

Translator Questions and Answers:

This information is for commercial stations- to be used as recruiting material when locating a third party applicant.

What is a translator & why do we need one?

Translators are low power transmitters designed to cover a small area such as a town or city. They can range from 10 watts to 250 watts. Through a special antenna, the signal of a radio station is "translated" from its original frequency (107.3 MHz for instance) to another frequency (101.5 MHz), on which the station is re-broadcast. Because some communities are a great distance from the station signal area, multiple translators are sometimes used to "leap frog" the signal across the terrain. A translator system will provide a crystal-clear reception on another frequency in a new community.

Why doesn't the radio station just put a translator in our area?

A commercial radio station is not allowed, by law, to initiate, finance, construct or otherwise be involved in the construction of a translator, outside of its 70 dbu signal (about 40 miles from its transmitter in the case of a 100,000 watt station). These translators must be financed and maintained by a local individual, organization or institution. Stations are allowed to give some very limited input.

What is the cost of putting on a translator?

The cost of putting a translator on the air is between \$5,000 and \$10,000, depending on the type of antenna and transmitter needed. The cost of operating a translator after initial equipment purchase and construction, is minimal(\$10 to \$40 per month). There may be other costs, such as tower lease, if needed.

What do we need to do to get a Translator?

After you decide that your group would like to have a translator, the next step is to determine if a frequency is available. To do this you must select an antenna site. You will need the coordinates of that site (longitude and latitude). An engineer will then determine from those coordinates whether or not a frequency is available, by conducting a frequency search. If a frequency is available, he can then complete an application to the Federal Communications Commission for a license to construct a FM translator. The cost of the search is \$295 and the application cost is \$895. We suggest you use an engineering company called Sterling Communications in Ringgold, GA. Sterling has been doing this type of work since 1979, and has been directly involved in establishing hundreds of radio stations, and translators. Their work is accurate, timely, and fair. Their number is (706) 965-2355. They will welcome your calls and questions.

What do we look for in an antenna site?

Since the FM signal works by "line of sight," you will need a site that provides an unobstructed view of the area to be covered. Tall buildings, hills, bluffs, etc. can obstruct the signal. You'll need a site that shoots the signal over obstructions. In some cases, the roof of a building or a church steeple can be utilized. You'll need about 20' or more of vertical space for the antennae (there are two or more per translator: receiving and sending antennae). If there is a tower with space available for the antennae, find the owner to inquire about available space and terms.

Do we need a building constructed to house the translator?

Translators are not very large, about the size of a bread box. They can be housed in a closet or on a shelf, etc. They do need to be located near the antenna, however, as they are connected to it by a cable.

Who owns the translator?

You or your group holds the license. Our radio station gives you permission to rebroadcast our signal.

How long does it take to get a translator on the air?

It currently takes about 3-4 months for the application to be processed by the FCC. The engineer you select can advise you on the construction time table.

What if we have other questions?

Questions of a technical nature may be addressed by Sterling, or your local engineer. Questions regarding the operation, programming or philosophy of our radio station may be answered by contacting the station.

** This publication is reprinted by permission of the author, Donald C. Lambert, General Manager of KSLT, in Spearfish, SD for the use of Sterling Communications, Inc. KSLT is a 100,000 watt station which operates on 14 translators.*

Simple Guidelines for Commercial Stations, Third Parties and their Translators.

1. The third party must reside in the community in which the translator is needed.
2. The third party must act as applicant.
3. The third party must take care of all expenses involved in operations of translator.
4. The primary station is able to maintain the equipment monthly through their engineer (as long as no funds are involved).
5. The third party can run one, thirty second spot per hour bringing attention to fund raising for the translator.
6. The third party is not limited to a maximum number of translators.



PO Box 1877
LaFayette, GA 30728
(706) 397-8744
sterlingjamesp@gmail.com