



NEWS

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FCC SELECTS DIGITAL RADIO TECHNOLOGY **Authorizes AM and FM Interim, Voluntary Digital Operation**

Washington, DC—Today in a First Report and Order, the FCC selected in-band, on-channel (IBOC) as the technology that will bring the benefits of digital audio broadcasting to AM and FM radio broadcasters efficiently and rapidly.

Also, the Commission announced notification procedures that will allow AM (daytime operations only) and FM stations on a voluntary basis to begin interim digital transmissions immediately using the IBOC systems developed by iBiquity Digital Corporation. During the interim IBOC operations, stations will broadcast the same main channel program material in both analog and digital modes.

After extensive tests, the National Radio Systems Committee endorsed the AM and FM IBOC systems developed by iBiquity, the sole remaining IBOC proponent. IBOC technology permits “hybrid” operations, the simultaneous transmission of analog and digital signals with a single AM and FM channel. The NRSC tests show that the iBiquity IBOC systems offer better audio quality, more robust signals, and the potential for new auxiliary services. According to system supporters, IBOC technology will provide near CD-quality sound on FM channels and FM quality on AM channels. Hybrid IBOC operations will have minimal impact on the present broadcast service.

The Commission announced its support for a public and open process to develop formal IBOC AM and FM standards. It also deferred consideration of IBOC licensing and service rule changes to a future Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking.

Radio broadcasters have been working toward a digital transition for more than a decade. Many broadcasters view digital operation not only as a technical opportunity, but as a competitive necessity. During the last few years, opinion in the radio broadcasting industry has consolidated strongly in favor of the IBOC approach. It is the only technology that will permit the rapid development and introduction of digital operations by radio broadcasters.

IBOC is spectrum efficient. It allows digital operations for all existing broadcasters with no new spectrum allocation requirements. The FCC noted that although it is no longer considering the proposed approach of requiring new spectrum in TV Channel 6, it is not today categorically foreclosing new spectrum options. In the event that new spectrum is identified for broadcast use, further consideration of both IBOC and non-IBOC out-of-band digital audio broadcasting approaches may be warranted.

Action by the Commission October 10, 2002, by First Report and Order (FCC 02-286). Chairman Powell, Commissioners Abernathy, Copps and Martin, with Commissioners Abernathy and Martin issuing a joint statement and Commissioner Martin issuing a separate statement.

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