

What This Means To Users

All existing Part 90 radio systems operating on frequencies between 150-512 MHz have eight years to convert those systems either to 12.5 kHz bandwidth or to a technology that provides one voice path per 12.5 kHz of bandwidth or provides a data rate of 4800 bps/6.25 kHz.

12.5 kHz Conversion Deadline for Existing VHF/UHF Systems

- Industrial/Business Pool licensees conversion deadline remains January 1, 2013
- Public Safety Pool licensees conversion deadline has been changed to January 1, 2013
- After this date, all systems must have converted either to 12.5 kHz bandwidth or to a technology that provides one voice channel per 12.5 kHz or operates at a data rate 4800 bps per 6.25 kHz of bandwidth.

Interim Deadlines for VHF/UHF Systems & Equipment

- New applications for 25 kHz bandwidth will be accepted until January 1, 2011
- After this date, applications for greater than 12.5 kHz bandwidth will be accepted only if the equipment meets the efficiency standard of one voice channel/12.5 kHz bandwidth or 4800 bps/6.25 kHz (9600 bps for 12.5 kHz; 19.2 bps for 25 kHz)
- Modifications of existing 25 kHz systems will be accepted until January 1, 2011
- After this date, applications to modifications to 25 kHz systems which result in an expanded service contour will be accepted only if the equipment meets the efficiency standard of one voice channel/12.5 kHz bandwidth or for data, 4800 bps/6.25 kHz (9600 bps for 12.5 kHz; 19.2 Kbps for 25 kHz)
- 25 kHz equipment can be manufactured and imported until January 1, 2011
- After this date, equipment operating at greater than 12.5 kHz bandwidth must meet the efficiency standard of one voice channel/12.5 kHz bandwidth or 4800 bps/6.25 kHz.
- 90.203(j) has been amended to allow certification of equipment operating at 25 kHz after January 1, 2005 if it meets the efficiency standards listed above. Effective date of 90.203(j)(5) has been stayed until the FCC releases a decision on the Manufacturers Petition for stay. (See next article).
- The FCC also revised its rules to exempt Part 90 paging-only frequencies from the narrowbanding requirements.

Basic Questions & Answers

Q - Are we forced to move to 800 MHz?

A - No. Narrowbanding does not require moving to another frequency band.

Q - Will we have to buy new radios?

A - Depends. Most radios purchased in the last 6-8 years are already narrowband capable. They only need to be re-tuned.

Q - Will we need to change frequencies?

A - No. You merely reduce the bandwidth of the channel(s) you are now using.

Q - Will that reduce our coverage?

A - Little if any. You may have to survey your system and area of operation. Only a thorough analysis of your coverage requirements can tell for sure.

Q - Will we have to convert to digital?

A - No. However, many agencies are using this opportunity to upgrade to digital technology. Most digital radios are dual mode capable and can operate in wide band analog as well as narrowband analog and digital. Digital is also more immune from adjacent channel interference along with features unavailable in analog.

Q - We do not have the money to move to narrowband. Isn't this an unfunded mandate?

A - Note really. The dates are extended enough to ensure most agencies have fully amortized the value of their current equipment by the time the mandates kick in.

Q - We have a data system. Won't this reduce our throughput?

A - Data systems must meet the 4800 bps/6.25 kHz equivalency. If your current 25 kHz system sustains 19.2 Kbs at 25 kHz, you may continue to use it and expand coverage area.