



NPSTC is a federation of organizations whose mission is to improve public safety communications and interoperability through collaborative leadership

Are You Operating in the T-Band? New Changes Affect You

The T-Band frequencies in 470-512 MHz are authorized for use in 11 metro markets by both public safety and industrial/business users. Public safety uses the T-Band to supplement existing UHF channels and to provide frequencies in metro areas with no spectrum. An unexpected provision of Public Law 112-96, enacted February 22, 2012 that created the Nationwide Public Safety Broadband Network (NPSBN) also requires the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to recover and auction the public safety T-Band spectrum.

The FCC must start to auction the spectrum no later than February 2021 and to relocate public safety from the band within 2 years after the auction concludes. There is a provision for cost reimbursement to agencies that have to relocate from the auction proceeds, but the legislation does not address a new spectrum home or commit to a specific reimbursement amount.

NPSTC’s Spectrum Management Committee stood up the T-Band Working Group at its June 2012 meeting to gather factual information and develop recommended actions and policy positions for the NPSTC Board regarding the impact to public safety this law creates.

Public Safety – Metrics				
	Licensees	Radios	Repeaters	Sites
Los Angeles	50	97,250	8,904	501
New York	243	95,649	3,736	728
Philadelphia	163	58,789	4,054	441
Boston	293	30,404	1,241	627
Chicago	113	29,893	503	209
San Francisco	53	19,265	908	229
Pittsburgh	31	9,598	149	87
DC	22	7,555	260	76
Dallas	20	4,883	212	50
Miami	15	2,067	63	26
Houston	6	277	9	8
Totals	1,009	355,630	20,039	2,982

Working Group Is Assessing Current Use and Identifying Potential Alternatives

From over 60 volunteers, the Working Group assembled Task Groups to do the following:

- Inventory and characterize public safety operations and equipment in the T-Band;
- Identify and characterize potential alternative spectrum options;
- Determine the viability of each option in each metro area; and
- Develop recommendations and actions for consideration by the NPSTC Board.

Public safety representatives are engaged in the Working Group, but not all T-Band markets are represented. The Working Group is seeking additional public safety representation to ensure all T-Band markets are represented.

The law does not address industrial/business users in the T-Band. The Working Group has been coordinating efforts with the Enterprise Wireless Alliance (EWA) and the Land Mobile Communications Council (LMCC). The FCC is concerned about this problem as well and plans to issue a Public Notice (PN) or Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM). The FCC cannot change the requirement, only Congress can amend the law.

As part of the initiative to assess the impact of the legislation, the T-Band Working Group developed a web-based questionnaire in August 2012. The questionnaire asked for information on the amount of equipment deployed, whether systems are conventional or trunked, whether a licensee had identified spectrum alternatives and/or funding, and whether the T-Band system was used to provide interoperability among multiple departments or jurisdictions in a region. Information has been collected from about 30 percent of the public safety licensees in the band, either through direct responses to the questionnaire or through partial data taken from other work being conducted in parallel by public safety T-Band working group members.

This Can Have a Serious Affect on Interoperability

Jurisdictions in many of those top 11 metro areas have built out extensive T-Band communications networks to meet their operational needs. In many cases, those networks are shared to provide regional interoperability among multiple jurisdictions and first responders. The T-band is a key spectrum resource and its potential reallocation for FCC auction and commercial use raises many concerns for both public safety and industrial/business licensees.

Agencies that use the band say that loss of the band will affect interoperable communications. The dominant user in the band is law enforcement, followed by fire departments, EMS and public works. Of the agencies that use the band, most use it to coordinate daily activities and in emergencies, and a high percentage use the T-band to communicate with other agencies.

For more information, visit www.npstc.org, click on Current Topics in the toolbar, and scroll down to T-Band. A comprehensive report of the analysis and recommendations will be issued.

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