



NEWS

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This is an unofficial announcement of Commission action. Release of the full text of a Commission order constitutes official action.
See MCI v. FCC, 515 F.2d 385 (D.C. Cir. 1974).

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FCC AUTHORIZES VOLUNTARY EXPERIMENTS TO MEASURE IMPACT ON CUSTOMERS OF TECHNOLOGY TRANSITIONS IN COMMUNICATIONS NETWORKS

Washington, D.C. – The Federal Communications Commission today launched a broad set of voluntary experiments meant to ensure that the nation’s communications networks continue to provide the services consumers want and need in this era of historic technological transformations.

Driven by developments in the marketplace, technology transitions in communications networks are already well underway. They include, for example, the transition from plain old telephone service delivered over copper lines to feature-rich voice service using Internet Protocols, delivered over coaxial cable, fiber, or wireless networks.

The FCC’s experiments will focus on how the enduring values underlying operation of today’s networks can be preserved and enhanced throughout technological change. These values are fundamental:

- Public safety communications must be available no matter the technology
- All Americans must have access to affordable communications services
- Competition in the marketplace provides choice for consumers and businesses
- Consumer protection is paramount

New technologies can deliver efficient, innovative services to consumers, spark investment, and grow the economy. But at this time, consumers can revert to legacy services if the newer technologies don’t meet their needs. When adoption of new technologies reaches critical mass, many providers may ask the FCC for permission to cease offering those legacy services.

These experiments will gather information in three broad areas:

- **Service-based experiments:** Providers are invited to submit proposals to initiate tests of providing IP-based alternatives to existing services in discrete geographic areas or situations. Proposals are due by Feb. 20, followed by a public comment and reply period ending on March 31, and final decision on the proposals made at the FCC’s May meeting
- **Targeted experiments and cooperative research:** These experiments will explore the impact on specific values, including universal access and competition.
 - **Rural America:** experiments will focus on ways to deliver robust broadband to rural areas
 - **People with disabilities:** development and funding of interagency research on IP-based technologies for people with disabilities

- **Telephone numbering in all-IP world:** a numbering testbed will address concerns raised about number assignment and databases in an all-IP world, without disrupting current systems
- **Data improvement:**
 - Reform of the FCC's consumer complaint and inquiry process to collect better data on how technological change is impacting consumer values
 - Intergovernmental collaboration (state, local and Tribal governments) to better understand consumer impact
 - Collection and analysis of data on next-generation 911 systems in coordination with the U.S. Department of Transportation's National 911 office and public safety associations

The data gathered in these experiments will ensure that the ongoing public dialogue about technology transitions is based on solid facts and data. This discussion will guide the FCC as it makes complex legal and policy choices that advance and accelerate the technology transitions while ensuring that consumers and the enduring values are not adversely affected.

Action by the Commission January 30, 2014, by Report and Order, Notice of Proposed Rulemaking and Notice of Inquiry (FCC 14-5). Chairman Wheeler, Commissioners Clyburn, Rosenworcel and Pai with Commissioner O'Rielly concurring in part. Chairman Wheeler, Commissioners Clyburn, Rosenworcel, Pai and O'Rielly issuing statements.

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