



NEWS FROM THE FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION

FCC Acts to Accelerate Submarine Cable Buildout & Security

Action Boost America's Leadership in AI and Next-Gen Technologies

WASHINGTON, August 7, 2025—The Federal Communications Commission today adopted new rules to unleash the buildout of secure submarine cable infrastructure. Submarine cable systems carry roughly 99% of global internet traffic and are key to further extending America's leadership in AI and next-generation technologies. The new rules streamline the submarine cable licensing process, give certainty to investors, and accelerate the timelines for building cables.

To address the reality that foreign adversaries like China pose greater threats to submarine cable infrastructure than ever, the new rules emphasize protecting submarine cable infrastructure from foreign adversary threats. Today's action follows the guidance of President Trump's America First Investment Policy Memorandum—streamlining investment into the United States, coupled with restrictions on foreign adversaries that seek to exploit U.S. vulnerabilities and threaten American national security.

While submarine cable systems carry the internet traffic that fuels today's economy, the oversight of submarine cables traces back to before the existence of the Commission itself. The U.S. has recognized the importance of submarine cables and their security since at least the Submarine Cable Act of 1888, and the Commission has been regulating them since Executive Order 10530 of 1954. But today, this infrastructure is more vital to global communications and economic activity than ever. There are 90 FCC-licensed cable systems and, as of December 2022, cable landing licensees reported more than 5.3 million Gbps of available capacity and 6.8 million Gbps in planned capacity for 2024.

Investment in submarine infrastructure is vital to American prosperity and economic dynamism. The new rules will ensure that the United States remains ready and able to deploy submarine cable infrastructure with increasing amounts of capacity to meet current and future internet and data demands so that the U.S. remains the unrivaled world leader in critical and emerging technologies and secures AI dominance. With global competition for submarine cables increasing, connections to the U.S. should continue to be at the forefront of the submarine cable marketplace.

The Report and Order portion of the item adopts a range of measures to protect submarine cables against foreign adversaries. The rules apply a presumption of denial for certain foreign adversary-controlled license applicants, limiting capacity leasing agreements to such entities, prohibiting the use of "covered" equipment, establishing cybersecurity and physical security requirements, and more—all while streamlining the Commission's license review procedures.

The Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking proposes and seeks comment on various additional measures to protect submarine cable security against foreign adversary equipment and services, while incentivizing the use of American submarine cable repair and maintenance ships and the use of trusted technology abroad. Notably, the FCC also seeks comment on a proposal to presumptively entirely exempt from Team Telecom review license applications that meet a high-level security standard.

Action by the Commission August 7, 2025 by Report and Order and Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (FCC 25-49). Chairman Carr, Commissioners Gomez and Trusty approving and issuing separate statements.

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