

The FCC Narrowbanding Mandate: What You Need to Know to Assure Radio Communications in 2013

Who is Affected

The FCC narrowbanding rules affect all operators of land mobile radios (LMR) that use channels between:

- 150 and 174 MHz (VHF)
- 421 and 512 MHz (UHF)

What will Happen if You Don't Narrowband

- Wideband LMR systems (i.e., two-way voice radio operating on the 25 kHz channel-widths for several decades) will experience ***increasing interference*** as other radio operators switch to narrowband channels.
- As of January 1, 2013, LMR systems still using wideband channels risk:
 - ***loss of radio communications through the inability to hear other users***
 - substantial FCC fines and/or loss of license
 - possible difficulty in obtaining new FCC licenses

What Needs to be Done

1. If you operate under an FCC license that is under another group's name: ask your license-holder about their plans for narrowbanding, and proceed to Step 3, below.
2. If you operate under an FCC license that is in your agency's name:
 - Check the license expiration date. If the license is expired, you must first reinstate your license or file for a new license (through your frequency coordinator).
 - Check the license emissions designator. If any of the channels on your license has an emissions designator that starts with a "20", your license most likely needs to be modified for narrowband operations.
 - Set a date prior to January 1, 2013 for changing to narrowband operations – consider coordinating your change with groups you communicate with, and consider setting an earlier date to reduce future radio interference and allow time to address any unforeseen issues prior to the deadline.
3. Check your radio equipment for narrowband capabilities and begin any necessary procurement.
 - All voice radio equipment should be capable of 12.5 kHz voice channels – most equipment purchased since 2000 should be narrowband capable.
 - If your radios are narrowband-capable but have been operating on wideband, changing your system to narrowband operation may still have substantial costs.
4. Set and re-tune your radio equipment to narrowband channels on the date set for beginning your narrowband operations.

Learn more about what needs to be done! Go to <http://TransitWireless.com> for links to more narrowbanding information and to the National Transit Institute (NTI) course offerings on narrowbanding.