

UTC 2018 Resolution: Sharing Access with Utilities and Other CII in the 4.9 GHz Band

WHEREAS, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC or Commission) has proposed expanding eligibility to utilities and other critical infrastructure industries (CII) as one way to encourage more effective use of the 4.9 GHz band (4940-4990 MHz) of the radio portion of the electromagnetic spectrum; and,

WHEREAS, this band is currently allocated to public safety exclusively, but is only lightly used by those entities; and,

WHEREAS, utilities use spectrum to run their own Information and Communications Technology (ICT) networks, which assist in the reliable and safe delivery of essential water, electric, and natural gas services; and,

WHEREAS, these ICT networks consist of wireless and wireline technologies which allow utility workers and industrial control systems to communicate, providing day-to-day reliability of our nation's energy and water infrastructure; and,

WHEREAS, energy and water providers use these networks to: restore service after storms, add digital and "smart" technology services for their customers, modernize their infrastructure, allow for intermittent generation resources to be added to the grid, deploy microgrids, utilize synchrophasors, and implement smart communities; and,

WHEREAS, the FCC is responsible for allocating spectrum in the public interest. However, the need for spectrum access is increasing exponentially due to the rise in usage of wireless devices like smart phones, laptops, tablets, unmanned aerial vehicles, autonomous machines, and much more; and,

WHEREAS, because the 4.9 GHz band is lightly used, it could be opened up to utilities and other CII; and,

WHEREAS, the Utilities Technology Council (UTC) has worked with the National Public Safety Telecommunications Council (NPSTC) to develop a proposed 4.9 GHz band plan, which would include utilities as eligible entities to hold licenses. UTC believes that expanding eligibility to include utilities and other critical infrastructure entities will promote emergency response and partnerships between utilities and public safety; and,

WHEREAS, UTC believes that sharing the 4.9 GHz spectrum is a good opportunity for utilities to deploy fixed point- to-point connectivity in a band that is lightly used in order to support their private utility networks that enhance operational efficiency, safety and reliability, and doing so would aid the Commission's effort to utilize spectrum more efficiently; and,

WHEREAS, UTC also believes that the process of sharing the band with public safety and the potential for using up to 50 MHz of licensed spectrum will promote partnerships between utilities and public safety that will create synergies as well as more effective use of the band.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Utilities Technology Council, gathered at its Annual Telecom & Technology Meeting in Palm Springs, California, urges the FCC to adopt rules that allow for utilities and other CII to share in the 4.9 GHz band; and,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Commission should issue a rulemaking and keep the proposals simple to make spectrum availability for utilities in the band more effective.

Adopted by the UTC Membership, May 10, 2018