



# Hearing Aid Compatibility

February 2008 Report and Order and Pending Issues

Jeffrey S. Steinberg  
Spectrum and Competition Policy Division  
Wireless Telecommunications Bureau, FCC  
(202) 418-0896

[Jeffrey.Steinberg@fcc.gov](mailto:Jeffrey.Steinberg@fcc.gov)

# Outline of Presentation

- Overview of February 2008 Order
- Implementation Questions
- Open Issues

# Background

- 1988 Hearing Aid Compatibility Act requires telecommunications equipment to be accessible to the hearing-impaired
- In 2003, the FCC partially lifted the exemption for wireless phones
- February 2008 Order set new deployment benchmarks going forward and made other changes to the rules

# Major Elements of February 2008 Order

- Hearing Aid-Compatible Handset Deployment Requirements
- Phase-In of 2007 ANSI C63.19 Standard
- Reporting, Information and Outreach
- Next Review in 2010

# Deployment Schedule - Manufacturers

- Requirements apply per air interface. A model that operates over more than one air interface counts in all of these interfaces.
- At least one-third of models (rounded down) must be rated M3 or higher
- At least two models must be rated T3 or higher
- Different rules for manufacturers offering few models in an air interface
- Requirements will increase annually beginning February 2009

# Deployment Schedule - Service Providers

- Requirements apply per air interface
- Either 50% of models or 8 models must be rated M3 or higher
- One-third of models must be rated T3 or higher
- Exceptions if offer 3 or fewer models over an air interface
- Requirements will increase annually beginning February 2009

# Additional Deployment Rules

- Beginning in 2009, at least half of required models rated M3 or higher for manufacturers must be new models
  - Exceptions for small product lines or lines being discontinued
- Service providers must offer models with differing levels of functionality

# 2007 ANSI C63.19 Standard

- Until 2010, may use either 2006 or 2007 Standard
  - Must use consistent version for all tests
- Beginning 1/1/2010, must use 2007 Standard for new certifications or permissive changes
- Old certifications remain valid for existing offerings
- Streamlined procedures for adopting future revisions or expansions of Standard

# Reporting and Outreach

- Manufacturers file reports on 1/15/09 and then annually beginning 7/15/09
- Service providers file reports annually beginning 1/15/09
- Manufacturers and service providers must provide certain information on their web sites

# Definition of a Model

- Market designation distinctions that do not reflect differences in form, features, or user capabilities, or that only differentiate units sold to a particular carrier, are not counted as distinct models.
- Where changes are made to a device that result in a change in the hearing aid compatibility rating, the altered device must be given a model name/number that is distinct from the original device's designation.
- Note that a change in M or T rating *is* a change in “form, features or capabilities.”

# Bands and Modes Without Standards

- 2007 ANSI C63.19 establishes standards only for certain air interfaces in the 800-950 MHz and 1.6-2.5 GHz bands
- Testing cannot be performed, and no rules currently apply, outside these bands/interfaces
- FCC adopted streamlined process for adopting future expansions of Standard

# Multi-Band/Multi-Mode Phones

- To be certified as hearing aid-compatible, handsets must meet standards in all frequency bands and all air interfaces over which they operate and for which there are established technical standards
- Except for Wi-Fi, record indicated no multi-band/multi-mode phones currently exist for bands or modes without standards
  - Record left open for further comment
  - In the interim, FCC will decide treatment of any specific models as they are brought before us

# Wi-Fi

- Multi-band/multi-mode phones with Wi-Fi voice capability are counted as hearing aid-compatible if two conditions are met:
  - Handset must otherwise qualify as hearing aid-compatible under our rules; and
  - Labeling must disclose that handset is not rated for Wi-Fi operation

# Proposed Consensus Principles

- On 9/11/08, an industry-consumer consensus group proposed principles for addressing new bands and modes:
  - Initial treatment based on predictive analysis
  - If no compatibility issues are identified, all handsets will be assumed compliant
  - If compatibility issues are identified, ANSI will develop standard
  - New models must comply with standard to be considered hearing aid-compatible beginning 12 months after FCC adopts standard.

# Multi-Band/Multi-Mode: Next Steps

- On 9/12/08, ANSI ASC C63® filed its own submission discussing the process of analyzing the interference potential of new technologies
- The Commission will consider both the consensus principles and the ANSI submission in deciding what rules to establish going forward

# Other Outstanding Issues

- Whether to revise the *de minimis* rule so that companies with two or fewer models are not automatically exempt
  - Some commenters advocated carving out popular models such as the iPhone
  - Additional comments received 8/30/08
- Application of rules to emerging technologies such as VoIP applications over Wi-Fi

# Outstanding Issues Continued

- Application of hearing aid compatibility rules in an open network context
  - Current rules govern manufacturer supply to carriers and carrier supply to consumers
  - Should this be changed as more consumers obtain phones through other channels?
- Application of hearing aid compatibility rules to Mobile Satellite Service
- Measures relating to volume controls and display screens
- Commission will address all of these issues based on the record