

Use of FRNs Mandatory as of December 3, 2001

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The Commission has amended its rules to require use of FCC Registration Numbers (FRNs) as of December 3, 2001.

FRNs are unique identifiers which will be required for each entity doing business with the FCC. This extends to any party making a payment, holding or applying for a license, or participating in an auction. Although eventually the FRN (pronounced "fern" by FCC staff) is to replace the use of taxpayer identification numbers (TINs), for now both identifications are to be used in most submissions.

Many parties already have FRNs. The Commission automatically assigned FRNs to entities contained in its universal licensing system (ULS) database of business radio and broadcast auxiliary stations. Although you may still apply for a FRN, either through the Commission's website or by completing and submitting a Form 160, we urge you to check the FCC's database for FRNs (CORES) to confirm that a FRN has not already been assigned to you. Parties without a FRN as of December 3rd will be assigned one by the FCC at the time of their next outgoing correspondence from the FCC.

The FRN is intended to improve FCC communication and tracking of payments and authorizations. The Commission requires each entity having a separate TIN to have a separate FRN as well. However, single or related entities may apply for multiple FRNs to reflect their internal organization or to track payments and authorizations.

The Commission announced that it will not require FRNs when filing comments and rulemaking proceedings, petitions to deny, informal objections, letters and electronic mail communications, reports that do not require a fee, database searches and applications for emergency authorizations (although a FRN would still have to be supplied prior to action taken on an emergency request). Tariff publications will require the use of a FRN, although carriers or their representatives will have 10 days within which to amend with a valid FRN should the transmittal omit the FRN or specify an invalid one.

The Commission has issued two cautions with respect to FRNs. First, it will not permit parties to evade payment of fees or other regulatory responsibilities through multiple FRNs. Even so, while a single FRN should be used for all submissions related to obtaining a given authorization, the Commission will permit the use of different FRNs over the life cycle of the license (provided this is not done for an improper purpose). Second, since the Commission eventually will rely upon the information associated with a FRN registration for communications, it is essential that all of the contact information associated with the FRN be updated as necessary. This can be done through the Commission's website or by filing a Form 161.

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