



Pyramid Communications, a leading USA manufacturer of vehicular repeater systems, has succeeded in securing six VHF 173 MHz frequencies for use with SVR (VRS) technology. In an effort to enhance the safety of first responders who depend on SVR equipment every day, Pyramid started aggressively seeking initiative back in 2009 and had its first official public proceeding on January 6, 2010 and further to a more targeted proceeding which was passed yesterday in July of 2011. Led by Chris Carbajal, Vice President of Engineering at Pyramid Communications, the idea behind the request from the very beginning was to help those agencies who needed the lifesaving equipment to do their daily job duties, but couldn't get it due to regulatory limits on the VHF Spectrum available for SVR units in the public safety band. Carefully constructed, Pyramid requested spectrum that would meet both the technical requirements of SVR systems and provide the best performance to the first responders who needed the equipment.

During this process, there has been a series of FCC proceedings, filings, public comments and rebuttals by various groups, however, through assistance between the industry groups and coordinators such as LMCC, APCO, EWA and others, we have jointly cooperated to achieve the goal of expanding the VHF spectrum needed for Police, Fire and EMS first responders. The key in the process was to find a way that would provide enough frequency separation for these agencies to use the technology, while at the same time being sensitive to incumbent users who could already have equipment deployed on these channels. With careful consideration, that plan has been refined and objective has been accomplished.

What the Amendment of Sections 90.20(d) and 90.265 of the Commission's Rules to Facilitate the Use of Vehicular Repeater Units really means is that, though these frequencies are/were primarily designated for use by utilities and waterway telemetry devices, they now are available for secondary use by Public Safety if they are not in use in any particular area. Of course, there are only six frequencies that have been expended for Public Safety use in this ruling. If in any area, all six frequencies are used, then they will be unavailable for new users to coordinate.

The question still remains, how does a first responder license one of these new frequencies? For that, stay tuned. Over the following weeks, the FCC has asked coordinators work together to come up with a best practices plan for coordinating these frequencies so both the new licenses and existing users are protected from interference.