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Alexicon *insider*

INFORMATION AND ADVOCACY FOR THE
RURAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS INDUSTRY

Regulatory Headlines

[Attempts to Close Digital Divide](#)

Over the past 15 years, there have been several government initiatives to expand the adoption of broadband in the United States. At the same time, industry has been busily focused on extending the reach and capacity of both fixed and mobile broadband networks. Yet, a digital divide still exists. Why? Let's review the history here.

[Pai Highlights Telehealth, Distance Learning](#)

FCC Chairman Ajit Pai on Wednesday said his agency has been working closely with Congress during the pandemic, particularly to improve telehealth and online learning as more Americans stay at home to slow the spread of the coronavirus.

[Pai Lifeline Proposal](#)

FCC Chairman Ajit Pai is recommending that the minimum monthly data allotment for the low-income Lifeline program should be 4.5 gigabytes (GB) per month.

[Congress Should Act on USF Contributions](#)

The Universal Service Fund (USF) contribution factor has hit 26%, notes AT&T Executive Vice President of Regulatory & State External Affairs Joan Marsh in a blog post.

[FCC Adopts Vertical 911 Rules](#)

The Federal Communications Commission has adopted an [order](#) expanding its "z-axis" vertical location E911 requirements for wireless carriers. Under the new requirements, nationwide wireless providers will have until April 2025 to deploy z-axis technology nationwide, while non-nationwide wireless providers will have an additional year (until April 2026) to deploy such technology within their service areas.

[Pole Attachment Rule Clarification](#)

The FCC's Wireline Competition Bureau issued a [Declaratory Ruling](#) in response to a Petition filed by CTIA seeking clarification of the utility pole attachment rules.



Market Watch

[Windstream Posts Loss in Q2](#)

[VZ Rural Broadband Strategy](#)

[Consolidated WFH Service Launches](#)

[Alaska Comm. Broadband Expansion](#)



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Questions? Comments?
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Technology Trends

New and notable technology and services

U.S. Ransomware Attacks Up 109%

The midyear update of the 2020 SonicWall Cyber Threat Report shows an increase in ransomware attacks, malicious files disguised as Microsoft Office file types and IoT malware attacks. These increases were mitigated, at least to some extent, by a drop in overall malware attacks worldwide. Data about ransomware attacks was particularly troubling, showing a 109% increase in U.S. ransomware attacks. The broad-based report—it uses data from 1.1 million sensors in more than 215 countries and territories—identifies a chaotic environment.

Windows, Linux Security Issue

If you are a Windows or Linux user, brace yourself for a long siege of vulnerability nightmares. The fix will be long and treacherous and could brick your computers. Eclipsium researchers Wednesday released details of a set of newly discovered vulnerabilities dubbed "BootHole" that opens up billions of Windows and Linux devices to attacks.

Verizon Late to LTE Fixed Wireless

Joining several of its industry peers, Verizon announced it will offer fixed wireless Internet services to homes and offices in select rural locations over its LTE network. The service is available to Verizon's mobile phone customers for \$40 per month and for \$60 per month to other customers. Verizon said customers can expect average download speeds of 25 Mbit/s with peak speeds up to 50 Mbit/s.

Zoom Fatigue

It's well over 100 days into the Covid-19 crisis, and I have to make a confession: I hate doing everything over video chat. I hated it at the start, and I hate it in new ways now. You've probably heard of "Zoom fatigue." I've transcended Zoom fatigue. At this stage in the pandemic, I'm experiencing something more advanced, like that moment on a long run when you've fought through fatigue, tapped into your body's store of endorphins, and also lost a toenail.

Amazon vs SpaceX Internet War

Amazon has received US approval for its Project Kuiper broadband satellite constellation and says it will invest more than \$10bn in the initiative that will bring it into direct competition with SpaceX's Starlink business. The Federal Communications Commission on Thursday approved Amazon's plan, revealed in mid-2019, to launch 3,236 satellites into low-Earth orbit and deliver broadband to underserved parts of the world.

IN FOCUS

FCC Robocall Blocking Order and FNPRM

The FCC released another [order](#) (3rd Report and Order and Order on Reconsideration) and Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (4th) in its ongoing proceeding designed to address Robocalls and caller ID authentication.

The latest actions continue the FCC's efforts to synchronize its previous rulings with the TRACED Act signed into law on the last day of 2019 (see January 3, 2020 [Special Bulletin](#)). The latest order adopts safe harbors for companies to rely on for liability protection when legitimate calls are inadvertently blocked.

The first safe harbor protects phone companies that use reasonable analytics, including caller ID authentication information, to identify and block illegal or unwanted calls from liability. Carriers using authentication information provided by STIR/SHAKEN, or any other effective call authentication framework for non-IP based calls, will be covered by this safe harbor. As of now, only STIR/SHAKEN meets this criteria and thus some providers (i.e., those with non-IP networks) will not be able to avail themselves of this safe harbor.

The second safe harbor protects providers that block call traffic from bad actor upstream voice service providers that pass illegal or unwanted calls along to other providers, when those upstream providers have been notified but fail to take action to stop these calls. The FCC has established a framework pursuant to which this can happen that includes notification to the originating provider and probable action by the USTelecom-led [Industry Traceback group](#). The important point under this safe harbor is that terminating providers will now be able to block call based on "bad actor" providers, in accordance with

the process laid out in the order, whereas only particular calls were previously able to be blocked.

The FCC also requires providers that block calls furnish a single point of contact to resolve unintended or inadvertent blocking. Also, providers should take all reasonable efforts to ensure that critical calls, such as those from PSAPs are not blocked, and 911 calls should never be blocked.

The FNPRM requests comment on a number of issues specifically related to the TRACED Act—Sections 4, 7, and 10, as well as other issues surrounding robocall mitigation and caller ID authentication.

The overall immediate effect of this order will depend on whether or not a terminating provider has an IP-based network and has begun STIR/SHAKEN implementation. Recall that certain rural and non-IP providers will likely receive a 12-month extension of the 6/30/2021 STIR/SHAKEN implementation deadline. Still, there are a couple of things to keep in mind for all providers:

1. *The single point of contact requirement for resolving unintended or inadvertent blocking*
2. *Originating providers will have certain steps to take when contacted about bad actors if calls are originating on their networks.*



Alexicon at Work

The sense of relief is pervasive across Alexicon now that cost study true-up, HCLS filing, and other deadlines are past. The break is likely short-lived as the FCC has remained active, and states still require information from ETCs to perform their annual ETC certification duties in October.

Be on the lookout for more Bulletins covering the FCC's activities.



Questions? Comments?

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