

**Media Contact:**

Will Wiquist, (202) 418-0509  
will.wiquist@fcc.gov

**For Immediate Release****FCC'S RAMPED UP 'PIRATE RADIO' ENFORCEMENT  
YIELDS RESULTS*****Unlawful Broadcasts Interfere with Licensed Stations, Preventing Consumers from  
Accessing Broadcast Content, Including Emergency Alerts***

LAS VEGAS, NEVADA, April 11, 2018—FCC Chairman Ajit Pai today announced that significant progress has been made as a result of the Commission's renewed commitment to combating unlawful broadcasting—often called “pirate radio.” The FCC's Enforcement Bureau has led an effort to crack down on this illegal activity, resulting in unlawful broadcasts going off the air, seizure of equipment, fines against pirates, proposed fines against pirates and property owners actively aiding pirate radio operations, and numerous other enforcement actions. Chairman Pai has used the full suite of the FCC's enforcement capabilities and staff, including targeted enforcement in key markets.

“Fighting unlawful broadcasts is a top enforcement priority for the FCC,” said Chairman Pai. “Pirate operators can interfere with important public safety announcements and hurt licensed broadcasters' business. Consumers should be able to get the news and information programming they count on.”

Since January 2017, the FCC's Enforcement Bureau has undertaken 306 pirate investigations, issued 210 Notices of Unlicensed Operation, issued a Notice of Apparent Liability for Forfeiture for the statutory maximum penalty to pirate radio operators, entered into a groundbreaking settlement with a Miami-area pirate radio operator to end his broadcasts and collect a fine, and referred cases to United States Attorneys' Offices to obtain federal court orders, which has led to four cases of pirate radio equipment being seized to date—[two](#) in Boston; one in Queens, New York; and one in Miami. (The Miami, Boston, and New York City metropolitan areas have generally proven to have the greatest concentration of pirate radio activities, as shown in this FCC map: <https://go.usa.gov/xRMhe>.) As part of these efforts, the Enforcement Bureau designated a subset of cases for further targeted enforcement.

In 2017, the FCC took more than twice as many actions against pirate broadcasters than it did the year before. Since January 2017, the Commission has fined illegal broadcasters \$143,800 and proposed fines totaling \$323,688. The Commission also for the first time found property owners apparently liable for actively supporting this illegal activity on their property. These actions have resulted in numerous unlicensed stations ceasing operation.

Much of the FCC's work in enforcing the law when it comes to unlicensed broadcasts is done by the agents in FCC field offices. Chairman Pai noted: “I'd be remiss if I didn't thank our outstanding field agents for their hard work enforcing the law. Guarding against interference

of lawful broadcasts lies at the heart of the Commission's work, and it would not be possible without their skill and dedication."

Federal law generally prohibits the operation of a broadcast radio or TV station without a license issued by the Commission. Congress enacted this requirement nearly a century ago as a means of managing interference to ensure functioning communications services and ensure a fair and equitable distribution by the FCC of scarce spectrum resources to maximize its availability and use among entities, such as public safety agencies and TV and radio broadcasters. Pirate stations undermine this mission. Such stations can interfere with licensed communications (including authorized broadcasts and communications by public safety entities). In addition, pirate stations can also pose a danger to the public because they can interfere with licensed stations' ability to convey important public safety messages, including Emergency Alert System (EAS) transmissions, that provide vital information regarding weather and other dangers to the public.

Meanwhile, the Commission has also pursued ways to provide more opportunities to start-up broadcasters. The FCC has licensed low power radio stations in markets where that can be done without causing interference. Also, the use of fill-in translators rebroadcasting AM stations and FM stations, including HD-Radio sub-channels, has expanded the availability of programming in the FM band, including in major markets. In addition, modern technology has empowered many new voices to reach audiences online via streamed radio services and other tools, like podcasts, that do not impact licensed spectrum users.

###

**Office of Media Relations: (202) 418-0500**  
**ASL Videophone: (844) 432-2275**  
**TTY: (888) 835-5322**  
**Twitter: @FCC**  
**[www.fcc.gov/office-media-relations](http://www.fcc.gov/office-media-relations)**

*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).*