

UTC 2020 Resolution: Resolution on Holistic Utility Spectrum Strategy

WHEREAS, In October 2018, President Trump signed a Presidential Memorandum on Developing a Sustainable Spectrum Strategy for America's Future directing federal agencies to assess how current and future spectrum needs can be met more efficiently in order to free up more spectrum for commercial use,¹ and;

WHEREAS, The Presidential Memorandum also determined that the U.S. government will continue to look for additional opportunities to share spectrum between federal and non-federal users, and;

WHEREAS, Electric, water, and natural gas utilities design, build, operate, and maintain their own private communications networks to underpin the critical infrastructure which delivers essential electric, water, and natural gas services across the U.S., and;

WHEREAS, Energy and water providers use these networks to monitor day-to-day reliability of their systems, restore service after emergencies, add digital and "smart" technology services for their customers, modernize their infrastructure, allow for intermittent generation resources to be added to the grid, and much more; and;

WHEREAS, These private utility networks consist of both wireline and wireless components, and therefore require radiofrequency spectrum to function, and;

WHEREAS, Given the importance of utility private networks to the continued reliable, safe, and resilient operation of our nation's critical utility infrastructure, utilities as much as possible rely on licensed spectrum. Licensed spectrum provides protections against harmful interference, which can degrade and diminish wireless communications, and;

WHEREAS, Spectrum, a finite commodity, is overseen by two entities in the U.S.—the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) for commercial spectrum, and the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) for federal use, and;

WHEREAS, The White House has designated NTIA and the Department of Commerce as the lead agencies for developing the National Spectrum Strategy; and;

WHEREAS, As the Utilities Technology Council acknowledged in its "2018 Resolution on Encouraging the Federal Communications Commission to Recognize the Criticality of Energy and Water Utilities in Spectrum Policies,"² the FCC historically has not recognized the criticality of utilities and other critical-infrastructure industries (CII) in its spectrum policies, and;

WHEREAS, UTC and the utility industry have filed comments encouraging NTIA to consider the critical needs of the utility industry as it develops the National Spectrum Strategy, and;

WHEREAS, The FCC is expected to make additional commercial spectrum available in order to meet growing demand fueled by new and innovative communications technologies, including by allowing unlicensed use in bands that previously were only accessible to licensed users, and;

WHEREAS, At the same time, the spectrum needs of the energy and water utility industry will also continue to

1 <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/presidential-memorandum-developing-sustainable-spectrum-strategy-americas-future/>

2 https://utc.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Resolution_FCC_Criticality_2018.pdf

grow to enable smarter, more secure and efficient infrastructure. Given the criticality of these services to our nation and our economy, these entities need continued access to spectrum that is protected against harmful interference, and;

WHEREAS, Over the last several years, UTC has engaged in overlapping discussions with policymakers, industry leaders, state and federal regulators, military officials, and many others about the growing spectrum needs of the energy and water utility industries, and;

WHEREAS, Federal sharing of spectrum is contemplated under the National Spectrum Strategy, and;

WHEREAS, As the NTIA and Department of Commerce pursue the creation of a National Spectrum Strategy, part of this dialogue should include a national conversation on ways to meet the critical needs of the energy and water industries while also allowing ample access to unlicensed spectrum for commercial purposes;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Utilities Technology Council calls for a broad, holistic conversation on the energy and water industry's spectrum needs. This discussion should include but not be limited to the following:

- Exploration of suitable bands for utility purposes
- Exploration of potential sharing with federal agencies
- Exploration of adequate protections for utility spectrum needs
- Exploration of future utility spectrum needs, and;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that UTC will establish a working group to propose a national utility spectrum plan that will outline the industry's use cases for current and future spectrum needs, and the best ways to pursue those needs.

Approved by the UTC Board of Directors, Aug. 24, 2020