

May 19, 2021

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# Alexicon *insider*

INFORMATION AND ADVOCACY FOR THE  
RURAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS INDUSTRY

## Regulatory Headlines

### [FCC Bets Big on Elon Musk](#)

Derrin Carelli's Reddit post couldn't be a better advertisement for Starlink, the satellite internet service brought to you by Elon Musk's SpaceX. In a short video, Carelli shows off the breathtaking view from his cabin, nearly 11,000 feet up in the Colorado Rockies.

### [Ookla Tests Starlink Service Speeds](#)

U.S. subscribers using Space X's Starlink non-geostationary satellite broadband service experienced median download speeds between 40 and 93 Mbps in the first quarter of 2021, according to tests conducted using Ookla's speed test technology. Median latency for the service varied from 31 ms to 88 ms.

### [FCC Map Overstates Access](#)

According to the researchers, FCC data over-reports broadband availability by 6.5% of the U.S. population.

### [Homework Gap Key to Digital Divide](#)

Schools across the country during the past year of distance learning have had access to important data on who has access to broadband and who doesn't.

### [RDOF Support Going to Served Areas](#)

The FCC is getting set to award hundreds of millions of Rural Digital Opportunity Fund (RDOF) dollars to service providers to deploy broadband to areas that already have service, according to an analysis by Competitive Carriers Association (CCA) filed with the commission.

### [Charter Requests RDOF Waiver](#)

Charter Communications filed a waiver request on May 11 with the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) related to its award in the Rural Digital Opportunity Fund (RDOF) auction. Charter, like all RDOF auction winners, promised to bring broadband to unserved areas. But the company has been auditing the census block groups (CBGs) where it was awarded funds...



## Market Watch

[Report Finds Strong Broadband Satisfaction](#)

[States Ramped Up Broadband Support in 2020](#)

[TDS Sees Gigabit Penetration of 17%](#)

[Comcast Gets Aggressive with 5G Pricing](#)



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Questions? Comments?  
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# Technology Trends

New and notable technology and services

## What's Best for Rural Fiber Broadband?

The Rural Digital Opportunity Fund (RDOF) has set a minimum performance tier of 25/3 Mbps but prioritized support for services with faster speeds and lower latency. The goal was to close the “digital divide” and encourage providers to offer affordable, reliable broadband connectivity everywhere. Fiber stands tall among all technologies as the most adaptive technology with the highest capacity and lowest latency. It is the prime high-speed network that RDOF favors.

## LEO Satellite Broadband Could Spur 5G

According to a new report from CoBank, Low Earth Orbiting (LEO) satellites could serve as a catalyst to expedite the availability of 5G in rural communities. “In rural America, 5G coverage appears to be improving, but the increase in speed is underwhelming,” said Jeff Johnston, lead communications economist with CoBank, in a prepared statement. Fixed wireless over 5G is beginning to draw more attention, the report notes...

## Ransomware's Dangerous New Trick

RANSOMWARE GROUPS HAVE always taken a more-is-more approach. If a victim pays a ransom and then goes back to business as usual—hit them again. Or don't just encrypt a target's systems; steal their data first, so you can threaten to leak it if they don't pay up. The latest escalation? Ransomware hackers who encrypt a victim's data twice at the same time.

## Mobile Devices Under Siege

Mobile phishing exposure doubled among financial services and insurance organizations between 2019 and 2020. Cyberattackers are deliberately targeting phones, tablets, and Chromebooks to increase their odds of finding a vulnerable entry point. A single successful phishing or mobile ransomware attack can give attackers access to proprietary market research, client financials, investment strategies and cash or other liquid assets, according to a new Lookout research team report released May 6.

## Starlink Broadband Service Review

The problem with reality is that it is very irritating. In our imaginations, we might dream of a satellite internet system that delivers lightning-fast broadband speeds from space, freeing us from the dreary earthbound experience of cable monopolies and wireless data caps. We might envision an ISP that smashes through the plodding local politics of digging fiber trenches by literally achieving escape velocity and delivering fast, reliable internet from the heavens above.

## IN FOCUS

**Form 481  
Due July 1**

Annual Eligible Telecommunications Carrier (ETC) reports pursuant to 47 CFR §54.313 (High Cost)/54.422 (Lifeline), done via FCC Form 481, are due this year on **July 1**. There are a few changes, including a new certification requirement related to the FCC's Supply Chain Security rules. Other changes, inapplicable to most reporting carriers, relate to CAF Phase II, CAF Phase II auction, Uniendo a Puerto Rico Fund Stage 2, and USVI Stage 2 support programs.

### New Communications Supply Chain Certification

According to USAC, the Supply Chain Security certification this year (per §54.9 of the FCC's rules) is required to ensure that USF support is not used “for the purchase of equipment or services from *companies* identified as a security threat to the nation's communications infrastructure (covered companies).”

- ⇒ Section 54.9 went into effect on January 3, 2020 and is applicable to all four USF programs (High Cost, Lifeline, E-Rate, and Rural Health Care)
- ⇒ On June 30, 2020, the Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau (PSHSB) of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) designated Huawei and ZTE, and their parents, affiliates, and subsidiaries, as covered companies.

In addition to this year's certification in accordance with §54.9, there will also be annual certifications related to §54.10, which prohibits the use of USF support for purchase, rent, or lease OR the maintenance of any covered *equipment*.

Reporting service providers will see one new supply chain certification in the Form 481 this year:

*Section 54.9: I certify under penalty of perjury that no universal service support has been or will be used to purchase, obtain, maintain, improve, modify, or otherwise support any equipment or services produced or provided by any company designated by the Federal Communications Commission as posing a national security threat to the integrity of communications networks or the communications supply chain since the effective date of the designations.*

This annual certification will be required for each USF program in which the provider participates.

### Form 481 Resources

[E-File via “One Portal”](#)

[Form 481 FAQs](#)

[Form 481 Webinar Slides](#)

[User Guide](#)

[Form 481 Template](#)

[Filing Guide](#)

[Form 481 Instructions](#)

[Upload Templates](#)

## Reminders

- ⇒ **988 Suicide Prevention Hotline.** Mandatory 10-digit dialing transition has started for certain area codes containing 988 NXXs. See the 8/19/20 *Special Bulletin*, 8/20/20 email distribution of the NANPA transition schedule, and 11/18/20 & 1/28/21 email distributions of NANPA's latest guidance. Mandatory 10-digit dialing in the affected area codes began on October 24, 2021.
- ⇒ **Robocall Mitigation Program.** All providers under the automatic 2-year STIR/SHAKEN implementation extension must adopt a robocall mitigation program and certify certain information to the [online database](#) by 6/30/21.



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