



NEWS

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FCC ESTABLISHES NEW WIRELESS MEDICAL TELEMETRY SERVICE

The Federal Communications Commission today allocated new spectrum and established rules for a Wireless Medical Telemetry Service (WMTS) that allows potentially life-critical equipment to operate on an interference-protected basis.

Medical telemetry equipment is used in hospitals and health care facilities to transmit patient measurement data to a nearby receiver, which may permit greater patient mobility and increased comfort. Examples of medical telemetry equipment include heart, blood pressure and respiration monitors. The use of these devices can allow patients to move around early in their recovery while still being monitored for adverse symptoms. With such devices, one health care worker can monitor several patients remotely, which could reduce health care costs.

The frequency allocation for WMTS provides spectrum where the equipment can operate on a primary basis, increasing the reliability of this important service. The Commission allocated 14 MHz of spectrum for use by medical telemetry equipment in the 608-614 MHz, 1395-1400 MHz and 1429-1432 MHz bands. This allocation was based on a needs assessment conducted by the American Hospital Association (AHA).

The 608-614 MHz band, which corresponds to TV channel 37, had been reserved for radio astronomy uses. Today's action elevates medical telemetry to a co-primary status with radio astronomy in this band. The 1395-1400 MHz and 1429-1432 MHz bands are former government bands reallocated for non-government use by the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1993. Allocating two separate bands facilitates two-way communications and gives medical telemetry greater flexibility.

Despite existing constraints in these bands, this allocation is flexible enough to allow spectrum to be available for medical telemetry services in all locations while protecting radio astronomy and government operations currently operating in the allocated spectrum.

Medical telemetry equipment has been operating on a secondary basis either on vacant TV channels under Part 15 of the rules or on special channels reserved for low-power operation under Part 90 of the rules. It has been unprotected from interference from primary users. More intense use by existing primary services poses an increased risk of interference to medical telemetry devices. Today's action will increase the reliability of medical telemetry equipment.

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The Commission also established in the Order service rules under Part 95 to facilitate the migration of medical telemetry from the TV and land mobile bands in which it formerly operated. The WTMS will be designated one of the Citizen's Band Services and licensed by rule to eliminate the costs and delays that could occur from having to obtain individual operator's licenses. The medical telemetry equipment will be authorized under the certification procedure in Part 2 of the rules. One or more frequency coordinators will be named to maintain a database of all equipment used in conjunction with WMTS.

Action by the Commission June 8, 2000, by Report and Order (FCC No 00-211)
Chairman Kennard, Commissioners Ness, Furchtgott-Roth, Powell, and Tristani.

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