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**Broadband over Power Line - A Step Closer**  
**FCC disposes of reconsiderations**  
**as feuding factions find common ground**

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The FCC's 2004 adoption of rules for Broadband over Power Line (BPL), electric utilities' delivery of Internet service along with raw wattage for the toaster, outraged amateur radio operators and certain other licensed radio users. Those parties had argued throughout the proceeding that placing the radio-frequency signals needed for broadband operation on power lines would turn a city's electrical distribution system into a giant antenna, disrupting radio communications for miles around. The FCC order disagreed with those claims, and OKed BPL, but did institute a series of measures intended to protect the amateurs and other opponents. BPL providers must maintain a public database of frequency usage by zip code, and after July 7, 2006, may only install BPL equipment certified as having the capacity to "notch out" individual frequencies by remote control. The providers also must avoid using certain frequencies in certain areas, and in other areas must consult in advance with public safety, Government, or aeronautical users.

Both sides requested reconsideration. The BPL industry objected to a requirement that it post operational information in the public database 30 days before initiating service, and asked for more time to roll out notching-capable equipment. The amateurs and their allies sought to scuttle the BPL enterprise entirely, pending further testing, and argued at length that the rules were inadequate to prevent interference, and in any event had been unlawfully adopted.

To no one's surprise, the FCC defended the legitimacy of its rules, called claims of their inadequacy "premature," and declined to require further testing. But the BPL industry did not get much relief, either. The 30-day advance notice requirement remains in place, as does the July 7 deadline for remote-controllable equipment. The FCC carved out only a minor exception, giving BPL providers another year to fill in gaps in older systems using older, uncertified devices.

The BPL proceeding has raised a lot of anger in the amateur radio community, which felt its interests had received insufficient priority. But the leading amateur radio association since voiced its approval of two BPL technologies that completely avoid amateur frequencies. As it happens, one of those technologies accounts for the major ongoing commercial deployments of BPL. After years of conflict, peace may be at hand.