

## D Block and the Role of Satellites

- Satellites continue to demonstrate their importance in serving hard to reach geographic areas or underserved areas in the United States for basic and emergency communications.
- This has been demonstrated time and time again during emergency situations where the terrestrial infrastructure is either not available or has been destroyed.
- As part of the 700 MHz proceeding, the FCC recognized the importance of satellite communications by imposing a satellite component requirement on the D block licensee for public safety communications.
- Despite the FCC's best efforts, at the recently concluded 700 MHz auction, the D block was not awarded. Commentators have suggested that the stringent build-out requirements in terms of time and scale required by the FCC were a factor in this result.
- As the FCC rethinks whether a new approach should be explored in light of the D block auction experience, it may well be appropriate to provide more flexibility in the build-out requirements. The dual mode MSS/terrestrial requirement that the FCC has already incorporated in its rules could offer a means of providing additional flexibility, while at the same time ensuring the effective coverage so essential to public safety operations. For example:
  - The D block licensee's obligation to meet its build-out requirements could be delayed or relaxed, to the extent it ensured that dual-mode MSS/terrestrial devices are available in areas which have not been built out with a terrestrial network, but are covered by an MSS footprint.
  - Alternatively, the FCC could retain its terrestrial build out requirement, but could give flexibility towards meeting the build-out requirement based on the availability of dual mode (700 MHz terrestrial and MSS) handsets.
  - This flexibility could be based on a showing by the D Block licensee of the robustness of the satellite offering. The flexibility could be scaled based on the substitutability of the satellite offering for the terrestrial services used by public safety. Factors in assessing such an offering might include:
    - The capabilities of the satellite component (e.g., voice, data, video, interoperability, priority/preemption).
    - The availability of data dual mode devices, in addition to voice handheld dual mode devices.
    - Geographic coverage.