



CITEL Activities Issue Brief

OCTOBER 2016

SUMMARY

The Utilities Technology Council (UTC) is engaging with CITEL (which is the entity formed by the Organization of American States to address interoperable and reliable telecommunications in North and South America) to support an international recommendation for utility spectrum access. The radio portion of the electromagnetic spectrum is needed to enable wireless applications for utilities, public safety and telecommunications providers, among others.

CITEL has established an electronic correspondence group to study the issue of utility spectrum access and to make recommendations on possible spectrum bands for use by electric, gas, and water utilities. The electronic correspondence group has reported to CITEL on several potential spectrum bands, including 400 MHz (megahertz), suitable to support utility communications. In response, CITEL adopted a questionnaire for each of its member nation delegations to report on spectrum access by utilities in their countries, including current and future spectrum opportunities in the 406.2-420 MHz band. These reports could serve as the basis for CITEL's recommendation regarding access to the 400 MHz band by utilities in International Telecommunications Union (ITU) Region 2 (North and South America). It could also serve as the basis for a recommendation for a worldwide allocation of spectrum by utilities during the World Radio Communications Conference in either 2019 or 2023.

BACKGROUND

CITEL is the telecommunications/ICT (information and communications technology) advisory body of the Organization of American States, established by the OAS General Assembly in 1994. Its mission is to promote the sustainable development of telecommunications/ICT in the Northern and Southern American Hemisphere. CITEL's membership includes all OAS Member States and more than 100 Associate Members from the telecommunications, Internet and the electronic media industry, among others. Within CITEL, the PCC II (Permanent Consultative Committee II) is developing common positions and preparing Inter-American proposals on the radio communications and radio broadcasting topics planned for the world and/or regional conferences convened under the auspices of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU).

Utilities often operate their own "private" communications networks (which, in this case, means networks not operated by telecommunications providers, typically to ensure optimal reliability for critical infrastructure sectors such as utilities). Such utilities have, in some cases, purchased or otherwise gained access to certain bands of spectrum to enable wireless applications. The needs of utilities to access spectrum applies both nationally in the U.S., and on an international basis, but each country manages its spectrum access differently from a policy standpoint.

UTC has joined CITEI as an associate member and is participating in concert with UTC Canada and UTC America Latina with various delegations of the Member States of CITEI. Working through an electronic correspondence group established to study the issue of utility spectrum access and to make recommendations for possible spectrum bands that utilities could use, UTC has participated in two meetings of the CITEI PCC II. The result has been the adoption of a questionnaire for member nations to report on their current and future spectrum policies for utility spectrum access, including access to the 406.2-420 MHz band.

UTC POSITION

UTC believes that working with CITEI could provide a path for an international allocation of spectrum for utilities. This could promote economies of scale for equipment development to operate in harmonized spectrum. It would also promote interoperability to the extent that utilities would be operating on harmonized spectrum, instead of on the disparate spectrum bands that they are currently forced to use, based on different spectrum allocations in different countries. UTC looks forward to working with CITEI and with the ITU to realize the goal of developing harmonized spectrum access for utilities worldwide.

ABOUT UTC

The Utilities Technology Council (UTC) is a global trade association dedicated to serving critical infrastructure providers. Through advocacy, education and collaboration, UTC creates a favorable business, regulatory and technological environment for companies that own, manage or provide critical telecommunications systems in support of their core business.

History: UTC was founded in 1948, to advocate for the allocation of additional radio spectrum for power utilities. Over the last 68 years, UTC has evolved into a dynamic organization that represents electric, gas and water utilities, as well as natural gas pipelines, critical infrastructure companies and other industry stakeholders.

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