

Before the
FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
Washington, D.C. 20554

In the Matter of)
)
Amendment of the Commission's Rules to)
Allocate for Public Safety Use a Portion of) RM-9274
the 138-144 MHz Band Being Reallocated) WT Docket 96-86
by the Federal Government Pursuant to the)
Balanced Budget Act of 1997)

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FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

To: The Commission

COMMENTS OF
THE COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES

The County of Los Angeles ("the County") hereby submits the following comments in support of the above-captioned Petition for Further Rulemaking to Allocate Spectrum in the 138-144 MHz Band for Public Safety, filed on April 9, 1998, by the National Public Safety Telecommunications Council ("NPSTC").

The County has a population of over 9 million citizens in an area of about 4,000 square miles that includes such varied terrain as the densely populated Los Angeles Basin, mountain peaks and valleys, islands, and deserts. The County's public safety agencies, including the Sheriff's Department, Fire Department, and Emergency Medical Services Agency, are heavily dependent upon highly sophisticated communications systems. The County operates extensive wide-area land mobile radio systems for its operations which utilize frequencies in the UHF, VHF, and 800 MHz bands.

The NPSTC Petition requests that the Commission refrain from auctioning 3 MHz in the 138-144 MHz band for commercial purposes and instead allocate the spectrum for

public safety use. This spectrum, which is currently used primarily by the Defense Department, is being reallocated by the Federal Government for non-Federal use pursuant to the Balanced Budget Act of 1997. However, rather than offer this spectrum for auction, the County urges the Commission to take whatever steps necessary to permit the 138-144 MHz frequencies to be allocated for public safety use. Such an allocation would help fulfill a key recommendation of the Public Safety Wireless Advisory Committee (“PSWAC”).¹

PSWAC set forth three reallocation recommendations. The first stated that 2.5 MHz should be allocated immediately for an interoperability band between 138 MHz and 512 MHz. The second recommendation stated that 25 MHz should be allocated for use by public safety officials in the “short term,” and suggested the 746-806 MHz band (TV channels 60-69) for that allocation. The third and final recommendation suggested that an additional 70 MHz be allocated for public safety use by the year 2010.

In partial response to the recommendations made by PSWAC, the Commission has allocated 24 MHz in the 746-806 band for public safety. While the 24 MHz allocation in 764-776/794-806 MHz may be beneficial at a future date, much of the band will be unusable until at least 2006 due to the continued use of channels 60-69 by incumbent broadcast stations. In Los Angeles, the Commission has also allotted several digital television stations in channels 60-69, with the result that, of the four television channels reallocated for public safety, only one (69) is unoccupied. Furthermore, use of that channel may also be limited due to the potential for over-water interference from a co-

¹ County personnel played key roles in PSWAC and its subcommittees, and the Los Angeles County Fire Chief served on the PSWAC Steering Committee.

channel television station in San Diego. This situation further heightens the need for additional spectrum in the 138-144 MHz band for public safety use.

One of the principal benefits of an allocation in the 138-144 MHz band is that it could address the PSWAC recommendation for 2.5 MHz of interoperability spectrum. As PSWAC described in detail, an interoperability band is an important element of any effort to resolve the serious interoperability problems facing local, state, and federal public safety agencies.

Additional spectrum in the 138-144 MHz band could also be used to relieve extreme spectrum congestion in the nearby 150-170 MHz band. The Los Angeles Fire Department uses this band, as do many other public safety agencies throughout Southern California. For many years, it has been nearly impossible to add new assignments in the 150-170 MHz without creating a dangerous potential for interference with existing public safety licensees. Nor are other options available, due to similar congestion in the 450-512 MHz and 800 MHz bands. As noted above, the newly allocated spectrum at 764-776/794-806 MHz will also be largely unavailable until the end of the digital television transition. Even then, VHF will remain an important band for many public safety agencies due to the substantial difference in cost and propagation characteristics between VHF and 800 MHz.

CONCLUSION

Therefore, for the reasons discussed above and in the NPSTC Petition, the County urges the Commission to take appropriate action to facilitate allocation of spectrum in the 138-144 MHz band for public safety.

Respectfully submitted,

COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES

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