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FCC Mail Room

Wireless Telecommunications Bureau and Office of Engineering and Technology Clarify Use of Revised Wireless Phone Hearing Aid Compatibility Standard

In the *Hearing Aid Compatibility Report and Order*,¹ the Commission required that digital wireless phones be capable of operating effectively with hearing aids based on certain performance measurement standards contained in the 2001 version of ANSI C63.19, "*American National Standard for Methods of Measurement of Compatibility between Wireless Communication Devices and Hearing Aids, ANSI C63.19-2001*."² Pursuant to the *Hearing Aid Compatibility Report and Order*, the Commission encouraged the relevant stakeholders to review the standard periodically to determine whether improvements to the standard are warranted.³ The Accredited Standards Committee on Electromagnetic Compatibility, C63 (ASC C63) has been working to revise C63.19-2001 and in a public notice issued on April 25, 2005, the Commission recognized a draft version of the standard and stated that applications for certification of wireless devices may rely on either the 2001 or 2005 version of ANSI 63.19.⁴

ASC C63 recently adopted and released version 3.12 of the hearing aid compatibility standard, *American National Standard for Methods of Measurement of Compatibility between Wireless Communication Devices and Hearing Aids* (ANSI C63.19-2006). On April 12, 2006, ASC C63 filed a petition requesting the Commission to immediately adopt version 3.12 of the C63.19 standard for measuring and rating wireless devices' compatibility with hearing aids.⁵ The Alliance for Telecommunications Industry Solutions (ATIS), on behalf of its Incubator Solutions Program #4 (AISP.4-HAC) members also submitted a similar request.⁶

¹ Section 68.4(a) of the Commission's Rules Governing Hearing Aid Compatibility, *Report and Order*, WT Docket No. 01-309, 18 FCC Rcd 16753 (2003); *erratum*, 18 FCC Rcd 18047 (2003).

² See *id.* at 16776-79 ¶¶ 55-64.

³ See *Hearing Aid Compatibility Report and Order*, 18 FCC Rcd at 16779 ¶ 63.

⁴ See *Public Notice*, DA 05-1134 (April 25, 2005).

⁵ See ASC C63 petition, WT Docket No. 01-309 (filed April 12, 2006) (ANSI Petition). The revised standard is available for purchase from the Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineers (IEEE) at <http://shop.ieee.org/ieeestore/>.

⁶ See *Ex Parte* submission of ATIS, WT Docket No. 01-309 (filed Mar. 27, 2006) (ATIS Notice).

The Commission delegated to the Wireless Telecommunications Bureau (WTB), in coordination with the Office of Engineering and Technology (OET), the authority to approve future versions of the hearing aid compatibility standard. WTB and OET have reviewed the standard and determined that the various clarifications and improvements in the standard will advance the Commission's objective of ensuring hearing aid compatibility for digital wireless phones. Accordingly, consistent with 47 C.F.R. §§ 0.241(b) and 2.947(a), OET will accept applications for certification of equipment tested and rated under the revised standard "American National Standard for Methods of Measurement of Compatibility between Wireless Communication Devices and Hearing Aids, ANSI C63.19-2006" for all wireless phone hearing aid compatibility testing and rating, as specified in Section 20.19 of the rules, effective immediately.

Applicants for certification may rely on only one version of the ANSI C63.19 standard, 2001, 2005 or 2006, and must identify which version they are using for compatibility testing and for rating wireless phones, consistent with 47 C.F.R. § 2.947 (b). Allowing the use of the new measurement and rating procedures now should assist manufacturers and carriers in providing handset models that comply with the hearing aid compatibility requirements of § 20.19(b).

We understand that ANSI C63 is currently developing an amendment to the standard that is targeted for completion later this year and will provide further improvements, particularly in the area of compatibility testing for magnetic coupling of wireless phones with hearing aids' T-coils. We encourage the participants to complete this work as expeditiously as possible.

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