

FCC Enforcement Bureau Centralizes Filing of Interference Complaints; Parties Directed to First Exhaust Private Efforts to Resolve Cases of RFI

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On October 7, the Enforcement Bureau (“EB” or “Bureau”) of the Federal Communications Commission (“FCC” or “Commission”) took action to enhance the method by which public safety and enterprise wireless providers file interference complaints and receive initial responses. In a [Public Notice](#), the Bureau announced that a new interference complaint intake portal, which the Bureau sees as a “backstop” when private resolution efforts fail, is now operational for these types of spectrum users. The action was in response to the Commission’s [2015 Field Modernization Order](#), in which the FCC called on the Bureau to ensure that EB’s field offices respond to radiofrequency interference (“RFI”) complaints filed by public safety and industry users in a timely fashion.

At the same time, the EB reminded parties that, before turning to the Commission with interference complaints, they should first seek to identify the source of interference and resolve complaints privately. It is worth remembering that the FCC shut down more than one-third of its EB Field Offices in early 2017, leaving the remaining field agents and staff with a larger work load. The new portal prompts private safety and enterprise users to first address interference problems through private means before filing through the portal, including certain industry-created reporting mechanisms where available.

Historically, public safety interference complaints have been made to the closest Bureau Field Office or to the Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau’s Operations Center, from which they are referred to the relevant Field Office. Most enterprise service interference complaints have been filed through the Cellular Telephone Interference Complaint web page maintained by the Bureau, which are then referred to the relevant Field Office. Those complaints are automatically forwarded to the closest EB Field Office. The Public Notice observes that other industry, enterprise, and government service interference complaints are made directly to the closest Field Office or are filed through the FCC’s websites.

With the new portal, there will be a single intake point nationwide for public safety and enterprise service interference complaints made by both non-federal public safety and enterprise service users and federal users. Public safety users include both emergency services, such as, police, fire, other first responders, and law enforcement, as well as safety-of-life services (e.g., Coast Guard, FAA, airport authorities, aircraft pilots, and operators of maritime vessels). The Bureau uses “enterprise”

to cast a wide net over a range of individually licensed services, including Advanced Wireless Services (“AWS”), wireless carrier services, broadcast services, and private land mobile radio services.

The FCC is adding a “PSIX-ESIX Interference Complaints” link to its [home page](#) which will redirect to the Radio Frequency Service Interference Complaint Portal [landing page](#) where the web user can select the type of complaint – public safety, enterprise, or consumer.

Consumers (which includes amateur radio operators, CB radio operators and other Personal, Wireless Service users, and General Mobile Radio Service users) experiencing difficulties with a range of communications services, including radio frequency interference, will continue to use the Commission’s existing [Consumer Complaint Center](#). Selection of a consumer complaint in the portal will connect to the Center.

The Public Notice explains that the new portal implements other features anticipated in an earlier [Bureau release](#) with respect to public safety and enterprise interference complaints, such as an initial review, where appropriate, and routing to the appropriate Field Office automatically, and issuance of an e-mail confirmation with a unique complaint number and expected initial response time from the Field Office. The Public Notice states that high priority interference issues (which includes those impact public safety operations) will receive response within one calendar day of filing with the FCC. Medium and low priority interference complaints will receive an initial response within two and five days, respectively.

The Bureau hopes the portal will establish and improve relationships with EB agents in their areas of operation as well as enhance the efficiency and responsiveness of the remaining Field Offices in dealing with complaints. These are noteworthy aspirations. Whether the new intake portal will be a success, ideally leading to more rapid and successful resolution when the Commission’s expertise is invoked, remains to be seen, but it appears that complainants can anticipate standardized and smoother first steps in the process.