

Before
FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
Washington, D.C. 20554

In the Matter of

Establishment of Public Service Radio Pool in the Private Mobile Frequencies Below 800 MHz

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) RM-9405
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COMMENTS OF JAMES P. PHINNEY
MANAGER OF MC COOK PUBLIC POWER DISTRICT

Pursuant to Section 1.405 of the FCC's Rules, McCook Public Power District hereby submits its Comments in support of the above-referenced "Petition for Rulemaking" filed on August 14, 1998, by UTC, The Telecommunications Association (UTC), the American Petroleum Institute (API), and the Association of American Railroads (AAR).

Introduction

McCook Public Power District is a non-profit electric utility in southwest Nebraska. McCook Public Power District operates some 20 vehicles in a four county service area in rural Nebraska. All communications with the service vehicles is by VHF (153 MHz band) two-way radios. The area is remote and we are required to operate in all kinds of weather at all times of the day. Many of our customers are farmers, often far from highways and rely heavily on us to provide reliable service for their farming operations. We also supply service for two large transcontinental oil pipeline pumping stations and an FAA radar installation.

Severe weather is not uncommon in our area. We experience tornadoes, high wind, and snow and ice storms on a yearly basis. On occasion, we have had 30 extra service vehicles from other areas helping restore power. Obviously, the two-way radios are vital to both our normal and emergency operations.

Comments

1. The two-way radios are the only reliable way to communicate with service crews in the field. The radios provide routine dispatching communications as well as vital coordination between crews during high voltage switching operations. The electric utility business is a dangerous profession and the radios are the only link a crew has in the event of an electrical or other accident. Communications between crews and the dispatcher are vital to maintain electric service to our customers, including the oil pipeline companies and the FAA radar installation.

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2. We could not tolerate more users on the radio channels. As it is, the frequencies are shared with other utilities and in times of emergency or high stress, we all get busy at the same time. Adding other users, especially non-utility traffic to the spectrum will cause serious delays in passing traffic. We already experience delays in communications, caused by interference from other users. We have had delays of half an hour because the crews have had to drive to a telephone to make contact with the dispatcher.

3. Competitive frequency coordination will allow users with the most money and therefore with the highest power and solid radio coverage of the area, to gain domination over the region. The only way to maintain "open channels of communications" for both the safety of our personnel and customers and the continued reliable electrical service is to allocate frequencies exclusively for utility use. Competitive frequency coordination is not a viable replacement for solid engineering and allocation according to geographical requirements.

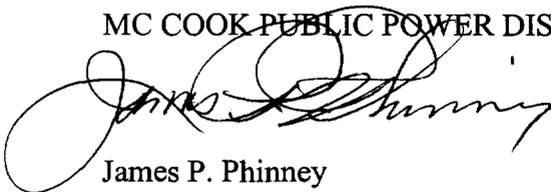
4. We note that the Petition for Rulemaking does include a reasonable solution, which we support in an effort to maintain the critical infrastructure of radio communications that the utility industry relies upon so heavily. Public service, whether it is to farmer's irrigation systems or transcontinental pipelines, must not be degraded by the unwise use of radio spectrum.

Conclusion

In conclusion, McCook Public Power District supports the Petition for Rulemaking, and urges the FCC to promptly issue a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking looking toward the creation of a Public Service Radio Service as described in the Petition.

Respectfully submitted,

MC COOK PUBLIC POWER DISTRICT



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December 16, 1998

CERTIFICATION OF SERVICE

I hereby certify that a copy of the foregoing "Comments of James P. Phinney" was sent by first-class mail, postage prepaid, to the following persons this 17th day of December, 1998.

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