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EWA Asks FCC to Waive Site-Based Construction Deadlines

The Enterprise Wireless Alliance has asked the FCC to waive until Aug. 31 the build-out requirements for site-based and mobile-only wireless systems with compliance deadlines between March 15 and Aug. 31.

“Granting temporary waiver relief would be consistent with other public interest actions the Commission has taken in response to the extraordinary disruption being caused by the coronavirus pandemic and would relieve the FCC of having to act on a large number of individual waiver requests that otherwise could be filed,” EWA said in its request.

“Because the pandemic is an international problem, it also has engendered significant supply chain delays that affect many products on which the American economy relies, including wireless telecommunications equipment. Activities that were routine and easily achievable, as well as products that were routinely available even one month ago, now present entirely unexpected challenges,” EWA added.

“Because new and modified licenses are issued on a daily basis, construction deadlines for site-based and mobile-only systems also arise daily. A licensee deploying a multi-site system might have multiple deadlines within a week, depending on when the FCC processed each of its applications. During normal times, complying with these timelines for placing spectrum into operation is not a problem except in the rarest of instances. These are not normal times,” EWA stressed. “Constructing a wireless system requires equipment that often comes from multiple vendors, some of whose supply chains already have been delayed or are expected soon to be seriously disrupted. It requires humans to prepare the equipment for installation, to deliver it to the location where it is to be deployed, and to place it into operation. It may require someone to climb a tower to install antennas and lines. In some cases, it requires users of subscriber devices to bring their radios to a location where they can be reprogrammed or a programmer to be dispatched to the place where the radios are located. Multiple people are involved at every step of the process and, at this time, people are in short supply.” —Paul Kirby, paul.kirby@wolterskluwer.com

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