Relocation of Wireless Medical Telemetry Band Devices May Be Mandated

Registration with ASHE Critical

Thursday, June 14, 2012

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) is evaluating reallocating the TV channel 37 Wireless Medical Telemetry Service (WMTS) band (608-614 MHz) as part of a much larger effort to reallocate portions of the TV bands to new use. As part of the evaluation, the FCC needs to determine the full impact of moving hundreds of thousands of medical telemetry transmitters to other suitable spectrum. As part of the FCC’s evaluation, it is trying to determine how to compensate channel 37 WMTS licensees.

An accurate count of the number of all WMTS systems – and their locations – is critical to this evaluation process. If your WMTS system is not registered, it is not considered licensed and it will not be counted. Registration with the AHA’s American Society for Healthcare Engineering (ASHE) of WMTS systems operating in this band and the WMTS upper bands (1395-1400 MHz and 1427-1432 MHz) is required by law. Also, if you have not registered your medical telemetry system with ASHE, you may not be eligible to receive compensation if relocation from Channel 37 is necessary.

Why is channel 37 being affected, and why is it being affected now?
The Middle Class Tax Relief and Job Creation Act of 2012 calls for incentivizing broadcast stations to relocate their channel assignments, freeing up spectrum for use in a variety of broadband wireless applications. Channel 37 is in the block of TV channels under evaluation, and may be part of the overall reallocation.

Will I have to move my Medical Telemetry System? How soon and much will it cost?
ASHE has met with FCC staff members to discuss the potential impact that reallocation could have on hospitals. The FCC staff has also met with WMTS manufacturers and may meet with WMTS users in an effort to fully understand the technical complexities and costs of reallocation before the FCC makes a final decision. However, at this point, that decision has not been made. ASHE and AHA will keep members informed as the process continues.

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What should I do now?
Review your medical telemetry systems now and verify that all WMTS equipment is registered with ASHE. If it is not registered, please register as soon as possible before any decision on reallocation or compensation is determined. As noted above, the registration of WMTS systems with ASHE is the law, as registered systems are almost certain to receive some compensation if reallocation occurs, and this may not be true for systems that are not identified in the ASHE database of WMTS licensees. Registration is quick and easy. To learn more, visit www.ashe.org/resources/WMTS.

If your WMTS system is registered with ASHE, you do not need to take any immediate action. ASHE will provide more detailed information with regard to any proposals by the FCC that would affect the use of spectrum between 608 and 614 MHz as it becomes available. For more information, contact ASHE Engineering & Compliance Director John Collins at jcollins@aha.org or (312) 422-3805.