



NEWS

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This is an unofficial announcement of Commission action. Release of the full text of a Commission order constitutes official action.
See MCI v. FCC, 515 F 2d 385 (D.C. Circ 1974).

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FCC ADOPTS RULE CHANGES FOR IMPROVED RADIO FREQUENCY IDENTIFICATION SYSTEMS TO FACILITATE HOMELAND SECURITY EFFORTS

Washington, D.C. – In an effort to increase homeland security and improve the efficiency of commercial shipping operations, the Federal Communications Commission today adopted a Third Report and Order (Order) that allows for the operation of improved radio frequency identification (RFID) systems for use in conjunction with commercial shipping containers. This action is expected to result in lower shipping costs and improved security at ports, rail yards and warehouses in commercial and industrial settings by enabling the contents of containers to be rapidly inventoried. These improvements will also help system users determine whether tampering with their contents has occurred during shipping.

RFID systems use radio signals to identify items. Uses of RFID include electronic toll collection such as the E-Z Pass system and anti-theft tags. An RFID system consists of a tag mounted on the item to be identified and a device that receives information transmitted from the tag. The Commission's rules permit RFID systems to be operated on a number of frequency bands, subject to limitations on their maximum signal level and transmission duration. These limitations constrain the range and information transfer rates of RFIDs.

The Order increases the maximum signal level permitted for RFID systems operating in the 433.5-434.5 MHz band to facilitate more reliable transmissions with greater range than the rules previously allowed. The 433 MHz band is available for unlicensed operation in many countries around the world, thus enabling manufactures to produce a single model of a device for use in both the United States and other countries. The Order also increases the maximum permitted transmission duration for these RFID systems from one second to 60 seconds, resulting in a sixty-fold increase in the amount of data that can be transmitted, thus facilitating the scanning of the contents of an entire shipping container. To minimize the risk of interference to authorized communication services, operation of RFID systems with higher power and longer transmission duration is limited to commercial shipping containers in commercial and industrial areas.

Action by the Commission April 15, 2004, by Third Report and Order (FCC 04-98).
Chairman Powell, Commissioners Abernathy, Copps, Martin, and Adelstein. Statement by
Chairman Powell.

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