

ALERT

FCC Extends Deadline for Accreditation of Equipment Testing Labs

June 16, 2016

On June 15, 2016, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC or Commission) adopted a Memorandum Opinion and Order extending the transition period within which all laboratories that test for equipment authorization must obtain FCC-recognized accreditation to perform such testing. The new implementation date is July 12, 2017.

As directed by the Order, the FCC's Office of Engineering & Technology (OET) also published specific guidance on the process for recognizing foreign laboratory accreditation bodies.

In a previous Order adopted in December 2014, the FCC altered its equipment authorization rules to require all laboratories that perform equipment certification testing to be accredited by a recognized accreditation body, among other things. Specifically, the Commission terminated its practice of allowing test data to be submitted by unaccredited laboratories that registered with the Commission (Section 2.948-listed labs). The Commission's Order further provided that test laboratories located outside the United States must either be accredited by a foreign Designating Authority and recognized by the Commission under the terms of a government-to-government Mutual Recognition Agreement (MRA) or, if located in a country that does not have an MRA with the U.S., be accredited by an organization recognized by the Commission for performing accreditation in that country. To facilitate accreditation of testing laboratories in non-MRA countries, the Commission also adopted a rule allowing a party that is seeking to become a laboratory accreditation body to submit an application for recognition to the Chief of the FCC OET. The 2014 Order provided for a transition deadline of July 13, 2016.

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Responding to petitions for reconsideration filed by Motorola Solutions and TIA, the Commission agreed with concerns that many labs would not be able to make the July 13, 2016 deadline. Accordingly, the FCC extended the implementation date of the new requirements by one-year to allow testing labs sufficient time to become recognized under the newly minted procedures. In the interim, the Commission will continue to recognize existing Section 2.948-listed laboratories. To help explain the new procedures, the FCC's OET issued a new Knowledge Database (KDB) guidance document explaining its procedures for the recognition of laboratory accreditation bodies and updated its previously issued KDB document on all relevant roles and responsibilities in the accredited test laboratory program.

For further information on this matter, please contact any of the listed authors.