

National Communications System Assigned to Administer Priority Access Service

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By David Scott, Operations Division, OMNCS

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has assigned the Office of the Manager, National Communications System (OMNCS) responsibility for the day-to-day administration of Priority Access Service (PAS), effective October 10, 2000. The NCS will support any NS/EP user request on or after October 10 -- if and when wireless providers offer the service. The FCC will maintain oversight responsibility. In an FCC Second Report and Order and Fourth Notice of Proposed Rulemaking dated July 13, 2000, the FCC determined there is a strong need and demand for PAS, by Government agencies at all levels and by non-government NS/EP personnel, such as those working in public utilities, medical services and facilities and transportation.

This Report and Order will permit, but not require, commercial mobile radio service (CMRS) providers to offer PAS to NS/EP personnel. PAS will allow authorized NS/EP users in emergencies to gain access to the next available wireless channel. However, PAS calls would not preempt calls in progress.

Although the offering of PAS by wireless service providers is voluntary, any provider that chooses to offer PAS is required to adhere to uniform operating protocols, which establish five priority levels for NS/EP users.

Those levels, with user examples, are:

1. Executive Leadership and Policy Makers
 - President of the United States
 - Secretary of Defense
 - Federal Senior Staff
 - State Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Cabinet-level for public safety and health
 - Mayors, County Commissioners, senior staff

2. Disaster Response/Military Command and Control
 - Federal emergency operations center coordinators
 - State emergency Services director, National Guard leadership
 - Federal, State, and local personnel with continuity of government responsibility
 - Incident Command Center Managers
 - Local emergency managers
 - Federal personnel with intelligence and diplomatic responsibilities

3. Public Health, Safety and Law Enforcement Command
 - Federal law enforcement command
 - State police leadership
 - Local fire and law enforcement command
 - Emergency medical service leaders
 - Search and rescue team leaders
 - Emergency communications coordinators

4. Public Services/Utilities and Public Welfare
 - Army Corps of Engineers leadership
 - Power, water, and sewage and telecommunications utilities
 - Transportation leadership

5. Disaster Recovery
 - Medical recovery operations leadership
 - Detailed damage assessment leadership
 - Disaster shelter coordination and management
 - Critical Disaster Field Office support personnel

The FCC Report and Order directs the use of authorizing agents, who will validate the user's request for PAS. The OMNCS will solicit participation of authorizing agents within the Federal departments and agencies and at the State and Territorial level for State and local NS/EP personnel. The OMNCS will issue the authorization code number and approve the appropriate priority level for each PAS request.

Because PAS is a voluntary offering, the OMNCS recommends that potential PAS users contact their present wireless service provider(s) and inquire whether the company will offer Priority Access Service. A demand from potential subscribers will encourage the providers to determine there is sufficient user demand for PAS to justify offering this service.

If you have any questions related to the Priority Access Service, please contact:

David K. Scott
National Communications System, ATTN: N3
701 South Courthouse Road, Arlington, VA 22204-2198
703-607-4993
scottd@ncs.gov
703-607-4998 (fax)

or

Maj. Jean Trakinat, (USAF)
National Communications System, ATTN: N2
701 South Courthouse Road
Arlington, VA 22204-2198
703-607-6113
trakinaj@ncs.gov
703-607-4830 (fax)