

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
Office of the Chief Technology Officer



MEMORANDUM

TO: D.C. Zoning Commission

FROM: Peter Roy, Deputy Chief Technology Officer
Office of the Chief Technology Officer

DATE: October 16, 2002

SUBJECT: Public Safety Wireless Communications – Request for Exemption from Proposed Case #01-02 (Text Amendment- Regulation of Antennas, Antenna Towers, and Monopoles.) Zoning Commission for the District of Columbia

RECOMMENDATION

Because of the critical nature of the District's Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness (PS/EP) communications, the Office of the Chief Technology Officer (OCTO) strongly believes that the public interest will be best served by exempting all Government of the District of Columbia (GDC) public safety wireless antennas, antenna towers and monopoles from, or be allowed as a matter-of-right liberal interpretation of, the regulations of the Zoning Commission.

JUSTIFICATION

OCTO asserts that the health, safety and welfare of the population is best served by GDC public safety communications networks that can both facilitate rapid assistance for District citizens, and promote the safety of emergency services personnel and that these real and immediate needs outweigh any perceived impact from wireless communications antennas and towers in the District. Public Safety/Emergency Preparedness networks are critical elements in the District's contribution to national security and will take on an even greater importance in the event of a terrorist, or similar, attack or incident.

The intent of the exemption is to optimize the designs of our Public Safety/Emergency Preparedness networks. In every case, best efforts will be made to minimize any negative aesthetic impacts from implementation of these networks. In no instance will any antenna installation introduce any public health or safety risk from exposure to radio frequency (RF) energy as per the governing FCC regulations.

The District is now in the process of upgrading its public safety private radio networks to implement national best-practice wireless communication capabilities. This effort to upgrade the emergency communication system for the D.C. Fire, Police, EMS, and EMA includes development of additional radio sites and installation of new radios and antennas at several locations within the District. The objective of this program is to improve coverage and ultimately to save lives and property. The design and implementation of this program is proceeding at a rapid pace, and this effort has been accelerated by the availability of Federal Emergency Funding. These network enhancements must be made in as timely a manner as legitimately possible without surrendering critical aesthetic consideration in the District. This requested exemption would further speed this network's development.

Antennas, Antenna Towers, Monopoles, and Related Equipment

OCTO recommends the following language be included as § 2600.3 in the proposed regulations to ensure that antennas, antenna towers, monopoles and related equipment required to provide Public Safety Emergency Preparedness communications by and for the District of Columbia can reasonably be situated as to provide maximum utility for emergency services professionals and the citizens they protect.

2600.3 Consistent with the overreaching requirement to support Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness (PS/EP), the matter-of-right construction of new towers, monopoles, antennas, and related equipment required for PS/EP networks owned by and operated solely to provide emergency services for the citizens of the District of Columbia shall be permitted as a matter-of-right in the UR, M, C-M, C, C-R, W, SP, and R zoned districts.