



White Space Issues

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March 2008

The term "White Space" has raised a lot of concern and confusion within the audio/video industry lately, but its definition is simple: white space defines the vacant radio frequency spectrum sandwiched between UHF television channels. In other words, the prime real estate that [licensed] wireless microphone systems have called home for many years. Unfortunately that spectrum is about to be way overdeveloped--causing our once trustworthy wireless microphones some huge problems.

The issue is tied into the new digital broadcast changes occurring in February of 2009. The federal government has enacted legislation that allows new, unlicensed devices to invade this spectrum that will be somewhat abandoned by this switch. The FCC is going to allow devices such as local area networks, PDA's, Wi-Fi, cordless home telephones, and other so-called "lifestyle" devices. If you ponder that only briefly, it is easy to see how harmful this is going to be to very low power wireless microphones. The chance of interference, especially in applications where there are multiple microphones under one roof, is daunting. The argument for the change is that wireless services will become affordable and will reach a far larger demographic.

To combat this issue the government and their wise consultants want to develop a smart chip that will tell a device to stay away from others in its range. This is great in theory and will likely become a standard, but there is one big problem with this logic-- none of your wireless microphones have such a chip. Furthermore, the digital upgrade is less than a year away and no wireless microphone company has been provided with a standard or engineering provision to implement into their new or existing systems.

Here is how you should prepare for the February 2009 digital broadcast switch:

(Note: It's best to be proactive because supply and demand in coming months could certainly be a factor.)

1. Evaluate your current inventory.

This would include systems you use when needed, and systems that are permanently installed. If you are using eight or more systems in one facility, we recommend having your Dascom representative visit so we can determine the frequencies and parameters.

2. Get old systems upgraded.

If you have any wireless systems that are operating in the VHF band (they would be older), then you will need upgraded systems very soon. What we can provide is a spectrum search and using that, we will be able to provide you with new systems.

3. If you need new wireless, now is the time to get it.

If you are in need of new wireless, Shure manufactures the UHF-R series that has 2400 selectable frequencies over a 60 MHz bandwidth-- with this rig interference should not be an issue. The cost per channel is higher but it will give you added peace of mind instead of having to scrap a six-month-old wireless system.

Unfortunately there are no easy answers but there are workable solutions and when it comes to wireless, failure is never an option.

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