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This is an unofficial announcement of Commission action. Release of the full text of a Commission order constitutes official action. See MCI v. FCC, 515 F.2d 385 (D.C. Cir. 1974).

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## FCC ADOPTS INTEROPERABILITY STANDARD TO ENSURE EFFECTIVE PUBLIC SAFETY COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN DIFFERENT AGENCIES

Washington, DC - The Federal Communications Commission adopted a *Fourth Report and Order (Fourth R&O)* and *Fifth Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (Fifth Notice)* today, establishing a framework and issuing guidance that will allow public safety officials throughout the country to communicate with each other on designated *interoperability* channels in the 700 MHz band. This interoperability is essential when different public safety agencies respond to emergencies using otherwise-incompatible equipment. The Commission has long noted that the inability of different public safety agencies to efficiently communicate with one another was a concern for the public safety community. Establishing rules for the interoperability channels on the 700 MHz band will help prevent a physical disaster from becoming a communications disaster.

In the *Fourth R&O*, the Commission adopted Project 25 Phase I as the voice standard for communications on the 700 MHz band interoperability channels, which are channels specifically set aside to allow different public safety entities to communicate with one another. The Public Safety National Coordination Committee (NCC), a group chartered under the Federal Advisory Committee Act to advise the Commission on various issues related to the 700 MHz public safety band, recommended the adoption of the Project 25 Phase I standard. This standard will ensure that all radios with voice capability on the 700 MHz band will have the ability to communicate with each other on designated interoperability channels. The Commission also adopted the data standard incorporated in the Project 25 suite of standards for data communications on the 700 MHz band interoperability channels. These channels will allow public safety entities, such as police and fire departments, to send status messages or short E-mails to one another. By adopting the Project 25 Phase I standard, the Commission promotes the development of public safety equipment in the 700 MHz band and facilitates the effective use of that band by public safety entities.

In a related matter, in the *Fifth Notice*, the Commission seeks comment on the issue of migration to an efficiency standard of one voice path per 6.25 kHz on the General Use channels. Because the Commission believes that eventual adoption of such an efficiency standard would be in the public interest, it seeks further comment on the proper migration path to a 6.25 kHz efficiency standard. To encourage early use of the 700 MHz spectrum, the Commission

concluded in the *Fourth R&O* that (1) the earliest date the Commission would require 6.25 kHz technology would be December 31, 2005, (2) any 12.5 kHz-based systems constructed and placed in operation prior to December 31, 2005 will be able to continue to purchase and deploy 12.5 kHz equipment for system expansion or maintenance, and (3) any 12.5 kHz systems constructed and placed in operation prior to December 31, 2005 will not be required to cease operations and convert to 6.25 kHz technology prior to December 31, 2015, at the earliest.

The Commission also took other actions to facilitate interoperability in the 700 MHz band. Given the primary role the states have in responding to disaster situations, the Commission concluded that states should develop and administer plans for using the interoperability channels. In the event a state is unable to develop and administer an interoperability plan, the state may delegate this function to the 700 MHz band Regional Planning Committee (RPC). The Commission also established other technical and operational requirements for the 700 MHz spectrum.

Action by the Commission January 11, 2001, by Fourth Report and Order and Fifth Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (FCC 01-10). Chairman Kennard, Commissioners Ness, Furchtgott-Roth, Powell, and Tristani.

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