



NEWS

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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).

For Immediate Release
October 25, 2005

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FCC Media Bureau Provides Relief for MVPDs and Broadcast Stations Affected by Hurricane Wilma

Washington, DC – In response to the devastation of Hurricane Wilma, the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) Media Bureau today released two *Public Notices* that provide relief to multichannel video programming distributors (MVPDs), television and radio broadcasters by allowing systems and stations to operate and restore communications as needed in areas impacted by Hurricane Wilma.

In light of the possible extensive damage to businesses and homes in Florida, and the essential need for broadcast services to the residents of the region, the FCC will provide additional assistance on an expedited basis to MVPDs and broadcast stations in order to get the systems and stations back on the air as quickly as possible.

The *Notices* give all requests for temporary facilities or modification to existing facilities expedited processing. The provisions for broadcasting emergency information are presumed to be in effect.

For television and radio stations, the *Notice* provides the following:

- **Special Temporary Authority (STA)** – Requests for STAs will be handled as expeditiously as possible.
- **Emergency Antennas** – The Commission rules permits FM and TV stations to erect temporary antennas without prior authority from the FCC. Also allows AM stations to use a horizontal or vertical wire or a non-directional vertical element of a directional antenna as an emergency antenna. The Commission waives the requirement that licensees notify the Commission within 24 hours of commencement of operations employing these antennas.
- **AM Nighttime Operations** – The Commission rules permits AM stations to use their full daytime facilities during nighttime hours to broadcast emergency information, provided all operation is conducted on a noncommercial basis.
- **Limited and Discontinued Operations** – The Commission waives current rule on notification time period and will accept notifications within 30 days and requests to remain silent within 60 days of the discontinuance of operations.

- **Tolling of Broadcast Station Construction Permit Deadlines** – Upon request, a permittee of a broadcast station located within a Federal Disaster Area will be provided an additional 90 days to complete construction.

For Cable Television Relay Service (CARS) stations, the *Notice* will begin expedited procedures for STAs for temporary facilities or modification to existing facilities for restoration of services. Operation under CARS STAs may commence immediately upon local coordination. Notification to the FCC shall be made within 48 hours and subject to ratification or modification by the FCC's Media Bureau. All requests for emergency operation must be coordinated with local frequency coordinators and interference protection to state and local emergency and public safety services must be made.

Also, compliance by MVPDs with many of the technical requirements of Part 76, Subpart K of the Rules will be waived for 90 days. (See the *Public Notice* for details – available online at www.fcc.gov). Bureau staff will provide expeditious service and coordination with MVPDs for Part 76 waiver requests or other assistance.

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