



NEWS

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This is an unofficial announcement of Commission action. Release of the full text of a Commission order constitutes official action.
See MCI v. FCC, 515 F.2d 385 (D.C. Cir. 1974).

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FCC PLANS \$640,000 FINE AGAINST AT&T FOR UNAUTHORIZED WIRELESS OPERATIONS

AT&T Allegedly Operated Numerous Wireless Stations at Variance from Licensed Parameters

Washington, D.C. – The Federal Communications Commission intends to fine AT&T Inc. \$640,000 for allegedly operating numerous wireless stations throughout the United States without authorization over a multiyear period and failing to provide required license modification notices to the Commission. According to the Commission, AT&T apparently operated numerous common carrier fixed point-to-point microwave stations at variance from the stations’ authorizations for periods as long as five years. The Commission takes this enforcement action as part of its duty to prevent unauthorized radio operations from interfering with authorized radio communications and to facilitate the efficient administration of the radio spectrum for the benefit of all Americans.

“Our society’s dependence upon wireless communications necessitates that the companies entrusted with authority to transmit those communications operate within licensed parameters,” said Travis LeBlanc, Chief of the FCC’s Enforcement Bureau. “A licensee’s failure to ensure that its facilities operate as authorized threatens the integrity of our network and greatly increases the risk of harmful interference, especially when, as in this case, numerous unauthorized operations continued for years without resolution.”

During its investigation, the Enforcement Bureau examined the licensing history of approximately 250 AT&T stations and determined that AT&T engaged in unauthorized operations at 26 of its stations and failed to notify the Commission regarding minor modifications of an additional eight stations within the past year. Today, the Commission finds that AT&T apparently failed to conduct timely technical reviews of newly acquired licenses to ensure they operated as authorized and that in some instances, even after becoming aware of the Bureau’s investigation, AT&T continues to operate the same stations at variance from their licensed parameters. According to the Commission, five major modification applications and two minor modification applications have yet to be filed. The Commission’s anticipated fine accounts for the overall scope of the apparent violations, both in terms of the number and duration of the violations. In addition, the forfeiture accounts for AT&T’s sophistication with handling licensing issues and the company’s size as one of the largest telecommunications service providers in the country.

In 2013, AT&T entered into a \$600,000 Consent Decree with the Enforcement Bureau to settle an investigation of unauthorized operations based on the company’s failure to file major and minor modification applications regarding its cellular service areas.

Common carrier microwave stations are generally used in a point-to-point configuration for long-haul backbone connections or to connect points on the telephone network which cannot be connected using

standard wireline or fiber optic cable because of cost or terrain. These systems are also used to connect cellular sites to the telephone network and to relay television signals.

The Notice of Apparent Liability will be released at a later time and available on the FCC website.

The 2013 Consent Decree between AT&T and the Enforcement Bureau is available at:

https://apps.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/DA-13-1998A1.pdf.

Action by the Commission January 29, 2015, by Notice of Apparent Liability for Forfeiture (FCC 15-12). Chairman Wheeler, Commissioners Clyburn and Rosenworcel with Commissioner Pai concurring and Commissioner O'Rielly concurring in part and dissenting in part. Commissioners Pai and O'Rielly issuing statements

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