

WTAT-TV – Request for STA to Operate on Interim Facilities

WTAT Licensee, LLC, licensee of station WTAT-TV, Charleston, SC, FIN 416 (“WTAT”), hereby requests special temporary authority (STA), due to circumstances beyond its control, to operate on interim facilities while its permanent facilities are completed, and further requests a waiver of the Commission’s rules to the extent necessary. WTAT hereby respectfully requests permission to operate from interim facilities for a period of 180 days from September 11, 2019 until March 9, 2020.

WTAT’s construction of its facilities has been delayed by a shortage of helicopter and transmitter installation crews. A helicopter to install the station’s post-repack permanent antenna was scheduled for August 26, 2019, but the installation was not completed due to unanticipated helicopter crew delays. WTAT’s current combiner serves WTAT, WCIV(TV), Charleston, SC (FIN 9015) and WCBD-TV, Charleston, SC (FIN 10587); a new combiner will be installed to separate out WTAT and will only be used by WCIV and WCBD. WTAT understands that a transmitter crew is on site and is currently installing the permanent WCIV combiner and transmitter for planned operation of WCIV on its post-repack facilities on September 11, 2019. WTAT must discontinue operations on its current Channel 24 before WCIV can operate on its post-repack Channel 25.

Because installation delays have left WTAT unable to commence operations on its post-repack Channel 17 prior to the September 11, 2019, Phase 5 transition deadline, WTAT has entered into a temporary joint use of channel agreement whereby WTAT intends to operate temporarily on Channel 25 on a joint use basis with WCIV from September 11, 2019 (provided that the FCC has granted this request for STA) until such time as WTAT is able to complete the transition to its post-repack Channel 17.¹ The station is actively working to re-schedule the helicopter crew to install WTAT’s permanent antenna and a crew to complete installation of the station’s permanent transmitter. Once the station’s permanent antenna is installed, WTAT will cut over and commence operations on its post-repack Channel 17 using its interim transmitter to feed the station’s full power permanent antenna until the station’s permanent transmitter installation is complete.

Because of the delays mentioned above, WTAT will not be able to complete construction of either its interim facilities or its permanent post-repack facilities by the end of Phase 5 on September 11, 2019. Thus, WTAT respectfully requests an STA (1) to permit WTAT to operate temporarily on Channel 25 pursuant to the joint use of channel agreement, so that WTAT may remain on the air after it timely discontinues operations on Channel 24 until such time as construction is completed on WTAT’s interim facilities on its post-repack Channel 17, and (2) to operate via its Channel 17 interim facilities until installation of WTAT’s permanent Channel 17 transmitter is complete. Grant of this STA request will aid WTAT and other stations’ transitions and preserve their ability to serve viewers in the community during the transition. These proposed interim operations will not interfere with the repack efforts of other stations because WTAT will timely discontinue operations on its pre-auction Channel 24 by the Phase 5 transition deadline. WTAT will continue to work expeditiously to complete construction of both its interim and permanent facilities on Channel 17.

¹ See Attached Joint Use Agreement demonstrating the host station licensee’s consent for WTAT to utilize the WCIV facilities.