 1.925(b)(3)—for waiver of the requirements of Section 20.19(i)(1) so that we may treat its hearing aid compatibility status report as timely filed. See LOI Response, Attachment at 3–4. The Bureau referred Northeast's request for rule waiver to the Wireless Bureau. On September 20, 2013, the Spectrum and Competition Policy Division of the Wireless Bureau denied Northeast's request for waiver of Section 20.19(i)(1). See *Northeast Telephone Services, Inc.*, Order, DA 13-1927 (Wireless Tel. Bur. rel. Sept. 20, 2013) (finding that "Northeast's failure to familiarize itself with the Commission's reporting requirements does not constitute a unique or unusual circumstance that would justify waiving the January 17, 2012 filing deadline").

¹⁵ See 47 C.F.R. § 20.19(i)(1).

¹⁶ See *Hearing Compatibility First Report and Order*, 23 FCC Rcd at 3446, para. 98 (stating that a handset model's hearing aid compatibility rating, among other relevant information, "should be readily available to service providers (continued....)");

timely file the hearing aid compatibility status report due on January 17, 2012, in apparent willful¹⁷ and repeated¹⁸ violation of Section 20.19(i)(1) of the Rules.¹⁹

B. Proposed Forfeiture

7. Under Section 503(b)(1)(B) of the Communications Act of 1934, as amended (Act), any person who is determined by the Commission to have willfully or repeatedly failed to comply with any provision of the Act or any rule, regulation, or order issued by the Commission shall be liable to the United States for a forfeiture penalty.²⁰ To impose such a forfeiture penalty, the Commission must first issue a notice of apparent liability for forfeiture and the person against whom such notice has been issued must have an opportunity to show, in writing, why no such forfeiture penalty should be imposed.²¹ The Commission will then issue a forfeiture if it finds by a preponderance of the evidence that the person has violated the Act or the Rules.²² We conclude that Northeast is apparently liable for a forfeiture for its failure to timely file the required hearing aid compatibility status report in apparent willful and repeated violation of Section 20.19(i)(1) of the Rules.²³

8. The Commission's *Forfeiture Policy Statement* and Section 1.80(b) of the Rules set a base forfeiture amount of \$3,000 for the failure to file required forms or information.²⁴ While the base forfeiture requirements are guidelines lending some predictability to the forfeiture process, the

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either from the manufacturer's previous reports to the Commission, from the manufacturer's own website, or from the manufacturer directly"). We note, however, that the Commission's Equipment Authorization System is the most reliable source for information on a handset's hearing aid compatibility rating. The Equipment Authorization System is an electronic database of all equipment certified under Commission authority. The database identifies the hearing aid compatibility rating of each handset by FCC ID, as reported by the handset manufacturer in test reports submitted to the Commission at the time of an equipment authorization or of any modification to such authorization. See <http://transition.fcc.gov/oet/ea/fccid/>.

¹⁷ Section 312(f)(1) of the Act defines "willful" as "the conscious and deliberate commission or omission of [any] act, irrespective of any intent to violate" the law. 47 U.S.C. § 312(f)(1). The legislative history of Section 312 clarifies that this definition of willful applies to Sections 312 and 503 of the Act, H.R. Rep. No. 97-765 (1982) (Conf. Rep.), and the Commission has so interpreted the term in the Section 503(b) context. See *So. Cal. Broad. Co.*, Memorandum Opinion and Order, 6 FCC Rcd 4387, 4387-88, para. 5 (1991), *recons. denied*, 7 FCC Rcd 3454 (1992) (*Southern California*).

¹⁸ Section 312(f)(2) of the Act, which also applies to forfeitures assessed pursuant to Section 503(b) of the Act, defines "repeated" as "the commission or omission of [any] act more than once or, if such commission or omission is continuous, for more than one day." 47 U.S.C. § 312(f)(2); see also *Southern California*, 6 FCC Rcd at 4388, para. 5. Failure to file these reports can have an adverse impact on the Commission's ability to ensure the commercial availability of hearing aid-compatible digital wireless handsets, to the detriment of consumers. As we have previously stated, the failure to file a hearing aid compatibility status report constitutes a continuing violation that persists until the violation is cured. See *ASTCA*, *supra* note 26.

¹⁹ 47 C.F.R. § 20.19(i)(1).

²⁰ 47 U.S.C. § 503(b)(1)(B); see also 47 C.F.R. § 1.80(a).

²¹ 47 U.S.C. § 503(b); 47 C.F.R. § 1.80(f).

²² See, e.g., *SBC Communications, Inc.*, Forfeiture Order, 17 FCC Rcd 7589, 7591, para. 4 (2002).

²³ 47 C.F.R. § 20.19(i)(1).

²⁴ See *The Commission's Forfeiture Policy Statement and Amendment of Section 1.80 of the Rules to Incorporate the Forfeiture Guidelines*, Report and Order, 12 FCC Rcd 17087, 17113, Appendix A, Section I, *recons. denied*, Memorandum Opinion and Order, 15 FCC Rcd 303 (1999) (*Forfeiture Policy Statement*); 47 C.F.R. § 1.80.

Commission retains the discretion to depart from these guidelines and issue forfeitures on a case-by-case basis under its general forfeiture authority in Section 503 of the Act.²⁵

9. We have exercised our discretion to set a higher base forfeiture amount for violations of the wireless hearing aid compatibility reporting requirements. In *ASTCA*, we found that the status reports are essential to implement and enforce the hearing aid compatibility rules.²⁶ The Commission relies on these reports to provide consumers with information regarding the technical specifications and commercial availability of hearing aid-compatible digital wireless handsets and to ensure that the digital wireless industry meets the needs of the increasing number of consumers with hearing loss.²⁷ In an analogous context, we noted that when setting an \$8,000 base forfeiture for violations of the hearing aid-compatible handset labeling requirements, the Commission emphasized that consumers with hearing loss could only take advantage of critically important public safety benefits of digital wireless services if they had access to accurate information regarding hearing aid compatibility features of handsets.²⁸ We also noted that the Commission has adjusted the base forfeiture upward when noncompliance with filing requirements interferes with the accurate administration and enforcement of Commission rules.²⁹ Because the failure to file hearing aid compatibility status reports implicates similar public safety and enforcement concerns, we exercised our discretionary authority and established a base forfeiture amount of \$6,000 for failure to file a hearing aid compatibility report.³⁰ Consistent with *ASTCA*, we believe the \$6,000 base forfeiture for violation of the hearing aid compatibility reporting requirement should apply here.

10. The \$6,000 base forfeiture, however, is subject to adjustment. In assessing forfeitures, Section 503(b)(2)(E) of the Act requires that we take into account the “nature, circumstances, extent, and gravity of the violation and, with respect to the violator, the degree of culpability, any history of prior offenses, ability to pay, and such other matters as justice may require.”³¹ In its LOI Response, Northeast suggests that we consider its contention that its failure to timely file was “inadvertent.” We decline to do so. It is well established that administrative oversight or inadvertence is not a mitigating factor warranting a downward adjustment of a forfeiture.³² Similarly, a violator’s lack of knowledge or erroneous belief does not warrant a forfeiture’s downward adjustment.³³ The severity of Northeast’s

²⁵ See *Forfeiture Policy Statement*, 12 FCC Rcd at 17099, 17101, paras. 22, 29; see also 47 C.F.R. § 1.80.

²⁶ See *American Samoa Telecommunications Authority*, Notice of Apparent Liability for Forfeiture, 23 FCC Rcd 16432, 16436–37, para. 10 (Enf. Bur. 2008), *forfeiture ordered*, Forfeiture Order, 27 FCC Rcd 13174 (Enf. Bur. 2012) (forfeiture paid) (*ASTCA*).

²⁷ See *id.*

²⁸ See *id.*

²⁹ See *id.*

³⁰ See *id.*

³¹ 47 U.S.C. § 503(b)(2)(E).

³² See *Southern California*, 6 FCC Rcd at 4387 (stating that “inadvertence ... is at best, ignorance of the law, which the Commission does not consider a mitigating circumstance”).

³³ See, e.g., *Profit Enterprises, Inc.*, 8 FCC Rcd 2846, 2846, para. 5 (1993) (denying the mitigation claim of a manufacturer/distributor who thought that the equipment certification and marketing requirements were inapplicable, stating that its “prior knowledge or understanding of the law is unnecessary to a determination of whether a violation existed ... ignorance of the law is [not] a mitigating factor”); *Lakewood Broadcasting Service, Inc.*, 37 FCC 2d 437, 438, para. 6 (1972) (denying a mitigation claim of a broadcast licensee who asserted an unfamiliarity with the station identification requirements, stating that licensees are expected “to know and conform their conduct to the requirements of our rules”); *Kenneth Paul Harris, Sr.*, 15 FCC Rcd 12933, 12935, para. 7 (Enf. Bur. 2000) (denying a mitigation claim of a broadcast licensee, stating that its ignorance of the law did not excuse (continued....))

apparent violation, however, is slightly mitigated by its prompt voluntary disclosure to Commission staff of the failure to timely file and its remedial efforts, both of which preceded the Bureau's investigation and the initiation of enforcement action.³⁴ As such, we find that, based on the particular circumstances of this case, some reduction of the forfeiture is appropriate.³⁵ In view of all the factual circumstances presented, and having considered the statutory factors enumerated above, we propose a forfeiture in the amount of \$5,400 against Northeast for failing to timely file its hearing aid compatibility status report for the period ending December 31, 2011, by the January 17, 2012 deadline, in apparent willful and repeated violation of Section 20.19(i)(1) of the Rules.³⁶

IV. ORDERING CLAUSES

11. Accordingly, **IT IS ORDERED** that, pursuant to Section 503(b) of the Communications Act of 1934, as amended, and Sections 0.111, 0.311, and 1.80 of the Commission's rules,³⁷ Northeast Telephone Services, Inc. is **NOTIFIED** of its **APPARENT LIABILITY FOR A FORFEITURE** in the

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the unauthorized transfer of the station); *Maxwell Broadcasting Group, Inc.*, 8 FCC Rcd 784, 784, para. 2 (Mass Med. Bur. 1993) (denying a mitigation claim of a noncommercial broadcast licensee, stating that the excuse of "inadvertent[ce], due to inexperience and ignorance of the rules . . . are not reasons to mitigate a forfeiture" for violation of the advertisement restrictions).

³⁴ See 47 C.F.R. § 1.80(b)(8), Note to Paragraph (b)(8): *Adjustment Criteria for Section 503 Forfeitures* (establishing "good faith or voluntary disclosure" as a downward adjustment factor). The *Forfeiture Policy Statement* affords us discretion to adjust forfeitures downward in cases of voluntary disclosure. See *The Commission's Forfeiture Policy Statement and Amendment of Section 1.80 of the Rules to Incorporate the Forfeiture Guidelines*, Report and Order, 12 FCC Rcd 17087, 17100-01, para. 27 (1997), *recons. denied*, Memorandum Opinion and Order, 15 FCC Rcd 303 (1999) (*Forfeiture Policy Statement*); 47 C.F.R. § 1.80. But the *Forfeiture Policy Statement* neither explains what constitutes voluntary disclosure nor establishes a particular downward adjustment percentage. *Forfeiture Policy Statement*, 12 FCC Rcd at 17100, para. 26 (expressly declining to prescribe the amount of the voluntary disclosure adjustment and explaining instead that the adjustment must reflect "the unique facts of each case"). We emphasize the public interest benefits of express, non-dilatory, and factually detailed noncompliance disclosures provided to the Enforcement Bureau and coupled with immediate corrective action. In this case, Northeast discovered the violation on September 14, 2012 and notified the Commission on or about September 20, 2012. This type of voluntary disclosure can timely reveal violations that the Commission would otherwise be unlikely to discover, expedite resolution of the resulting enforcement proceeding, and yield tangible benefits to the disclosing party in terms of the forfeiture penalty applied. Of course, the forfeiture we adopt in any particular case will always entail our exercise of discretion based on the particular circumstances before us.

³⁵ Even though Northeast notified the Wireless Bureau of the violation and requested permission for the late filing of its report prior to the Enforcement Bureau's investigation, Northeast filed the required report approximately eight months after the filing deadline. Although we can upwardly adjust a forfeiture based on the violation's duration (see 47 C.F.R. 1.80(b)), we refrain from doing so here. Prior enforcement actions concerning the same type of violation (and, in some instances, for a longer duration than here), have not always resulted in the upward adjustment of the \$6,000 base forfeiture amount. See, e.g., *STi Prepaid, LLC*, Notice of Apparent Liability for Forfeiture, 25 FCC Rcd 17836, 17839-45, paras. 6, 8, 18-20 (proposing \$6,000 forfeiture for failing to timely file hearing aid compatibility status report; reseller of wireless services was 11 months late in filing report). We have previously warned companies subject to the filing requirements that they must timely file the reports or, if late, come into compliance immediately. We now further warn Northeast and other parties subject to the digital wireless handset hearing aid compatibility status report filing requirements of Section 20.19(i) that future violations of the requirement may be subject to an upward adjustment of the \$6,000 base forfeiture based on the duration of the violation

³⁶ 47 C.F.R. § 20.19(i)(1).

³⁷ 47 U.S.C. § 503(b); 47 C.F.R. §§ 0.111, 0.311, 1.80.

amount of five thousand four hundred dollars (\$5,400) for willful and repeated violation of Section 20.19(i)(1) of the Commission's rules.³⁸

12. **IT IS FURTHER ORDERED** that, pursuant to Section 1.80 of the Commission's rules, within thirty (30) calendar days after the release date of this Notice of Apparent Liability for Forfeiture, Northeast Telephone Services, Inc. **SHALL PAY** the full amount of the proposed forfeiture, or **SHALL FILE** a written statement seeking reduction or cancellation of the proposed forfeiture consistent with paragraph 15, below.

13. Payment of the forfeiture must be made by check or similar instrument, wire transfer, or credit card, and must include the NAL/Account Number and FRN referenced above. Northeast Telephone Services, Inc. shall send electronic notification of payment to Pamera Hairston at Pamera.Hairston@fcc.gov and to Samantha Peoples at Sam.Peoples@fcc.gov on the date said payment is made. Regardless of the form of payment, a completed FCC Form 159 (Remittance Advice) must be submitted.³⁹ When completing the FCC Form 159, enter the Account Number in block number 23A (call sign/other ID) and enter the letters "FORF" in block number 24A (payment type code). Below are additional instructions you should follow based on the form of payment you select:

- Payment by check or money order must be made payable to the order of the Federal Communications Commission. Such payments (along with the completed Form 159) must be mailed to Federal Communications Commission, P.O. Box 979088, St. Louis, MO 63197-9000, or sent via overnight mail to U.S. Bank – Government Lockbox #979088, SL-MO-C2-GL, 1005 Convention Plaza, St. Louis, MO 63101.
- Payment by wire transfer must be made to ABA Number 021030004, receiving bank TREAS/NYC, and Account Number 27000001. To complete the wire transfer and ensure appropriate crediting of the wired funds, a completed Form 159 must be faxed to U.S. Bank at (314) 418-4232 on the same business day the wire transfer is initiated.
- Payment by credit card must be made by providing the required credit card information on FCC Form 159 and signing and dating the Form 159 to authorize the credit card payment. The completed Form 159 must then be mailed to Federal Communications Commission, P.O. Box 979088, St. Louis, MO 63197-9000, or sent via overnight mail to U.S. Bank – Government Lockbox #979088, SL-MO-C2-GL, 1005 Convention Plaza, St. Louis, MO 63101.

14. Any request for full payment under an installment plan should be sent to: Chief Financial Officer – Financial Operations, Federal Communications Commission, 445 12th Street, S.W., Room 1-A625, Washington, DC 20554. If you have questions regarding payment procedures, please contact the Financial Operations Group Help Desk by phone, 1-877-480-3201, or by email, ARINQUIRIES@fcc.gov.

15. The written statement seeking reduction or cancellation of the proposed forfeiture, if any, must include a detailed factual statement supported by appropriate documentation and affidavits pursuant to Sections 1.80(f)(3) and 1.16 of the Commission's rules.⁴⁰ The written statement must be mailed to the Office of the Secretary, Federal Communications Commission, 445 12th Street, S.W., Washington, DC 20554, ATTN: Enforcement Bureau – Spectrum Enforcement Division, and must include the NAL/Account Number referenced in the caption. The statement must also be emailed to Pamera Hairston

³⁸ 47 C.F.R. § 20.19(i)(1).

³⁹ An FCC Form 159 and detailed instructions for completing the form may be obtained at <http://www.fcc.gov/Forms/Form159/159.pdf>.

⁴⁰ 47 C.F.R. §§ 1.80(f)(3), 1.16.

at Pamera.Hairston@fcc.gov and to Samantha Peoples at Sam.Peoples@fcc.gov. The Commission will not consider reducing or canceling a forfeiture in response to a claim of inability to pay unless the petitioner submits: (1) federal tax returns for the most recent three-year period; (2) financial statements prepared according to generally accepted accounting practices; or (3) some other reliable and objective documentation that accurately reflects the petitioner's current financial status. Any claim of inability to pay must specifically identify the basis for the claim by reference to the financial documentation.

16. **IT IS FURTHER ORDERED** that a copy of this Notice of Apparent Liability for Forfeiture shall be sent by first class mail and certified mail, return receipt requested, to W. Michael George, Chief Executive Officer, Northeast Telephone Service, Inc., P.O. Box 219, 6402 Howell Avenue, Collinston, LA 71229, and to Harold Mordkofsky, Esq., Blooston, Mordkofsky, Dickens, Duffy & Pendergast, LLP, Counsel to Northeast Telephone Services, Inc., 2121 L Street, N.W., Suite 300, Washington, D.C. 20037.

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION

John D. Poutasse
Chief, Spectrum Enforcement Division
Enforcement Bureau