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Courtesy [Paul Kirby, TR Daily](#)

FCC Grants Some Relief of 2011 Interim Narrowbanding Deadline

The FCC has adopted an order that grants public safety licensees some relief of the interim Jan. 1, 2011, milestones related to narrowbanding VHF and UHF systems operating on frequencies below 512 megahertz.

The order grants in part a petition filed last year by the National Public Safety Telecommunications Council that asked the Commission to stay the interim milestones. In the petition filed in September 2009, the public safety federation said that the interim deadlines "will hamper public safety interoperability during the final two years of the transition and will unnecessarily raise costs for public safety users." NPSTC stressed that it fully supports the final Jan. 1, 2013, narrowbanding transition deadline.

Under the FCC's rules, systems operating on the VHF (150-174 MHz) and UHF (421-512 MHz) frequencies must transition from 25 kilohertz to 12.5 kilohertz channels by Jan. 1, 2013. But beginning on Jan. 1, 2011, the FCC won't accept license applications for new or modified VHF and UHF systems that use the wider channels unless they are capable of transmitting on 12.5 KHz channels. Under the current rules, after that date companies would no longer have been permitted to manufacture or import single-mode or multimode transmitters that operate at an efficiency mode that exceeds 12.5 KHz. The order grants the relief from the 2011 deadline as it relates to equipment.

"This will make it easier for licensees to manage the transition of their existing systems to 12.5 kHz capability," the FCC said today. "In granting this relief, however, the Commission reaffirmed its commitment to timely completion of the migration to 12.5 kHz technology by the January 1, 2013 deadline."

"The transition to 12.5 kHz narrowband will result in more spectrum capacity for public safety agencies and commercial users in the VHF and UHF bands by increasing the efficiency of spectrum use," said Jamie Barnett, chief of the Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau. "But as today's order indicates, the Commission also appreciates the concerns that NPSTC and others have raised regarding the need for flexibility in the transition. We look forward to continuing to work with NPSTC and the public safety community to support each licensee's efforts to meet the 2013 compliance deadline." Ruth Milkman, chief of the FCC's Wireless Telecommunications Bureau, added, "Although the Commission took action to eliminate certain interim compliance deadlines related to the use of antiquated radios and other equipment in these lower bands, it is essential for all band-users to continue forward with this transition so that they can maximize the use of their narrowband communications. We envision that voice network capacity could eventually quadruple, enabling users, including public safety agencies in particular, to take full advantage of the capabilities of existing technologies to provide high-quality narrowband voice communications in these lower spectrum bands." In the order, the FCC also (1) extended until 2013 the deadline for requiring equipment to be 6.25 KHz-capable, and (2) denied the request that sought authorization for new or expanded 25 KHz operations after Jan. 1, 2011.

A number of state and local public safety representatives have also complained about a myriad of difficulties in complying with the final 2013 deadline, including funding shortfalls, the impact the transition will have on interoperability, and the chance of diminished coverage areas.