

Background

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) created the Low Power Television (LPTV) service in 1982 to provide opportunities for locally-oriented television service in small communities. These communities may be in rural areas or may be individual communities within larger urban areas. LPTV service presents a less expensive and more flexible means of delivering programming tailored to the interests of viewers in small localized areas than traditional full service/power TV stations. It has created opportunities for new entry into television broadcasting, provided a means of local self-expression, and permitted fuller use of the broadcast spectrum.

FCC Requirements

LPTV stations have “secondary spectrum priority” to full-service stations. This means LPTV stations **must not** cause interference to the reception of existing or future full-service television stations, must accept interference from full-service stations, and must yield to new full-service stations, where interference occurs.

When there is interference between cable systems and LPTV stations, a “first in time, first in right” policy applies. Under the “first in time, first in right” policy, the cable system or LPTV station that had initial use of the channel has first priority and is not responsible for correcting the interference.

LPTV Station Operation

LPTV stations are operated by diverse groups and organizations – high schools and colleges, churches and religious groups, local governments, large and small businesses and individual citizens. LPTV modes of operation and programming vary widely. These include satellite-delivered programming services,

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syndicated programs, movies and a wide range of locally-produced programs. LPTV stations sometimes tailor program segments or entire schedules to specific viewer groups (on the basis of age, language or particular interest).

On the technical side, LPTV stations transmit on one of the standard VHF or UHF television channels. The distance at which a station can be viewed depends on a variety of factors – antenna height, transmitter power, transmitting antenna and the nature of the environment (rural or urban, hilly or flat terrain).

Applying for an LPTV Station

New applications for LPTV and TV translator stations are only accepted during designated filing window periods. The FCC announces these window periods at least 30 days before the opening of the window. The announcement provides details on how to file. Interested applicants should periodically check the FCC’s Media Bureau (MB) Web site at www.fcc.gov/mb/video for window announcements.

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Owning and Operating an LPTV Station

There is no limit on the number of LPTV stations that may be owned by any one entity. Current broadcast licensees, cable operators and newspapers may own LPTV stations. LPTV stations may operate on any available VHF (2-13) or UHF (14-51) channel provided that they do not cause objectionable interference.

The FCC does not allocate channels for LPTV service. Applicants select channels and apply during a given time period.

LPTV stations are limited to an effective radiated power of 3 kilowatts (VHF) and 150 kilowatts (UHF). There are no limits on transmitter output power and on antenna height, as long as the tower structure has been registered with the FCC.

Programming and Programming Content

LPTV stations are subject to a minimum of program-related regulations. There are no prescribed amounts of non-entertainment programming or local programming, and there are no limits on commercials, and no minimum hours of operation. However, the broadcast of obscene material is prohibited at all times and the broadcast of indecent and profane material is prohibited between 6 A.M. and 10 P.M.

For More Information

For more information on LPTV stations, visit the FCC's Media Bureau Web site at www.fcc.gov/mb. For information about other communications issues, visit the FCC's Consumer & Governmental Affairs Bureau Web site at www.fcc.gov/cgb, or contact the FCC's Consumer Center by e-mailing fccinfo@fcc.gov; calling 1-888-CALL-FCC (1-888-225-5322) voice or 1-888-TELL-FCC (1-888-835-5322) TTY; faxing 1-866-418-0232; or writing to:

Federal Communications Commission
Consumer & Governmental Affairs Bureau
Consumer Inquiries and Complaints Division
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, D.C. 20554.

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To receive information on this and other FCC consumer topics through the Commission's electronic subscriber service, visit www.fcc.gov/cgb/contacts/.

This fact sheet is for consumer education purposes only and is not intended to affect any proceedings or cases involving this subject matter or related issues.

11/6/08*

