

Broadcasting False Information

Knowingly broadcasting false information concerning a crime or a catastrophe may violate the rules of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC).

Specifics of the FCC's Rules

The FCC's rules prohibit holders of broadcast licenses from broadcasting false information concerning a crime or a catastrophe if:

- the licensee knows the information is false; and
- the licensee knows beforehand that broadcasting the information will cause substantial "public harm." The public harm: (1) must begin immediately and cause direct and actual damage to property or the health or safety of the general public; or (2) divert law enforcement or public health and safety authorities from their duties.

Disclaimers

If a broadcast licensee uses a disclaimer that clearly characterizes the program as fiction, and the disclaimer is presented in a way that is reasonable under the circumstances, the program will be presumed not to pose foreseeable public harm.

Filing a complaint

You have multiple options for filing a complaint with the FCC:

- File a complaint online at <https://consumercomplaints.fcc.gov>
- By phone: 1-888-CALL-FCC (1-888-225-5322); TTY: 1-888-TELL-FCC (1-888-835-5322); ASL: 1-844-432-2275
- By mail (please include your name, address, contact information and as much detail about your complaint as possible):

Federal Communications Commission
Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau
Consumer Inquiries and Complaints Division
445 12th Street, S.W.
Washington, DC 20554

Accessible formats

To request this article in an accessible format - braille, large print, Word or text document or audio - write or call us at the address or phone number at the bottom of the page, or send an email to fcc504@fcc.gov.

Last Reviewed 11/3/ 2015