



NEWS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
December 30, 2010

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FCC CONSIDERS EXPANDING ROLE OF TRAVELERS INFORMATION STATIONS TO BROADCAST ADDITIONAL PUBLIC SAFETY AND OTHER INFORMATION TO PUBLIC

Washington, D.C. – The Federal Communications Commission has adopted an Order and Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) that seeks public comment on whether the role of travelers information stations (TIS) should be expanded beyond sharing noncommercial information of interest to travelers, including broadcast of Amber alerts, public health warnings, terror threat levels, weather reports, and other helpful information.

TIS stations serve as a local AM radio communications channel that is diverse and reliable particularly for motorists seeking information and updates on traffic congestion, accidents and weather reports. Expansion of TIS' role to provide travelers with other types of emergency information and alerts may benefit the public interest not only through redundancy, but particularly during power blackouts when traditional means of communications may be inoperable. A significant number of these stations throughout the country operate on solar-power and/or have battery back-up power systems and would enable them to continue to provide broadcast information to travelers regionally during significant power outages.

The Order and NPRM comes as a direct result from petitions filed by the Highway Information Systems, Inc. (HIS), the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO), and the American Association of Information Radio Operators (AAIRO) requesting that the FCC expand the role of TIS nationwide by allowing regional broadcasts of more types of potential life-saving emergency information to travelers.

In the interest of promoting policies to enhance the reliability and effectiveness of emergency alerts and warnings reaching the public over diverse communications platforms, the FCC grants the petitions by HIS and AASHTO requesting a rulemaking to expand the role of TIS. However, the FCC denies AAIRO's request for a declaratory ruling on the FCC's rules for TIS to broadcast messages concerning the safety of life and protection of property at the discretion of authorized government agencies because their interpretation of the rule would constitute a change in policy requiring a notice and comment rulemaking. The issues raised by AAIRO have been included in the FCC's NPRM and are open to public comment.

Generally, the Order and NPRM seeks public comment on whether the FCC should significantly expand the scope of permitted communications and alerts by local governments on TIS stations and what limits if, in any, should be placed on those noncommercial messages. The FCC is also seeking comment on whether TIS power limits should be modified to reach a larger listening audience in their coverage area and to what extent TIS broadcast locations should be expanded without resulting in harmful interference to the communications of other licensed broadcasters.

The deadline for public comments is 30 days after publication in the Federal Register and 45 days after publication in the Federal Register for reply comments.

For additional information about the Order and NPRM please contact Eric Ehrenreich, Policy and Licensing Division, FCC's Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau, at 202-418-1726 or via email: eric.ehrenreich@fcc.gov.

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