

ITU and Spectrum Access Issue Brief

Updated: Third Quarter, 2020

SUMMARY

Electric utilities need access to spectrum to meet their increasing communications needs and continue providing their life-sustaining services. Because the need for spectrum is the same for utilities all over the world, the Utilities Technology Council (UTC) is pursuing a global approach. UTC is working with international organizations such as the International Telecommunications Union (ITU), the Inter-American Telecommunications Commission (CITEL), and the European Conference of Postal and Telecommunications Administration (CEPT), which make recommendations for spectrum allocations for adoption by individual countries.

UTC ACTIVITIES

The Utilities Technology Council joined the ITU with the aim of developing a proposal for utilities to access spectrum in the 400 MHz band. Through its work with the ITU, UTC is expanding its global presence after having led international-spectrum efforts in CITEL in the Americas and CEPT in Europe.

UTC will engage with a task force with the ITU addressing land-mobile service excluding International Mobile Telecommunications (IMT), amateur and amateur-satellite service. This group is referred to specifically as Study Group 5, Working Party 5A (WP5A). The most recent meeting of this task force was held in Geneva in November 2018. At the meeting, UTC officials introduced a draft report that detailed utility spectrum needs and identified potential bands for utility use internationally.

Ultimately, UTC's goal is to promote the adoption of a formal recommendation by the ITU during its World Radiocommunications Conference (WRC), which it hosts every four years. The most recent WRC was held in November 2019.

AMERICAS, EUROPE

UTC's participation in the ITU expands its activities with CITEL in the Americas and CEPT in Europe. These groups also make recommendations for spectrum policies, and these recommendations may also be considered by the ITU at the WRC.

UTC joined CITEL in 2015 and created an Electronic Correspondence Group to address the issue of utility spectrum needs. This group sits within the Terrestrial Fixed and Mobile Working Group within CITEL.

UTC has submitted several reports to CITEL and conducted a questionnaire of CITEL members regarding the use of the 400 MHz band. Most recently, UTC was successful in getting CITEL in August 2019 to approve a work plan to survey utilities in different countries in the Americas about how they are using spectrum, which increases the attention of utility spectrum needs in the CITEL region. Once collected, the survey results will be reported back to CITEL, which will form the basis of a CITEL recommendation on utility spectrum allocation. Getting such a recommendation will take time, but it is critical to our international policy advocacy.

In Europe, UTC is working with CEPT and the European Telecommunications Standards Institute as part of a coordinated strategy to promote spectrum access in Europe for use by utilities. UTC has contributed to numerous reports on this issue, which is also helping to raise awareness and gain additional support, which is crucial for the successful adoption of a recommendation by the ITU at the WRC, as well as at CEPT and CITEL.

WHAT IS THE ITU?

The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) is an United Nations specialized agency for global Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs). The ITU hosts a World Radiocommunications

Conference (WRC) which recommends worldwide spectrum allocations. The ITU also hosts study groups on particular issues. UTC is actively participating in a study group on, "Land mobile service above 30 MHz; wireless access in the fixed service; amateur and amateur-satellite services," as more fully described below.

For more info see: www.itu.int

WHAT ARE CITEL AND CEPT?

The Inter-American Telecommunications Commission, or CITEL, makes recommendations for spectrum allocations regionally in the Americas. The European Conference of Postal and Telecommunications Administration (CEPT), which functions in a similar capacity as CITEL, but for Europe.

CITEL, which typically holds semi-annual meetings, has established an Electronic Correspondence Group to study "the Spectrum Needs for the Continual Monitoring, Control, and Protection of the Critical Infrastructure Used by Utilities." UTC serves as the Rapporteur of the Electronic Correspondence Group.

UTC's counterpart in Europe--EUTC--has also been pursuing spectrum access for utilities with CEPT and the European Telecommunications Standards Institute (ETSI). EUTC helped establish a Utility Spectrum Requirements Group within ETSI, which has completed an ETSI Technical document that is now being updated into an ETSI System Reference Document. In CEPT, EUTC is active in CEPT FM54 group promoting the argument for utility spectrum. The CEPT FM54 meets every couple of months throughout the year.

For more info see: www.citel.oas.org and <https://cept.org>

GLOBAL STRATEGY

A coordinated global strategy for harmonized spectrum will benefit utilities by:

- Promoting equipment availability and economies of scale by expanding the market for manufacturers to design, produce and sell equipment.
- Advancing interoperability and compatibility between utility communications networks.
- Fostering greater international support that will help to encourage the U.S. and other countries to adopt policies to provide access to spectrum by utilities.

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.

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