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TECHNOLOGY AND DISABILITY POLICY HIGHLIGHTS 11.11

November 2011

Overview

This month marked the first national test of the new Emergency Alert System (EAS) conducted by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) in coordination with the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). In response to this event, Senator Susan Collins called for new legislation to update the system to include the dissemination of alerts via new technologies.

In the regulatory arena, the FCC issued a **Second Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (2nd FNPRM) [WT Docket No. 07-250]** seeking comment on the implementation of new technological standards for hearing aid compatibility with wireless devices. The new standards would ensure greater compatibility of hearing aids with wireless devices by increasing the frequency range covered to include new 4G technology. The Consumer Advisory Committee of the FCC submitted comments this month in response to the FCC's **Further Inquiry Public Notice concerning Lifeline Link Up Reform and Modernization [WC Docket No. 11-42]** asking the FCC to expand eligibility for the program. The CAC's comments ask the FCC to expand the definition to give eligibility to individuals who may live in group homes or may be in transient living situations. Finally, the majority of regulatory activities this month concerned greater accessibility for broadband service. In an effort to expand the availability of broadband service, the FCC released a **Report and Order and Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (FNPRM) [WC Docket No. 10-90, GN Docket No 09-51, WC Docket No. 07-135, WC Docket No. 05-337, CC Docket No. 01-92, CC Docket No. 96-45, WC Docket No. 03-109, WT Docket No. 10-208]** calling for the reformation of the Universal Service Fund. The Report and Order outlines a transformation of the $4.5 billion dollar fund to include funding for the deployment of broadband networks in underserved areas. Further support for increasing broadband accessibility came with the announcement of the *Connect to Compete* program. The new program will offer subsidized broadband and computer costs for lower income families and will also offer digital literacy classes.

__Click the headings below to link directly to a particular section.__

__Legislative Activities__

New Proposed Legislation to Update Emergency Alert Systems

11.09.2011 – Coinciding with the first national test of the EAS, U.S. Senator Susan Collins, the Ranking Republican on the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, released a statement calling for an update of EAS for the Twitter age. The national EAS test lasted 30 seconds and interrupted regularly scheduled television, radio, cable, and satellite shows to issue a statement that a test of the EAS was in progress. Senator Collins, however, will soon introduce legislation requiring the FEMA to issue alerts via new technology in addition to television, radio, cable, and satellite. According to Senator Collins, "FEMA has begun to embrace technology, but needs to ensure more people receive life-saving information in more parts of America, more of the time, through current and future technologies. Traditional radio and TV broadcasts remain integral to communicating emergency information, but Americans are also getting a constant stream of information from Twitter, Facebook, and other social networking platforms whether at home or on the go via smart phones and other devices. Americans are certainly not always sitting by their TV when disaster strikes, and we need to ensure that as many people as possible receive important alerts." Senator Collins' upcoming legislation would include provisions for people living in rural areas as well as people with disabilities. Overall, the upcoming legislation would help ensure that emergency alerts are provided for as many people as possible by expanding the avenues of technology by which people receive alerts.
[Source: U.S. Senator Susan Collins]

Additional Information:

U.S. Senator Susan Collins Press Release
[http://collins.senate.gov/public/continue.cfm?FuseAction=PressRoom.PressReleases&ContentRecord_
id=89199ab2-9341-eb46-faac-b8d14c873571&CFID=104599414&CFTOKEN=99310572]

__Regulatory Activities__

FCC Proposes Rules for Hearing Aid Compatibility with Wireless Phones

11.01.2011 – The FCC issued a **Second Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (2nd FNPRM)**
[WT Docket No. 07-250] seeking comment on the adoption of the most current hearing aid

compatibility (HAC) technical standards into the Commission's rules. The proposed rules would adopt new standards to evaluate HAC with wireless phones based on the new 2011 revision of American National Standards Institute (ANSI) technical standards. For example, the new ANSI technical standards expanded the operating frequency range for wireless devices covered from the previous standard which included 800 MHz – 950 MHz and 1.6 GHz to the new standard which includes 2.5 GHz to 2.5 GHz to 698 MHz – 6GHz. The current FCC rules regarding HAC ensure that consumers have access to wireless communication services without experiencing interference from radio frequencies or other technical sources.   If adopted, the proposed rules would reflect technological advances made since the previous adoption of the 2007 ANSI standards, such as new 4G phones which utilize the 700 MHz band, and allow for compatibility of a greater number of HAC compliance wireless handsets. Comments are due thirty days after the notice is published in the Federal Register.

[Source: FCC]

Additional Information:

2nd FNPRM: WT Docket no. 07-250

[http://hraunfoss.fcc.gov/edocs_public/index.do?document=310367]

Consumer Advisory Committee Calls for Expansion of Lifeline and Link-Up Programs

11.04.2011 – The Consumer Advisory Committee (CAC) of the FCC submitted comments in response to the FCC's **Further Inquiry Public Notice concerning Lifeline Link Up Reform and Modernization [WC Docket No. 11-42]** recommending the expansion of eligibility for the Lifeline and Link Up programs. The Lifeline and Link Up programs provide discounts on telephone service to low income households. The CAC responded to comments concerning the FCC's proposal to limit the availability of the Lifeline and Link Up programs to "one per residence." According to the CAC, the eligibility for the programs should be defined as "one per household," where "household" is defined as an individual or group of people functioning as an economic unit. This rephrasing would expand eligibility to reach individuals who may live in group homes or may be in transient living situations. The Lifeline and Link Up programs were initially designed to address the disparity of telephone service in the low income community; however, the CAC states that only six states have a participation rate over fifty percent. Thus, expanding the eligibility requirements would allow the Lifeline and Link Up programs to have greater impact.

[Source: FCC]

Additional Information:

Consumer Advisory Committee Comments

[http://transition.fcc.gov/Daily_Releases/Daily_Business/2011/db1109/DOC-310917A1.pdf]

New Funding for Broadband Deployment

11.08.2011 – FCC Commissioner Mignon L. Clyburn announced the reformation of the $4.5 billion Universal Service Fund (USF). In the past, the USF supported low income families by providing voice telephone service to underserved areas. However, the FCC has unanimously elected to transform the USF and intercarrier compensation systems into a new Connect America Fund (CAF) that will reflect 21st century telecommunications advances and will also provide funding for the deployment of broadband networks to such areas. On November 18, 2011, the FCC issued a **Report and Order and Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (FNPRM) [WC Docket No. 10-90, GN Docket No 09-51, WC Docket No. 07-135, WC Docket No. 05-337, CC Docket No. 01-92, CC Docket No. 96-45, WC Docket No. 03-109, WT Docket No. 10-208]** explaining the requirements of the new fund and seeking comment on certain aspects of the fund. The Report and Order includes information on the creation of both the Mobility and Remote Areas Funds which will provide funds to ensure availability of broadband service in underserved areas. In his speech announcing the USF reformation, Clyburn noted that approximately 18 million Americans lack access to broadband networks, and are consequently disadvantaged since high-speed Internet provides easy access for tasks such as job searches, homework help, and small business expansion. The plan for utilization of CAF funds ensures funding will be provided for broadband deployment in underserved areas and includes provisions to shift funding from networks once support is no longer needed so that other areas may be served. The FCC expects that the new broadband deployment will provide new jobs and economic growth for underserved areas.

[Source: FCC]

Additional Information:

Transition of Universal Service from Phone to Broadband
[http://transition.fcc.gov/Daily_Releases/Daily_Business/2011/db1108/DOC-310900A1.pdf]
FNPRM: WT Docket no. 10-90
[http://transition.fcc.gov/Daily_Releases/Daily_Business/2011/db1122/FCC-11-161A1.pdf]
Broadband Adoption Presentation to FCC Open Meeting
[http://hraunfoss.fcc.gov/edocs_public/index.do?document=311281]

Connect to Compete: Low Cost Broadband Service and Computers

11.09.2011 – FCC Chairman Genachowski announced a new effort to offer broadband service and computers to low income Americans at lower costs. The *Connect to Compete* program will offer broadband Internet at a discounted rate of $9.95 a month and laptop or desktop computers for as little as $150 to families who qualify for the National School Lunch Program. The program can potentially serve 15-25 million Americans, which includes 10-15 million students. The program also includes the development of a microfinancing plan to aid low income families in purchasing new technology and digital literacy programs so new users will be able to fully utilize the potential of broadband. In his speech regarding the *Connect to Compete* program, Chairman Genachowski

acknowledged broadband as the great equalizer and stated that broadband can offer many new opportunities, including educational and job opportunities, especially to those who know how to properly use the technology. Thus, one of the key facets of the Connect to Compete program are digital literacy classes, which will be offered in public libraries, via the internet, and after hours in public schools. According to the National Telecommunications and Information Administration, approximately 43% of householder's with disability status utilize broadband, in comparison with 80% of householders with no disability; 75% of dial-up Internet users stated monthly service was "too expensive" as their reason for not upgrading to broadband. The *Connect to Compete* program will be one of the first programs aimed at eliminating the disparity in broadband adoption by addressing affordability.

[Source: FCC]

Additional Information:

Chairman Genachowski's Remarks on Broadband Adoption

[http://transition.fcc.gov/Daily_Releases/Daily_Business/2011/db1109/DOC-310918A1.pdf]

FCC Connect To Compete Fact Sheet

[http://transition.fcc.gov/Daily_Releases/Daily_Business/2011/db1109/DOC-310924A1.pdf]

__Publications and Reports__

New Recommendations for Emergency Alerts

11.01.2011 – The Consumer Electronics Association (CEA) published CEA-CEB25, *Best Practices for Implementing Common Alerting Protocol (CAP) based Alerts for Consumer Electronics (CE) Devices.* The report provides recommendations for the delivery of CAP based alerts to various consumer electronic devices, regardless of manufacturer. "A consumer electronics manufacturer can help consumers, by implementing CEA-CEB25, it will provide a similar user experience across multiple platforms and devices for the consumer to easily understand emergency alert information on different types of products from different manufacturers," said Matthew Straeb, who chairs CEA's R6WG16 Best Practices for Implementing Common Alerting Protocol (CAP) based Alerts for Consumer Electronics Devices , and is Executive Vice President for Global Security Systems, LLC. "With the federal government initiating emergency information as CAP-based alerts, consumer electronic equipment makers will soon be producing products to receive those alerts; CEA-CEB25 provides these manufacturers with guidelines for implementing CAP-based alerts to provide the best possible user experience." The recommendations outlined in CEA-CEB25 include both unidirectional CAP receivers, such as over-the-air broadcast radio CAP receivers, and bidirectional CAP receivers, such as Internet Protocol Connected devices. CEA-CEB25 also includes a section highlighting that people with disabilities should be considered when developing CAP-based alert receivers, which includes

recommendations to insure people with disabilities will be able to connect the receivers to additional assistive technological devices. The report is currently available from IHS.

[Source: CEA]

Additional Information:

CEA-CEB25 Available from IHS

[http://www.ihs.com]

Other Items of Interest

The First Annual Research-to- Policy Roundtable

11.08.2011 – With the release of the 2011 Disability Statistics Compendium, the American Association of People with Disabilities co-sponsored the First Annual Research-to-Policy Roundtable with the University of New Hampshire Institute on Disability. The roundtable included disability advocates, policy makers and researchers who presented and discussed research on the current conditions of people with disabilities. Discussions from the Roundtable centered on the statistics presented in the 2011 Disability Statistics Compendium and illustrated the trends of high poverty and unemployment rates within the disability community. The Roundtable also discussed how researchers and policy makers can work together to create new policies that begin reversing such trends.

 [Source: AAPD]

Additional Information:

News Release: First Annual Research-to-Policy Roundtable

[http://jfactivist.typepad.com/jfactivist/2011/11/aapd-co-sponsors-rollout-of-the-2011-annual-disability-statistics-compendium-and-first-annual-resear.html]

Sessions from FEMA's Getting Real II Conference Now Available

11.21.2011 – Sessions from FEMA's Getting Real II– Promising Practices in Inclusive Emergency Management conference are now available online with captions and American Sign Language Interpreters. The sessions include both local, state and federal practitioners as well as educators discussing best practices in inclusive emergency management.

Additional Information:

FEMA's Getting Real II Online Sessions

[http://gettingreal-ii.webcaston.tv/vod/11-09-12-grii-p-roth.php]

Wireless RERC Updates

Helena Mitchell Speaker at AEGIS Conference in Brussels, Belgium

Helena Mitchell spoke at the AEGIS International Conference, "Accessibility Reaching Everywhere", held November 28-30 2011 in Brussels, Belgium. The co-authored paper "Planning for Accessible Emergency Communications: mobile technology and social media" was delivered on November 29th. AEGIS brings together people with disabilities, as well as platform and application accessibility developers, representative organizations, the assistive technology industry, and policy makers to discuss scientific and policy developments in accessibility and showcase projects and initiatives in the area of assistive technology.

Additional Information:

AEGIS Conference

[http://www.epr.eu/aegis/]

National EAS Test Focus Groups

11.09.2011 - On Wednesday, November 9, 2011, at 2:00 p.m. the first nationwide test of the EAS was broadcast over the radio and television (via broadcast, cable and satellite). The Wireless RERC, together with the Georgia Radio Reading Service (GaRRS), a radio station for the blind, visually impaired and print disabled communities in Georgia, and Public Broadcasting Atlanta (PBA) conducted focus groups to discuss the accessibility of the national EAS test message. People who are deaf, blind, hard of hearing or have low vision gathered to listen/watch the signal on radio and television and then provided feedback as to the effectiveness of the EAS signal for people with sensory disabilities through a follow up focus group session. The focus groups were the first activity in a series of studies the Wireless RERC will be conducting of emergency alerting in the US. The focus group feedback and data from the national EAS test pre and post-test surveys will be compiled into a report that will be shared with the FCC and FEMA. For more information on the focus groups and/or surveys, please contact Salimah LaForce at Salimah@cacp.gatech.edu or 404-894-8297.

Upcoming Events

M-Enabling Summit Conference and Showcase 2011

The Global Summit on Mobile Applications and Services for Seniors and Persons with Disabilities is being held in Washington, DC from December 5-6, 2011, "The *M-Enabling Summit, Global Summit and Showcase for Mobile Applications and Services for Senior and Persons with Disabilities* is the first global program solely dedicated to participants in the emerging ecosystem for mobile accessible and assistive technologies, applications and services."

Additional Information

M-Enabling Summit: Conference and Showcase 2011

[http://www.m-enabling.com/]

FCC Technological Advisory Council Meeting

The next Technological Advisory Council Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, December 20th 2011 in Washington, D.C. The Council provides the FCC with technical advice in many innovative fields, such as broadband. This event is open to the public. For more information on TAC priorities or attending the meeting, contact Walter Johnston at walter.johnson@fcc.gov or 202-418-0807.

Additional Information:

FCC Technological Advisory Council Meeting

[http://hraunfoss.fcc.gov/edocs_public/index.do?document=310751]

International CES 2012

The "world's largest consumer technology tradeshow" is being held in Las Vegas, NV from January 10 – January 13, 2012.

Additional Information

2012 International CES

[http://www.cesweb.org/default.htm]

Annual International Technology and Persons with Disabilities Conference

The Center on Disabilities in the California State University is holding the 2012 CSUN conference in San Diego, CA at the Manchester Grand Hyatt Hotel from February 27 – March 3, 2012.

Additional Information

Center on Disabilities Conference Welcome

[http://www.csun.edu/cod/conference/index.php]