

Date sent:

Wednesday, August 15, 2012

Subject:

Hearing Aid Compatibility Waiver Reconsideration Order

On August 14, 2012, the FCC released an Order on Reconsideration addressing petitions for waiver of its rules on hearing aid compatibility (HAC). Specifically, the FCC has granted the petitions of NDNC, i wireless, and South Slope, and denied the petitions of Blanca, CTC, Farmers Cellular, UBET, SLO Cellular, and EU. The Order will have little impact for consumers because the petitions had sought extensions of a deadline that since passed, and the companies involved are now in compliance with the HAC rules.

Here is the background:

In 2003, the FCC adopted rules requiring handset manufacturers to offer to service providers, and service providers to offer and make available in each retail store that they own or operate, at least two handset models that met the U3T or T3 rating for inductive coupling by September 18, 2006. Inductive coupling avoids feedback from a handset to a hearing aid and eliminates background noise. After these rules were adopted, various companies requested waivers from the FCC's September 18, 2006 deadline. In 2008, the Commission denied several of the requested waivers, including those requested by NDNC, i wireless, South Slope, Blanca, CTC, Farmers Cellular, UBET, SLO Cellular, and EU. These companies then filed for reconsideration of the FCC's decision to deny their waivers.

After careful consideration of the merits of the requests, in this Order on Reconsideration, the FCC has granted the petitions for reconsideration of NDNC, i wireless, and South Slope, and denied the petitions of Blanca, CTC, Farmers Cellular, UBET, SLO Cellular, and EU. However, because the deadline for compliance with the Commission's HAC mandates has since passed, all of companies still doing business have since come into compliance with these FCC rules.

As the Order notes, "[b]y requiring that carriers demonstrate reasonably diligent efforts to comply with our hearing aid compatibility rules before granting waivers of those rules, we ensure that deaf and hard-of-hearing Americans will have access to the rapidly growing number of digital wireless handsets."

Links to the Order are as follows:

http://hraunfoss.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/FCC-12-89A1.doc

http://hraunfoss.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/FCC-12-89A1.pdf

http://hraunfoss.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/FCC-12-89A1.txt