

ALERT

FCC Grants an Additional 18-Month Extension of Time for Broadcasters to Provide Aural Description of Non-Text Emergency Information

November 16, 2016

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) today granted a further 18-month extension of time for broadcasters to come into compliance with the rule that requires they provide an aural description of non-textual emergency information (such as maps or graphics) on a secondary audio stream. While the FCC did not announce the new effective date in this order, broadcasters should expect the rules to go into effect in May 2018.

In the *Emergency Information/Video Description Order* adopted in 2013, the FCC implemented rules that required broadcasters to relay aurally, on a secondary audio channel, emergency information presented visually during a non-news program. For example, emergency information presented in a screen crawl must be provided aurally on the secondary audio channel. The rules additionally required that any emergency information presented in a non-text format, such as graphics or maps, be aurally described on the secondary audio channel. In March 2015, multiple parties sought and obtained an 18-month waiver of this requirement arguing that no real-time automated solution exists to comply with the requirement. Although advancements have been made, the American Council of the Blind, the American Foundation for the Blind, and the National Association of Broadcasters (Petitioners) requested a further extension on September 2, 2016 because of the continued lack of an automated solution.

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Practice Areas

Media
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The FCC cautioned broadcasters that they should be ready to comply with the rule at the end of this extension period. Additionally, Petitioners must provide a status report on efforts to develop a technical solution to the FCC by November 22, 2017.