

JON RUNYAN
3RD DISTRICT, NEW JERSEY

COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS
CHAIRMAN
SUBCOMMITTEE ON DISABILITY ASSISTANCE
AND MEMORIAL AFFAIRS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON HEALTH



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-3003
January 25, 2012

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
SUBCOMMITTEE ON
TACTICAL AIR AND LAND FORCES
SUBCOMMITTEE ON READINESS

COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES
SUBCOMMITTEE ON FISHERIES, WILDLIFE,
OCEANS AND INSULAR AFFAIRS

PSG/SB

144

Julius Genachowski
Chairman, Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street SW
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Chairman Genachowski,

I am writing today to express my concern regarding ongoing digital television transmissions interference to public safety communications systems in southern New Jersey and request the Commission resolve interference issues on public safety radio.

The public safety radio frequencies in several southern New Jersey counties, including Burlington, Camden and Ocean Counties, have been experiencing interference since 2002. This interference has been magnified due to the FCC's licensing of digital television stations in the 500 MHz spectrum. In addition, the signal from out-of-state digital television stations in certain weather conditions can also cause interference. These conditions have made it difficult for public safety radio stations here in New Jersey to perform their functions.

As you know, this interference can lead to interrupted communications between emergency dispatchers and emergency responders. Radio signals that are scrambled or eliminated altogether can result in catastrophe if our first responders are unable to be communicated with in real-time.

As a result of the communications problems caused by DTV interference, municipalities and counties have been encouraged to move their systems to the 700 MHz spectrum, while using the 500 MHz frequency as a back-up. However, moving to a new frequency can cost millions of dollars, and there is no guarantee that municipalities and counties will have clear radio frequencies moving forward.

The complaints relayed to my office by Emergency Management personnel in Burlington, Camden and Ocean Counties are extremely troubling. It is my hope that the FCC work with these counties to resolve these issues and ensure that public safety is preserved in our communities. I also ask that you respond to this letter in writing with how the FCC intends to resolve the current interference issues so that our first responders are able to communicate on a clear, reliable frequency now and in the future.

Sincerely,

Jon Runyan
Member of Congress

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1 FEB 2012 RCUD

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FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION

January 3, 2013

JULIUS GENACHOWSKI
CHAIRMAN

The Honorable Jon Runyan
U.S. House of Representatives
1239 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Runyan:

Thank you for your letter regarding interference to public safety communications systems in New Jersey. I appreciate your interest in this matter and am pleased to provide the enclosed letter on this issue from the Chief of the FCC's Public Safety Homeland Security Bureau.

If you have any additional questions or need any further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Julius Genachowski", written over a horizontal line.

Julius Genachowski



Federal Communications Commission
Washington, D.C. 20554

January 3, 2013

**In Reply Refer To:
1200144**

The Honorable Jon Runyan
U.S. House of Representatives
1239 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Runyan:

Thank you for your letter concerning public safety radio licensees in New Jersey that have reported interference from local and distant television (TV) stations. I appreciate your concern and want to assure you that staff of the Commission's Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau (Bureau) has been working with the affected public safety licensees to explore all viable options.

This interference appears to be the result of a physical phenomenon in the atmosphere, also known as "ducting," that causes electromagnetic radio waves to be transmitted over unusually long distances beyond their ordinary range. When this condition exists (most frequently during nighttime hours in the summer), distant television broadcast signals, sometimes originating hundreds of miles away, can be transmitted through the atmosphere, causing harmful interference to land mobile radio systems operating on the same channel. In this particular case, it appears some public safety licensees operating in central and southern New Jersey are receiving harmful interference from distant broadcast TV licensees operating on the same TV Channel 20 (506-512 MHz) frequencies.

Options for resolution of this issue are limited because the television broadcasters in question are operating their systems in full compliance with the Commission's broadcast transmission power limits. Forecasting these conditions, or predicting the timing, duration, or geographic scope of specific ducting events is impossible.

Frequency relocation is one possible way to address the problem. In this regard, Commission staff has been working with affected jurisdictions to identify alternative frequencies other than Channel 20 that have not been susceptible to ducting interference in the region. As a result, the Bureau has granted waivers to two public safety entities in New Jersey to use alternative frequencies for their operations, assigning TV Channel 15 frequencies to Ocean County in 2009 and TV Channel 16 frequencies to Woodbridge Township in 2010. Moreover, in February 2012, President Obama signed the Middle Class Tax Relief and Job Creation Act of 2012 (Spectrum Act). Section 6103 of the Spectrum Act requires the Commission to reallocate the spectrum in TV Channels 14-20 used by public safety agencies in order to issue new initial licenses pursuant to competitive bidding. This reallocation must occur within nine years of the

The Honorable Jon Runyan

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Spectrum Act's enactment, or by February 2021. Section 6103 further requires public safety licensees operating on TV Channels 14-20, including those in New Jersey, to relocate within two years after the completion of competitive bidding.

While the Commission does not have statutory authority or resources to provide funding assistance, Section 6103 makes the funds received from the future auction of spectrum in TV Channels 14-20 available to the Assistant Secretary for Telecommunications at the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) to pay for the relocation expenses of public safety licensees. Alternatively, Commission staff encourages licensees to work with agencies like the Department of Homeland Security to identify potential grant programs and other funding resources. The Commission stands ready to assist in the licensing process for any jurisdictions making this migration.

I appreciate your interest in this matter. Please let me know if I can be of any further assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David S. Turetsky". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "D".

David S. Turetsky
Chief, Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau