



NEW FM Translator Services Rules Effective October 1st

The FCC's new FM translator service rules, which allow use of an FM translator by certain AM Stations were published in the Federal Register on September 1 and will become effective October 1st.

Licensees with pending or authorized STAs to operate AM broadcast stations on FM Translators must submit written notification to the FCC "specifying their AM primary stations pursuant to Section 74.1251(c) of the Rules" prior to October 1, 2009 in order to continue such operations beyond October 1st.

According to Jack Mullaney of Mullaney Engineering in Gaithersburg, MD, the new rule presents a wonderful opportunity for AM stations, particularly daytimers.

- Specifically, the new rules allow commercial FM translator stations that were authorized *prior to May 1, 2009*, to rebroadcast the program material of any AM radio station (regardless of class or hours of operation) as a "fill-in" translator service. This will permit daytime-only AM Class D stations to continue programming during nighttime hours.
- A "fill-in" translator is permitted to operate with a maximum effective radiated power (ERP) of 250 watts without regard to its antenna height above average terrain (HAAT). However, while a translator is permitted to receive interference, it must never cause interference to any other full-service or translator facility operating on the same channels or within three channels.
- In many situations, the full 250 watts will not be possible, and the use of a directional antenna to operate at any ERP is very common. If rebroadcasting an AM radio station, the 60 dBu of the FM translator: 1) must never extend outside the 2 mV/m daytime contour of the AM station (using standard M-3 conductivity map predictions), and 2) must never extend more than 25 miles from the AM transmitter site. This is only a real concern when FM translator and AM station are not at the same site.
- Translators will be authorized to operate 24 hours a day and must always rebroadcast the same content as the AM station. In the case of daytime-only AM stations (Class D), the FM translator is permitted to "originate" its own programming during the AM station's non-broadcast hours, provided the Class D station has operated during the previous 24 hours. However, it should be understood that these new rules are not intended to create an additional programming source or stream.

These are just the highlights of the new FM Translator service rules. You should consult your engineer and/or counsel before proceeding with any FM Translator operations.

The complete text of the Report and Order can be found on the FCC's website at http://fjallfoss.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/FCC-09-59A1.pdf.