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Regional TIS Gets FCC Green Light

Susan Ashworth, 07/24/2015

A regional emergency management agency took a number of unusual steps to receive a green light from the FCC to operate a new travelers' information station in Southern Pennsylvania.

In its application, Avon Grove requested a license for a new TIS, meeting all the requirements that the FCC usually requests for approving these useful pop-up stations — information on travel, details on traffic hazards, updates on detours and basic directions to make travel more efficient. The Avon Grove Regional Emergency Management Agency currently provides emergency services to about 30,000 residents in West Grove, Pa., including those who traverse a number of busy highways heading in and out of Philadelphia, about 45 minutes to the northeast.

In particular, Avon Grove said in its request to FCC that the TIS' priority would be to “advise motorists within Southeastern Chester County, Pennsylvania, of hazards and emergencies endemic to the area.”

But to bring the project to fruition, Avon Grove had a number of hurdles of its own to consider — in particular, asking the FCC for three separate waivers: one on antenna height, a second on field strength limitations and a third on geographic separation from a broadcast station operating on an adjacent channel.

To obtain even a single waiver, an applicant “faces a high hurdle and must plead with particularity the facts and circumstances that warrant a waiver,” the FCC said in its July 21 order.

The FCC approved Avon Grove's triumvirate of waiver requests based on the information submitted with the application — including detailed field tests, engineering statements and interference studies that illustrated that the proposed antenna height, field strength and location would not cause any harmful interference to nearby station WTTM(AM).

“In reaching this conclusion, we note that TIS stations are licensed on a secondary, noninterference basis,” the FCC report said. “We also find that grant of Avon Grove's waiver request is in the public interest, as it will enable Avon Grove to better protect the safety and property of traveling motorists throughout southeastern Chester County by providing them with critical road condition and safety hazards information, without increasing the likelihood of harmful interference to any licensed broadcast radio station.”