

**Before the
Federal Communications Commission
Washington, D.C. 20554**

In the Matter of)
)
Comprehensive Review of Licensing and) IB Docket No. 12-267
Operating Rules for Satellite Services)
)

**COMMENTS OF THE
NATIONAL CABLE & TELECOMMUNICATIONS ASSOCIATION**

The National Cable & Telecommunications Association (“NCTA”)^{1/} hereby submits these comments in response to the Notice of Proposed Rulemaking issued by the Federal Communications Commission (“Commission” or “FCC”) seeking comment on proposals to update and streamline Part 25 of the FCC’s rules governing the licensing and operation of space stations and earth stations.^{2/} In particular, NCTA addresses the Commission’s proposals to revise Section 25.281 of its rules regarding the Automatic Transmitter Identification System (“ATIS”) signal, which requires the insertion of transmitter identification information into satellite analog video uplink signals to facilitate the resolution of satellite interference problems.^{3/}

NCTA program network members distribute the vast majority of their programming to cable operators via satellite transmissions. They devote substantial resources to ensure the quality and integrity of these satellite signals and to mitigate interference, which has become an

^{1/} NCTA is the principal trade association for the U.S. cable industry, representing cable operators serving more than 90 percent of the nation’s cable television households and more than 200 cable program networks. The cable industry is the nation’s largest provider of broadband service after investing over \$185 billion since 1996 to build two-way interactive networks with fiber optic technology. Cable companies also provide state-of-the-art competitive voice service to more than 23 million customers.

^{2/} See *Comprehensive Review of Licensing and Operating Rules for Satellite Services*, Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, IB Docket No. 12-267, FCC 12-117 (rel. Sept. 28, 2012) (“*NPRM*”).

^{3/} See *id.* ¶ 149.

increasingly recurrent problem as the number of satellite transmit facilities has grown rapidly. NCTA commends the Commission for initiating this proceeding and for seeking to update its satellite rules to reflect changes in technology and industry practice. It is especially important to address the ATIS requirements, which need to be modified to reflect the fact that satellite transmissions largely have migrated from analog to digital technology. The Commission, however, should recognize that with respect to ATIS, global industry efforts are already underway to adopt standards for digital carrier identification. Pending completion of these efforts, the Commission should defer any action now on new ATIS rules. At the appropriate time, should the Commission decide to update its ATIS requirements to conform to standards adopted globally, it should provide satellite uplink operators with a sufficient phase-in period to implement the new requirements.

I. INDUSTRY EFFORTS ARE UNDERWAY TO ADDRESS CARRIER IDENTIFICATION.

Many program networks have actively engaged with the Satellite Interference Reduction Group (“SIRG”), a global industry organization whose mission is to combat and mitigate radio frequency interference to satellite transmissions.^{4/} SIRG has completed a specification for a carrier identification (“Carrier ID”) system, which would be on every carrier transmitted to satellites. It would include identifying information such as the latitude and longitude of the transmitting station, the operator name, and the contact’s telephone number, among others.^{5/} The

^{4/} See Satellite Interference Reduction Group, Welcome to the Satellite IRG Website, <http://www.suirg.org/> (last visited Jan. 13, 2013).

^{5/} See Satellite Interference Reduction Group, Accomplishments, <http://www.suirg.org/p.asp?id=52> (last visited Jan. 13, 2013); see also *NPRM* ¶ 151.

SIRG has suggested that all new equipment that transmits a satellite carrier should have Carrier ID capability by January 1, 2015.^{6/}

Carrier ID was successfully deployed and utilized on an industry-wide basis by satellite uplink operators involved with distribution of the London 2012 Olympics.^{7/} Two versions of Carrier ID were used at the time, which are similar to the options proposed by the Commission in the *NPRM* – Network Identification Table (“NIT”), which includes transmission of identification information in the MPEG transport stream, and a new spread spectrum modulation technology developed by Comtech.^{8/} Since the 2012 Olympics, satellite and uplink operators have been encouraging the use of Carrier ID at three upcoming events on three different continents – the 2014 World Cup, the 2014 Winter Olympics, and the 2014 Commonwealth Games.^{9/}

In addition to the foregoing efforts, the Digital Video Broadcasting Project (“DVB”), an industry-led consortium of broadcasters, manufacturers, network operators, software developers, regulatory bodies, content owners and others in over 35 countries committed to designing global

^{6/} See Comtech EF Data, *Carrier ID Using MetaCarrier Technology*, at 2 (Aug. 2011), available at http://www.comtechefdata.com/files/articles_papers/WP-Carrier-ID-Using-MetaCarrier.pdf. NCTA members have also participated in the Radio Frequency Interference – End Users Initiative (“RFI-EUI”), a voluntary group comprised of media companies, equipment manufacturers, industry groups, satellite system operators and satellite service providers from around the world, established to work together “to identify, mitigate and prevent – ultimately to stop – satellite interference.” See Radio Frequency Interference – End Users Initiative, Welcome to the RFI-EUI Website, <http://www.rfi-eui.org/> (last visited Jan. 13, 2013). Formed in 2011, RFI-EUI has been working diligently to promote the adoption of Carrier ID by key players in the industry and all uplinkers in the world. See Radio Frequency Interference – End Users Initiative, Carrier ID, <http://www.rfi-eui.org/p.asp?id=18> (last visited Jan. 13, 2013).

^{7/} See Patricia Constantino, *Carrier ID Wins a Gold Medal at the 2012 Summer Olympics*, SATCOM FRONTIER (Dec. 20, 2012), available at <http://www.intelsatgeneral.com/blog/carrier-id-wins-gold-medal-2012-summer-olympics> (noting that “it was implemented seamlessly and with no issues”).

^{8/} See *id.*; see also Satellite Interference Reduction Group, *Satellite Interference Reduction Group are Dealing with . . . Satellite Interference! . . . the Carrier ID Process*, at 5 (Oct. 24, 2011), available at <http://www.nabanet.com/wbuarea/library/docs/isog/presentations/2011B/1.3.3%20MColeman.pdf>.

^{9/} See Anne Wainscott Sarget, *Carrier ID Comes into Its Own*, SATELLITE TODAY (Dec. 2, 2012), available at http://www.satellitetoday.com/via/features/Carrier-ID-Comes-into-Its-Own_40028_p4.html.

standards for the delivery of digital television and data services,^{10/} currently is evaluating the Carrier ID system developed by Comtech.^{11/} In the wake of the success of Carrier ID during the 2012 Olympics, many countries and operators, as well as the DVB, are expected to adopt the Comtech system in the near future.^{12/}

II. THE COMMISSION SHOULD REFRAIN FROM REVISING ITS ATIS REQUIREMENTS UNTIL INTERNATIONAL EFFORTS TO ADDRESS SATELLITE UPLINK INTERFERENCE ARE MORE DEVELOPED.

NCTA applauds the Commission for taking the initial steps “to prescribe appropriate methods of ATIS message transmission for stations transmitting broadband video with digital techniques.”^{13/} As noted by the Commission, the existing ATIS rules were adopted more than 20 years ago in 1990 when operators transmitted broadband video signals with analog modulation techniques.^{14/} Today, broadband video signals are increasingly being transmitted as encoded and compressed digital data streams.^{15/}

Moreover, as the number and types of satellite uplink facilities and systems have multiplied, radio frequency interference events have become increasingly prevalent. Interference is still being caused by improper or poorly installed equipment as well as by operator errors.^{16/}

^{10/} DVB, What is DVB?, <http://www.dvb.org/> (last visited Jan. 13, 2013).

^{11/} See Patricia Constantino, *Carrier ID Wins a Gold Medal at the 2012 Summer Olympics*, SATCOM FRONTIER (Dec. 20, 2012), available at <http://www.intelsatgeneral.com/blog/carrier-id-wins-gold-medal-2012-summer-olympics> (reporting that “[t]he successful demonstration of the Comtech Carrier ID technology was very important because in February 2013, it is up for approval by an internationally recognized body, the Digital Video Broadcasting Project (DVB), as the industry standard”).

^{12/} See Anne Wainscott Sarget, *Carrier ID Comes into Its Own*, SATELLITE TODAY (Dec. 2, 2012), available at http://www.satellitetoday.com/via/features/Carrier-ID-Comes-into-Its-Own_40028_p4.html.

^{13/} *NPRM* ¶ 150.

^{14/} See *An Automatic Transmitter Identification System for Radio Transmitting Equipment*, First Report and Order, 5 FCC Rcd 3256 (1990); *NPRM* ¶ 150.

^{15/} See *NPRM* ¶ 150.

^{16/} See Philip Hunter, *Carrier ID for Satellite for 2012 Olympics*, BROADCAST ENGINEERING (Oct. 3, 2012), available at <http://broadcastengineering.com/news/carrier-id-satellites-2012-olympics>.

Because of the continuing problems with satellite interference, Commission action may eventually be appropriate to mandate updated ATIS requirements.

The Commission, however, should refrain from revising its rules at this time. As the Commission recognizes, and as noted above, there are multiple methods by which ATIS information could be included in digitally modulated uplinks, and efforts are well under way by industry organizations around the world to arrive at a common solution.^{17/} A short deferral by the FCC while these international industry initiatives run their course will allow the Commission to conform its requirements and processes to match global standards for addressing satellite uplink interference. If the Commission acts prematurely, it could end up adopting requirements that conflict with industry standards, resulting in unnecessary industry confusion, frustration, and expense.

III. IF THE COMMISSION ADOPTS REVISIONS TO ITS ATIS RULES, IT SHOULD AFFORD UPLINK OPERATORS A SUFFICIENT PHASE-IN PERIOD TO IMPLEMENT THE NEW REQUIREMENTS.

The Commission seeks comment on whether “a grace period after the effective date of the rules would be needed to allow operators time to conform to any new ATIS requirements for digitally modulated uplinks and, if so, the length of time needed.”^{18/} NCTA agrees that if new requirements are adopted, uplink operators should be afforded a phase-in period based on normal equipment replacement cycles to allow the operators to implement the new requirements in the normal course of their operations.

The current analog ATIS rules have been in place for more than 20 years even as uplink operators throughout the country have adopted digital modulation and installed digital uplink transmission systems. It is doubtful that many of these digital uplink systems will be compatible

^{17/} See *NPRM* ¶ 151.

^{18/} *Id.*

with whatever new digital ATIS requirements may be established. Replacing this equipment will be time consuming, costly, and burdensome to system operators. In arriving at a specific phase-in period, the Commission should give primary consideration to the normal life cycle of uplink equipment and the efforts and costs that will be imposed on operators in replacing their legacy systems.

IV. CONCLUSION

NCTA supports the Commission's efforts to update Part 25 of its rules regulating satellite and earth station operations and licensing. The Commission's ATIS rules in particular may warrant revisions to address satellite uplink interference in a digital environment. The Commission, however, must recognize that this matter is of a global concern and that industry stakeholders are already evaluating multiple interference-prevention measures. It should therefore refrain from adopting any changes to its ATIS rules at this time. When the industry-led effort is more complete, the Commission may wish to make conforming revisions to the ATIS rules. If it does so, the Commission should provide a sufficient phase-in period for satellite uplink operators to implement the new rules, based primarily on normal equipment upgrade cycles.

Respectfully submitted,

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