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More Tweaks To Dedicated Short-Range Rules

*By Donald J. Evans
evans@fhhlaw.com
703-812-0430*

The Dedicated Short-Range Communications Service (DSRC) is an idea whose time may finally be coming. DSRC is that service which will permit vehicles to be alerted instantly of impending crashes and permit other informative communications with moving vehicles. Although proposed and originally adopted more than four years ago, the FCC and the industry have been fine-tuning the process for the last few years prior to wide-scale licensing and deployment of equipment. The latest round of reconsideration petitions has resulted in the following adjustments to the regulatory scheme announced in late 2003:

Channels 172 and 184 will be dedicated to public safety-related applications. Although the FCC had previously resisted dedication of channels in this service, it became convinced that even milliseconds of delay due to congestion could create the potential for accidents which might otherwise have been avoided. These channels are therefore now reserved for public safety, with channel 184 being permitted a higher operating power for longer distance safety applications such as “intersection violation mitigation.”

Licensees must file a notification when licensed sites have been constructed and put into operation.

Higher power is authorized for antennas between six and fifteen meters above ground.

The FCC rejected proposals to appoint a third party database manager for this service and to assign a unique identifier to licensed DSRC operations (as opposed to adjacent unlicensed ones). Underscoring the sense that this service remains a work in progress, the FCC left open for further study the adoption of new emission mask rules for certain higher power operations, the designation of a special licensing category for public safety-related On Board Units, and, most significantly, the need for prior frequency coordination with fixed satellite service earth stations. The industry is working on standards that may or may not warrant further action in these areas in the future, and the FCC indicated it would accept those recommendations as part of this Docket when consensus is achieved.