

**THE VERMONT
ASSOCIATION OF
BROADCASTERS**

500A DALTON DRIVE
COLCHESTER, VT 05446
(802) 655-5764
VAB@TOGETHER.NET

WJJR IS OUT FOR BLOOD

Last year, Rutland radio stations WJJR and WSYB helped collect 712 pints of blood for the American Red Cross during their annual "Gift of Life Marathon." The blood drive set a one-day record for Northern New England. But now the Pamal Catamount stations are aiming higher. The goal for this year's marathon is 773 pints, which would break the All-New England record set September 11 at Boston's Fenway Park. This year's marathon will be held December 23 from 10:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. at Rutland's historic Paramount Theatre. Donors will receive snacks, gift bags and a chance to watch some favorite holiday movies on the theatre's big screen.

NEW VT AM HEADED TO NY

Many local broadcasters were a bit surprised when an out-of-state group proposed a new AM station for Jericho, VT. Locating a tower is tricky enough, but especially so in Vermont, thanks to ACT 250. No surprise then when the proponents, Al Alonzo and Charles Hecht, petitioned the FCC last month to relocate the proposed facility to East Greenbush, NY. In the filing, they ask that WVVT be allowed to broadcast at 15KW at 670 AM. They hope to rent tower space from WGDJ in that town.

NEW TV STATION IN WORKS

Twin Valley Television, headed by Jeff Loper, has purchased the license of full-power WCWF Channel 40 in Saranac Lake, NY from Ch. 61 Associates. The sale price was reported at just over one million dollars. The station has tested in analog, but is now building its digital system, according to Radio and TV Business Report. Loper is also a partner in a group that has an LMA for WDYC-FM in Saranac Lake.

The VAB Voice



December, 2008

DTV "Soft Test" Planned for Burlington/Plattsburgh Market

Local television broadcasters are banding together in an effort to help viewers know if they need a digital converter box or not.

At 7:58 p.m. on December 16, all local full-power TV stations in the Burlington-Plattsburgh market will send split messages to their analog and digital viewers.

Analog viewers, those watching their favorite local station over the air with a rooftop or rabbit ears antenna will see a message urging them to obtain a \$40 coupon for a digital converter box. The boxes are now widely available at dozens of local retailers. The analog viewers will be reminded that full-power analog broadcasting in the U.S. will come to an end on Feb. 17. (So-called "nightlight" service may continue on analog—see sidebar).

Those watching on cable, satellite or digital over-the-air TV will be assured that they are all set as the transition approaches.

The December soft test will be the first of at least



three to take place between now and the transition date. The agreement to run the soft tests was the culmination of months of meetings coordinated by VPT's Ann Curran. The soft test will be conducted by VPT, WCAX-TV, WFFF-TV, WVNY-TV, WPTZ-TV, WNNE-TV and by Mountain Lake Public Television.

Most of the stations will run the test for one or two minutes, leading up to the top of the hour. The public TV stations may opt to run a longer test.

Recently, the FCC has urged broadcasters nationwide to run a five-minute soft test at 7:30 p.m. on Dec. 17. They learned that many broadcasters had already come to an agreement on when and how often to do the soft tests.

Nightlight Bill to U.S. House

On November 20 the U.S. Senate gave unanimous approval to a bill by Sen. Jay Rockefeller (D-WV) that asks all TV stations to continue to broadcast in analog for 30 days after the DTV transition date of Feb. 17. Stations would be asked to show DTV transition information on the analog broadcasts, as well as local emergency notifications if needed. The so-called "nightlight" bill is supported by both the White House and the NTIA. The bill now moves to the House, which won't reconvene until December 8. The House version of the bill is being sponsored by Rep. Lois Capps (D-CA). The NAB also supports passage of the bill, calling it one last shot to make sure no viewers are left behind in the DTV transition.

WHITE SPACE DEVICES? DON'T HOLD YOUR BREATH!

BY David Oxenford

The FCC has released the details of its "White Spaces" decision, authorizing the use of both fixed and mobile unlicensed devices within the television spectrum.

In theory, these devices are supposed to be able to sense the existence of television signals so that they can operate on other frequencies and avoid creating interference. However, as an extra safety measure, the FCC has also required that these devices connect at least once a day with a database of all other protected users of the television spectrum and, by use of geo-location technology, determine what other users are in the area where the "TVBD" (television band device) is being used and operate on frequencies which protect those other users.

When one reviews the full text of the FCC decision, it becomes pretty clear that we should not look for such devices anytime soon.

While the Commission's order actually discussed in some detail the question of whether

these devices should be permitted to operate before the end of the digital television conversion in February 2009, given the issues that still need to be resolved, this discussion really appears to be an academic one.

First, devices that meet all of the FCC requirements have to be designed and built, and type-accepted by the FCC labs. In a recent article by Shelly Palmer in his well regarded blog on television issues, he suggests that many engineers are convinced that these devices simply will not work. When one reviews the FCC requirements, one can see why that might be the case.

First, the devices must be designed so that they can determine where they are operating, sense other users of the spectrum, and access the database of other users of the spectrum. That database has not yet been created, and the FCC has said that it will, by subsequent public notice, solicit private companies to create the database (or databases, as multiple companies may be authorized to maintain competing databases).

The database will list not only full power television stations, but also low power TV stations and TV translators. And, while in most cases the TVBDs will be required to protect the full-power TV stations only to their protected contour, there will be added protections for stations outside of their protected contours in the path between the TV station and either LPTV or translator stations which pick up these stations off of the air, or cable television system headends which pick up TV station signals. Thus, the location of cable headends and that of LPTV and TV translators, and the signal paths between them and the stations that they pick up, must all be computed.

In addition, there are Land Mobile radio services that operate in the television band, which will also have to be protected, and



entered into the database. Wireless microphones that operate in the TV band will also be predicted, and sites that regularly use those microphones (e.g. theaters, stadiums, churches) will be eligible for registration in the database. Even sites that only use those microphones for special events can register for the length of the event. All of these items will need to be entered into a database that will be accessible by the devices - a project that will obviously take time.

In addition, the devices will not be able to operate in areas near the Canadian and Mexican borders, nor in areas near the "quiet zones" around radio astronomy installations. The TVBDs will have to be able to determine their locations so, for the most part, they will need outdoor antennas to receive the satellite signals to determine their locations. Fixed location TVBDs, which can operate at higher power than mobile devices, will also have to register with the FCC so that, if they create interference, they can be located.

With all of these requirements, it will be quite a design feat for engineers to accommodate all of the FCC requirements. In addition, the FCC will have to complete the regulatory requirements of authorizing the databases.

So don't look for these services to provide broadband access (or any other service) until all of these requirements are met. And, of course, there still may be legal hurdles to overcome should opponents of the devices appeal the FCC decision. So stay tuned...

SAVE THE DATE!

VAB CONVENTION SET FOR MAY 7 IN MONTPELIER



Chris Lytle

The 2009 VAB Convention will be held May 7 at the Capitol Plaza Hotel & Conference Center. We're delighted to offer morning and afternoon seminars with three great speakers: Sales trainer extraordinaire Chris Lytle, Morning Show coach Valerie Geller and sales and copywriting wiz Jeffrey Hedquist! Watch your mailbox and www.vab.org for more details and registration information.



Valerie Geller



Jeffrey Hedquist



COMMERCIAL OF THE YEAR AWARDS COMING!

Did your station produce some killer spots this year? Of course!

Now get ready to enter those spots in the 2008 VAB Commercial of the Year Awards! Your entry form will be arriving soon. The awards will be announced at this year's VAB convention, May 7 in Montpelier.