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FCC REVISES RULES FOR CALCULATING AUDIENCE UNDER NATIONAL TELEVISION OWNERSHIP RULE

The FCC today revised its national TV ownership rule to clarify that no market will be counted more than once when calculating whether a group station owner complies with the rule's 35% aggregate national audience reach limit.

In a Report and Order decided today, the Commission said that owners of television stations that have an attributable interest in another TV station in the same market, or that operate a satellite station in the same market, would not have to include those additional same-market outlets in calculating its 35% national aggregate television audience reach cap.

The FCC said that the public interest would not be served by double-counting the audience of a market when calculating an entity's national audience reach. The Commission clarified, however, that a station owner with an attributable interest in a station in a separate market (including time-brokered LMAs and satellite stations) would have to count that additional audience as part of its national aggregate audience.

It said the clarifications were being made in conjunction with its decisions in two other Orders adopted today to revise its local broadcast ownership rules and its television attribution rules. It said that the changes would not be expected to cause any existing group television station owner to exceed the 35% national aggregate reach cap.

Pursuant to the national TV ownership rule, a station's audience reach is defined as consisting of the total number of television households within the television market for that station. UHF stations are attributed with 50% of the audience within the market (the UHF Discount).

The Commission said it would begin utilizing the Designated Market Areas (DMAs) compiled by A.C. Nielsen, a commercial ratings service, for national and local audience figures. Previously the markets were defined as the Area of Dominant Influence (ADI) established by Arbitron, another commercial audience-rating service. It said that DMAs are now used for cable must-carry and retransmission consent determinations, and that Arbitron no longer updates its county-by-county market definitions.

Action by the Commission August 5, 1999, Report and Order (FCC 99-208), Chairman Kennard, Commissioners Ness, Furchtgott-Roth, Powell and Tristani, with Commissioners Ness and Tristani issuing separate statements

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