
FEDERAL ENERGY REGULATORY COMMISSION



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NEWS RELEASE

NEWS MEDIA CONTACTS:

FERC - Bryan Lee (202) 502-8680
FCC – David Fiske (202) 418-0513

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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FERC CHAIRMAN WOOD, FCC CHAIRMAN POWELL ISSUE JOINT STATEMENT ON BROADBAND OVER POWERLINE

Federal Energy Regulatory Commission Chairman Pat Wood, III and Federal Communications Commission Chairman Michael K. Powell today issued a joint statement encouraging development of broadband over power line (BPL) communications services, noting the emerging technology's potential to provide competitive choices for customers and improve power supply system reliability.

The joint statement cites the potential for BPL to "improve communications for the American public and enhance power supply system management."

The statement was released at today's meeting of the Federal Communications Commission, two days after Chairman Wood, Chairman Powell and FERC Commissioner Nora Mead Brownell on Tuesday toured BPL facilities at the municipally owned electric utility in Manassas, Va. The city's utility system is among the first in the nation to widely offer broadband communications services over its electricity system.

"This technology holds tremendous potential, not just in providing new avenues for communications services, but in helping electricity systems operate more efficiently and reliably," said Chairman Wood. "It's a potential win-win for customers, and the most important thing we can do here in Washington is help make sure existing rules and regulations don't get in the way of this promising new technology," he added.

At today's FCC meeting, where a final rule on BPL was adopted, Chairman Powell welcomed Chairman Wood, Commissioner Brownell and Commissioner Suedeem Kelly, calling their attendance "a remarkable show of solidarity among federal agencies."

Given that BPL can offer broadband services through any electrical outlet, Chairman Powell cited the technology's potential to provide "ubiquitous service to all Americans at affordable rates."

Commissioner Brownell, who initiated the development of today's joint statement, described BPL as the vanguard of a host of new technologies that promise to usher the nation's power grid into the 21st Century.

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“The vast majority of today’s power system features technology that reached its zenith 50 years ago. Broadband over power line services will empower customers while improving grid reliability and security. It illustrates how investing in our electricity delivery system will deliver tangible customer and economic benefits,” Commissioner Brownell said. “Our nation’s electricity-dependent economy is at risk as long as it depends on infrastructure that is a vestige of the 20th Century,” she added.

The joint statement notes that BPL can improve power supply system communications and operations, enhance security against physical and cyber threats, aid in the development of distributed generation and advanced metering, promote energy conservation through customer and utility control of appliances and equipment, facilitate demand management and better grid utilization, and improve system monitoring and outage detection.

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Joint Statement on Broadband over Power Line Communications Services by Chairman Pat Wood, III, of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, and Chairman Michael K. Powell of the Federal Communications Commission

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission and the Federal Communications Commission have been examining the technology of broadband over power line communications services (BPL) and its ability to improve communications for the American public and enhance power supply system management.

By this joint statement, Chairman Pat Wood, III of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) and Chairman Michael K. Powell of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) agree that BPL holds great promise for the American public.

Specifically, FERC Chairman Wood and FCC Chairman Powell believe:

- that ubiquitous broadband deployment is important to the economic, educational, social, medical, and cultural welfare of the country. In order to achieve this goal, national policies should facilitate rapid deployment of all broadband technologies, including BPL. Policymakers at all levels should coordinate their efforts to promote a minimally intrusive policy framework for such technologies.
- that the provision of high-speed communications capabilities over utility poles and electric power lines (Access BPL) provides an opportunity to increase the competitive broadband choices that are available to customers and the power supply system management options of utilities.

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- that Access BPL may help provide additional power supply system communications and control capabilities to improve reliability and efficiency. Such capabilities include “self-healing” network capabilities; improved security from physical and cyber threats; facilitating use of distributed generation; customer and utility control of appliances and equipment energy use; improved load management and electric grid utilization; and such applications as automated meter reading, extension of supervisory control and data acquisition functions to the end user level, outage detection, and equipment performance monitoring.
- that these services should be allowed to develop according to market demands with minimal regulation.

Therefore, Chairman Wood and Chairman Powell urge:

- utilities to pursue new and developing technologies, such as BPL, that will foster greater customer options in broadband, provide more efficient management of the power supply system, and ensure increased operational reliability.
- utilities to appropriately allocate revenues and costs related to new technologies, such as Access BPL, between regulated and unregulated functions.

In addition, Chairman Wood and Chairman Powell agree to:

- continue to encourage the development of new technologies that provide additional competitive broadband options, promote continued U.S. leadership in broadband technology, and improve power supply system security, reliability, and efficiency.
- monitor experience with Access BPL to ensure that existing regulations do not stifle the development of this nascent technology.