Gentlemen:

In regard to the question as to whether AM stations should be allowed to broadcast in digital MA-3 mode, I’m very much in favor of it, assuming the station wants to go to the expense to do so. At this point in time it should be a voluntary change, not a mandatory change.

There are many positives to this idea, and not much downside that I can see, other than we would be adopting a proprietary system that belongs to a for-profit company, rather than using an open source digital broadcasting such as DRM. But that train left the station some time ago when the Commission adopted the IBOC standard. The other down side is the cost of conversion. Many small stations may not be able to afford it, but at least, they would have the opportunity to investigate further.

The plus side is there are already a significant number of receivers that could decode the signal. It might even attract new listeners to the AM band. Many AM stations already have FM translators (me included). I have noted that most listenership has migrated to the superior sounding FM signal, rather than the originating AM signal. In conversations with fellow broadcasters, that seems to be a trend. It is unlikely that we would lose many listeners by making such a change.

For AM stations that have already adopted IBOC equipment, switching to digital only would be very cost effective and have the side benefit of actually reducing interference to adjacent channels. There is nothing “On Channel” about the current hybrid mode. There is already enough interference on the AM band without intentionally adding to the noise pollution. This would help, since the adjacent channel sidebands would be eliminated.

It should also be pointed out that this would be totally reversible, by simply shutting off the digital exciter and returning to a conventional analog mode. That feature might be very helpful in the event of a national or local disaster where getting information to the public is more important than high fidelity.

In conclusion, I hope the Commission will approve this move.

Sincerely,

Chuck Conrad  
Owner & General Manager  
KDOK & KZQX Radio