



International Association of Fire Chiefs

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September 21, 2020

The Honorable Ajit Pai
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Chairman Pai:

On behalf of the approximately 12,000 members of the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC), I ask that you remove, from the September 30 Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) meeting agenda, the proposed Sixth Report and Order and Seventh Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (WP Docket No. 07-100) regarding public safety spectrum in the 4.9 GHz (4940-4990 MHz) band. The public safety communications operations on the 4.9 GHz band provide critical mission-support functions for local public safety agencies and will serve as an important network for future public safety technologies. We ask that the FCC reconsider the proposed Report and Order and work with the national public safety organizations to develop a proposal that protects the operations of incumbent public safety agencies.

Nearly twenty years ago, the FCC allocated 50 MHz of spectrum in the 4.9 GHz band for use by public safety. This spectrum is used mostly for fixed point-to-point and secure Wi-Fi operations. For example, public safety agencies use the 4.9 GHz spectrum to host local broadband intranet networks, video camera networks, bomb disposal robot operations, and airborne public safety video operations. These are critical operations for local public safety agencies.

The IAFC has concerns about the FCC's proposal to license the 4.9 GHz to individual states and territories. Our greatest concern is that the states do not have expertise in auctioning and sub-licensing spectrum. We are concerned that new users on the network may interfere with the operations of existing incumbent public safety agencies.

We also are concerned that the licenses of the existing public safety users on the 4.9 GHz band may not be protected. Local public safety agencies have spent millions of dollars investing in networks on the 4.9 GHz band. We ask that the FCC's Order specifically protect the licenses of the incumbent licensees or that the states pay to transfer the incumbent licensees to other spectrum and replace their equipment.

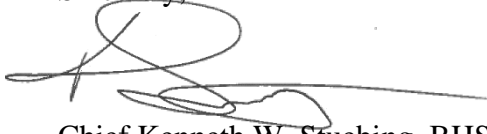
The IAFC also is concerned about how the state licensing scheme would affect cross-state interoperable communications. In many metropolitan areas, local public safety networks rely on

regional networks that can cross-state lines. It is important that states consider these interstate public safety communications networks as they consider plans to sub-license the 4.9 GHz band.

Finally, the IAFC respectfully questions the FCC's assertion that the 4.9 GHz band is under-utilized. With the geographical licensing scheme, it can be hard to determine exactly how many users are specifically operating under a 4.9 GHz license. Considering that major cities including New York City and Los Angeles have licenses on the 4.9 GHz band along with states such as Oregon and Tennessee, it seems that there may be more users on this band than are currently being counted. Also, the number of users on the 4.9 GHz band may be increasing. In its 2018 filing, the National Public Safety Telecommunications Council reported that the number of fixed point-to-point sites on the 4.9 GHz band increased by 31% between 2015 and 2018.¹ The IAFC recommends that the FCC consider accounting for the number of actual users on the 4.9 GHz band before potentially diverting its use away from public safety operations.

The IAFC thanks you for your continued support for public safety, especially in ensuring the accurate location of 9-1-1 callers using mobile devices and your support for allowing public safety users to retain their communications networks on the T-Band (470 MHz - 512 MHz). We look forward to working with you to develop a plan so that the 4.9 GHz band continues to be effectively administered in support of critical public safety operations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K. Stuebing', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Chief Kenneth W. Stuebing, BHSc, CCP(f)
First Vice President

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¹ Comments of the National Public Safety Telecommunications Council to WP Docket 07-100, July 6, 2018, p. 28.