



PUBLIC NOTICE

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INTERNATIONAL BUREAU ADDRESSES ACCURACY OF EARTH STATION LOCATION INFORMATION IN IBFS

PROVIDES GUIDANCE TO EARTH STATION LICENSEES AND APPLICANTS

Report No. SPB-272

With this Public Notice, the International Bureau (Bureau) provides guidance to earth station licensees and applicants as part of the Bureau's ongoing efforts to update and improve the accuracy of the earth station information on file with the Commission in the International Bureau Filing System (IBFS) data base.¹ Specifically, the Bureau reminds earth station licensees that seek to continue to operate beyond their current license term to apply for license renewal in a timely fashion. In addition, all licensees should maintain accurate information about currently licensed earth stations with the Commission, and immediately surrender licenses for earth stations that are no longer operational. The Bureau also recommends that licensees use World Geodetic System 1984 (WGS84) datum to identify earth station locations in their filings at the Commission.

Timely License Renewals. On February 14, 2002, the Commission adopted earth station rule changes that lengthened the standard earth station license term from 10 to 15 years.² Now, roughly 15 years later, many earth station licenses will soon expire and automatically terminate without further notice to the licensee if no further action is taken (47 CFR § 25.161(b)). The Bureau thus reminds current earth station licensees with expiring licenses that intend to continue operations to file timely license renewal applications. The Commission's Part 25 rules for earth stations provide that applications for renewals of earth station licenses must be submitted on FCC Form 312R no earlier than 90 days, and no later than 30 days, before the expiration date of the earth station license. (47 CFR § 25.121(e)). If a licensee fails to

¹ We note that the Fixed Wireless Communications Coalition (FWCC) has requested that the Bureau conduct an audit of Fixed Satellite Service (FSS) earth stations in bands that are shared on a co-primary basis with Fixed Service (FS) stations. FWCC argues that "a substantial majority of licensed FSS earth stations in shared bands have been decommissioned, never existed, or are mis-located from their license coordinates." Letter from FWCC to Mindel De La Torre, Chief, International Bureau (Sep. 30, 2016). We do not believe that an exhaustive audit of the IBFS earth station database is warranted at this time. Rather, the Bureau believes that, building upon our ongoing work with industry, the guidance provided in this public notice is an appropriate measure to update and improve the accuracy of the IBFS earth station database. However, we do not foreclose the possibility of such an audit in the future.

² *In the Matter of Amendment of the Commission's Space Station Licensing Rules and Policies*, Notice of Proposed Rulemaking and First Report and Order, 17 FCC Rcd 384, para. 41 (2002).

seek renewal before the license expires, petitions for reinstatement may be filed within 30 days after the expiration date. Such petitions are granted at the Commission's discretion, upon a finding that doing so would serve the public interest, convenience and necessity. See 47 CFR § 25.163(a). After that time, a new application would be required.

Maintaining Updated Licensee Information. In its application for an earth station license, an applicant must provide critical contact information listed on FCC Application Forms FCC 312 and FCC 312-Schedule B. This information includes the name of the applicant, the applicant's contact representative, the site location(s) contact information, and the remote control point contact information (if applicable). Licensees are reminded that they are required to maintain accurate information with the Commission by filing a pleading or modification application through MyIBFS³ requesting that the current authorization record files be updated.

Recommended Use of WGS84 Coordinate Datum to Identify Earth Station Site Location. Schedule B to Form 312 requires earth station license applicants to file the latitude and longitude of earth station sites by referencing North American Datum (NAD)-27, NAD-83, or "N/A." With advances in technology, however, more precise location datum is available. In particular, World Geodetic System 1984 (WGS84) is a publicly available reference coordinate system defined and maintained by the United States National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency (NGA),⁴ and used by the Global Positioning Systems (GPS)-based satellite mapping services such as Google Earth.⁵ Although the Commission's rules do not require it, given WGS84 datum's greater precision over NAD, we recommend that all earth station licensees update earth station location information using WGS84 datum. By using WGS84-based coordinates, the Bureau, applicants, and interested parties can easily and accurately verify the location of earth stations. Further, prospective new licensees can conduct more accurate interference analysis and better protect current licensees. Although the use of WGS84 datum in earth station licenses and applications is voluntary, the Commission may propose this standard as a requirement in a future rulemaking proceeding.

The earth station renewal application form, FCC Form 312-R, does not specifically request that applicants confirm the geographic coordinates of each antenna. The Bureau thus recommends that all licensees submit a brief narrative statement with their renewal application that specifically confirms station site location using the recommended WGS84 coordinate datum and verifies the presence of the station site location using a mapping application such as Google Earth. For the past few months, International Bureau staff processing earth station renewals have been verifying earth station site locations. During this upcoming renewal period, International Bureau staff will remain vigilant in ensuring accuracy of the earth station site location. To this end, renewals may be delayed if the requested information is not provided in a timely manner.

We also recommend that applicants seeking a new license or modification specify the site location by submitting station coordinates referenced to the WGS84 datum. The Bureau recommends that, when submitting applications, applicants select "N/A" in the coordinate datum box "E13" on the Schedule B of Form 312. Then, the Bureau recommends that applicants use Box 43 of Form 312 to

³ Federal Communications Commission, MyIBFS, <http://licensing.fcc.gov/myibfs/>.

⁴ National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency, Products and Services, <https://www.nga.mil/ProductsServices/GeodesyandGeophysics/Pages/WorldGeodeticSystem.aspx> (last visited Nov. 20, 2017).

⁵ GISGeography, World Geodetic System (WGS84), <http://gisgeography.com/wgs84-world-geodetic-system/> (last visited Nov. 20, 2017).

provide the coordinates based on the WGS84 datum.⁶ Alternatively, applicants may provide the coordinates based on the WGS84 datum in an exhibit to the application.

Operators of temporary fixed earth stations such as Satellite News Gathering (SNG), must keep the station operator contact information updated by submitting a pleading in IBFS associated with its current authorization. The pleading must include the operator's mobile phone number, text message address, and email address.

Decommissioned or Inoperable Earth Stations. The Bureau also reminds licensees that they are required to notify the Commission when an earth station is no longer in service. In addition, licensees are required to seek license modification to operate an earth station at a different location than previously authorized. Failure to do so may unfairly deprive licensed satellite and terrestrial operators of the ability to operate in or near that location. Moreover, pursuant to Section 25.161(c) of the Commission's rules a station authorization shall be automatically terminated in whole or in part without further notice to the licensee upon the removal or modification of the facilities which renders the station not operational for more than 90 days, unless specific authority is requested.

For further information, please contact Paul Blais at (202) 418-7274 or Paul.Blais@fcc.gov.

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⁶ Box 43 of Form 312 (titled "Description") requires the applicant to summarize the nature of the application and the services to be provided.