



FCC Narrowbanding Mandate

Frequently Asked Questions

What is Narrowbanding?

In an effort to promote more efficient use of spectrum, the FCC mandated all VHF and UHF Public Safety and Industrial /Business licensees using 25 kHz land mobile radio (LMR) systems migrate to narrowband 12.5 kHz efficiency technology by January 1, 2013. Currently, a very large number of licensees are still licensed and operating in 25 kHz efficiency.

What is spectrum efficiency?

Currently the UHF and VHF frequency bands are congested and often there is not enough spectrum available for licensees to expand their existing systems or implement new systems. This mandate requires licensees to operate more efficiently, either on narrower channel bandwidths or increased voice paths on existing channels. This will allow creation of additional channels within the same spectrum, thereby supporting more users.

What do I need to do before January 1, 2013?

After January 1, 2011, users who apply for a new license or modify their existing license must specify 12.5 kHz efficiency. By January 1, 2013 all licensees must convert to and operate in at least 12.5 kHz efficiency. By that date, you must ensure that the 25 kHz mode is disabled via software on your dual mode 25/12.5 kHz radios. And you must replace all radios only capable of operating at 25 kHz efficiency. You will also need to modify your FCC license to include 12.5 kHz efficiency.

What will happen if I fail to comply with the FCC Narrowbanding mandate? Can I continue to operate at 25 kHz efficiency on a secondary status after January 1, 2013?

No. The FCC will prohibit licensees from operating 25 kHz efficiency equipment on a secondary basis. Non-compliance will be considered a violation subject to FCC Enforcement Bureau action, which may include admonishment, large monetary fines and loss of license.

How can I tell if my license is not Narrowband compliant?

To determine if frequencies on a license are narrowband, inspect the emission designators of those frequencies on the license. If the first three characters of an emission designator are "20K", then that frequency is licensed as wideband 25 kHz efficiency. A modification to the license will be required to change the designator to one that begins with "11K", signifying 12.5 kHz narrowband efficiency. If you have trouble locating your license or would like some assistance in deciphering your license, contact a representative at Action Communications.



How much will this cost?

There is a relatively low filing fee to modify a FCC license to be narrowband compliant, providing that narrowbanding is the only modification made. Fees may be higher if the narrowband modification is combined with other changes such as, license renewal, number of unit, and coverage. If non-narrowband capable radio equipment replacement is required, then the cost of the replacement radios will contribute to the overall narrowbanding cost. Contact a representative at Action Communications to determine the exact cost for your license modification for your situation and learn about replacement radio equipment options.

My license will be expiring before January 1, 2013. Do I need to narrowband now or should I wait?

The narrowband modification can be combined with a license renewal. Combining both processes in one application would ideally save some money and effort. However, this is not recommended in situations when the expiration date is near the January 1, 2013 deadline. Because the narrowbanding mandate affects an extremely large number of licensees, the FCC approval process is delayed. We suggest applying for the narrowband modification at the earliest available opportunity. A representative at Action Communications can assist in determining the most appropriate time for you to make the narrowband modification.

How can I tell if my equipment is Narrowband (12.5 kHz) capable?

Radio equipment certified by the FCC since February 14, 1997 is 12.5 kHz efficiency capable. To verify if your equipment is narrowband (12.5 kHz) capable, contact a representative at Action Communications. We will be glad help.

What if my equipment is not Narrowband (12.5 kHz) capable?

Radios that are not narrowband (12.5 kHz) capable cannot be in operation on or after January 1, 2013. To continue your radio communications, you will need to replace your wideband radio equipment. Contact a representative at Action Communications to explore your radio options and learn about new digital products designed with narrowband specifications.

How do I upgrade my existing 12.5 kHz capable equipment?

12.5 kHz capable radio equipment can be reprogrammed to operate in narrowband (12.5 kHz) to be compliant with the FCC mandate. Contact a representative at Action Communications if this service is required. Our technicians are ready to help.

Does Narrowbanding require me to change frequencies or obtain new channels?

No. Narrowbanding does not require moving to another frequency band or different channels. Licensees stay on the same channel center(s), but reduce the bandwidth of the channel(s) currently used, from 25 kHz to 12.5 kHz and change the emission designator on the license. Alternatively, licensees stay on the same 25 kHz channel but implement a 12.5 kHz equivalent technology on that channel.



If I currently have a license for a 25 kHz channel, will I automatically be entitled to license two 12.5 kHz channels?

No. Your 12.5 kHz channel will remain on the same 25 kHz channel center. Your current 25 kHz channel will not be split into two 12.5 kHz channels. You will need to justify and apply for any additional 12.5 kHz channels to the FCC through a certified frequency coordinator.

Will migration to 12.5 kHz change my system coverage area?

Maybe. Conduct tests during conversion to ensure your system continues to provide similar coverage. Contact your Action Communications representative to help you determine if transmitter site changes or additions will be required to compensate for possible coverage change.

Have more questions?

Contact a representative at Action Communications. We are ready to help and guide you through the narrowbanding process. Do not delay and risk losing your FCC license or be subjected to heavy monetary fines.