800MHz Rebanding Underway
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800 MHz Rebanding Begins

The process of moving existing public safety licensees in the 800 MHz band is under way. The 800 MHz land mobile band is undergoing extensive reconfiguration in an effort to resolve interference problems that have been plaguing public safety systems in the band. As a result, many existing licensees, primarily those in the General Category and NPSPAC bands, will be required to retune their systems to alternative 800 MHz channel assignments (see IMSA Journal Nov/Dec 2004). The costs are being paid by Nextel Communications, Inc. The process began in late June for licensees in regions of the country that were assigned to “Wave 1” in the rebanding plan that was approved by the Commission. Wave 1 consists of regions that are most populous and/or have experienced a high level of interference problems. It includes, for example, Northern California, Colorado, Oregon, the Northern Atlantic states, and much of Illinois, Indiana, and Wisconsin. Incumbent 800 MHz licensees in Wave 1 and elsewhere should take note of the following important dates:

- **June, 2005:** Start of voluntary negotiation period for Wave 1 non-NPSPAC (806 - 817 MHz and 851 – 862 MHz) licensees. During this time, licensees have the option – on a voluntary basis – of seeking to negotiate a retuning agreement with Nextel.
- **September 26, 2005:** End of voluntary negotiation period and start of mandatory negotiation period for Wave 1 licensees. Parties are obligated to negotiate in good faith during this period.
- **December 26, 2005:** End of mandatory negotiation period.
- **December 26, 2006:** Nextel is to have relocated all licensees other than itself and former General Category Channels 1-120 in the first twenty regions scheduled for rebanding and to have initiated retuning negotiations with all NPSPAC licensees in those regions.
- **December 26, 2007:** All systems subject to retuning (in all waves) are to have commenced reconfiguration.
- **June 26, 2008:** Band reconfiguration must be completed in all regions.

The Commission has placed a temporary freeze on the filing of new applications for all non-NPSPAC 800 MHz channels in regions that are assigned to Wave 1, as well as in all adjacent regions that are within 70 miles of the border of a Wave 1 region. The freeze will end on February 8, 2006 and applies only to applications for new systems and applications for modification that seek to change an 800 MHz frequency or expand the licensee’s existing coverage area. (Applications filed in order to implement 800 MHz band reconfiguration are not subject to the freeze). The purpose of the freeze is “to maintain a stable spectral landscape” during the rebanding process.

The FCC requires all public safety licensees to construct their authorized system within 12 months of the issuance of the license and to notify the Commission that the requirement has been met. If a licensee fails to construct the license terminates automatically as of the applicable construction/coverage deadline.

To notify the FCC that a construction/coverage requirement has been met, you must file FCC Form 601 (Main Form and Schedule K) no later than 15 days after the deadline. If you miss the notification filing window, but you met the construction requirement, you must still file the Notification and include a request for a waiver of the timely filed rule. The FCC sends a Construction Reminder Letter as a courtesy (similar to the renewal reminder letter) and it is mailed approximately 90 days before the deadline. If for some reason you do not receive a reminder letter, you are still required to file your notification in a timely manner.

You can also notify the FCC electronically through the Universal Licensing System (ULS). You may access electronic filing via ULS Online Filing at http://wireless.fcc.gov/uls. You will need an FCC Registration Number (FRN) and password to use the ULS system. If you do not have them you may register at the same site.

Automatic License Termination Scheduled for Fall 2005
In January the Wireless Telecommunications Bureau (WTB) of the FCC issued a Public Notice announcing that it had initiated the development of

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*Notify the FCC that your system has been constructed or lose your license!*

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an automated feature in ULS that will identify those licenses, locations or frequencies for which a timely notice of construction or request for an extension of the construction or coverage period has not been filed by the required deadline. This feature will both notify the licensee that its license, location or frequency has automatically terminated and will list the license, location or frequency on a weekly public notice as automatically terminated. It is expected that this feature will become effective late in September 2005.

ULS Build-Out Deadline License Search
The WTB also announced that it has enhanced its ULS License Search by adding a new feature that searches on build-out deadlines. The new search will help licensees locate licenses, locations, and frequencies where they have failed to submit a notice of construction in a timely manner or locate licenses with upcoming deadlines. Specifically, the Bureau has enhanced the License Search feature in ULS allowing the public to locate licenses that have construction or coverage deadlines within a specific date range, not to exceed six months. Once the date range is chosen, the search can be further customized by using a FCC Registration Number (FRN), licensee name, radio service, radio service group, or auction ID. The results will be displayed at the license level and will include any license, any location within a license, or any frequency within a license that meets the search criteria.

New FCC License Search Enhancements to ULS
The WTB has announced the completion of an extensive redesign of the ULS Application Search interface. You may access the new functionality and enhanced search capabilities via the “Search Applications” and “Search License” links on the ULS homepage http://wireless.fcc.gov/uls.

The new ULS Application Search provides enhanced system performance, more search options, better control of search criteria and compatibility with most major Web browsers and operating systems. The visual redesign also offers greater convenience of use with faster, easier navigation of displayed application information.

Some of the new features in ULS Application Search include the following:

- **Speed and Compatibility** - New technology dramatically increases the speed of searches and cuts the time needed to load search results. Many compatibility issues regarding browser and operating systems have also been eliminated.
- **Simplified Navigation of Data** - Easy access to the information in the database through new features such as navigation tabs for the application details.
- **New Basic and Advanced Application Search Pages** - ULS Application Search has been divided into a Basic and Advanced search. Commonly used search fields can be selected easily on the Basic Search page, eliminating the need to read through a list of all search fields. You can specify more detailed search criteria by using the Advanced Search.
- **Search Results Page** - Displays high-level information about each application, returned in a search results set such as file number, applicant name, application status, radio service, and application purpose.
- **No Limit on Search Results** - There is no longer a limit to the number of records returned by Application Search. Previously this limit was set at 3,000.
- **Application Search Details** - New navigation tabs across the top of the detail provide you with instant access to general, administrative, and service-specific information, antenna and transmitter locations, frequencies, paths, and other data. The detail pages also provide a number of custom features for finding and organizing information:
  - Link to the details of a license from Application Search;
  - View a PDF reference copy of letters sent to the applicant (renewal reminders, construction reminders, returns, etc.);
  - Display detailed frequency data in different views;
  - Quickly access all frequencies associated with a given location, or click a menu to “filter” frequencies by locations; and
  - Display all paths for an application, or “jump” to specific paths, using navigation tools at the top and bottom of the Paths detail.
- **Improved Geographic Search** - Find a location by searching around a geographic center point. Specify the point by state and county; by location street address, city, state, or zip code combinations; or by latitude and longitude. Combine an advanced search or specialized search with a geographic search to display results geographically. You also can refine a geographic search by frequency. The “Geographic Search” function also includes a point radius search around the location, or latitude and longitude search.
- **Printable Page** - A new “Printable Page” button appears at the top of every search results page and detail, allowing you to print the contents of the page pre-formatted for most common printers.
- **Reference Copy** - A new “Reference Copy” button appears at the top of every application detail, allowing you to print an unofficial copy of the application.
- **Redesigned Query Download** - Click the new “Query Download” button at the top of any search results page, enter your e-mail address, and ULS will send the results of your search to you by e-mail in a text (*.txt) file. Import this file into your favorite spreadsheet application.
- **Map Application** - A new “Map Application” button appears at the top of any search results page, allowing you to generate an interactive geographical map of applications found in your search.

Frequency research and keeping track of license data has come a long way since I first started as a volunteer frequency coordinator for IMSA!