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Fundraising for Others

By John Crigler *

Public radio stations are often asked to assist others in raising funds. From local charities to national disasters, there are usually ways to help... but be careful!

The Federal Communications Commission's rules prohibit non-commercial stations from interrupting regular programming to raise funds for anyone except the station. The best way to work within this rule is to air short, underwriting-length announcements that don't interrupt programming. Such announcements permit you to assist in fundraising for other non-profits without risking a fine.

There are, of course, times when short announcements simply aren't enough. When disaster hits and more extensive fundraising efforts are in order (terrorist attacks, floods, hurricanes, earthquakes, etc.), the FCC may allow you to interrupt regular programming for third-party fundraising, but you need to obtain a waiver of the FCC's rules.

The FCC has liberally granted such waivers in cases of extraordinary disasters. So, if you would like to request such a waiver, here are a few pointers on what to include in the request:

1. Briefly describe the disaster. The FCC should be convinced that it is extraordinary.
2. Describe the nature and duration of your fundraising. The FCC is unlikely to waive its rules for an indefinite or uncertain period of time.
3. Explain why the relief effort is related to your noncommercial broadcast mission (e.g. public service to your broadcast coverage area).
4. Explain that the funds will go to another non-profit, such as the Salvation Army or Red Cross, and will be used specifically for relief.

File your hard copy request with the Office of the Secretary, Federal Communications Commission, and send an electronic copy to Michael Wagner in the Audio Division. The amount of time needed for approval varies, depending on the request. Straightforward requests (such as a catastrophic event) should be granted in a week or two. Others may take longer, or be denied. The FCC denied a waiver request to



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air the annual Jerry Lewis Telethon on behalf of the Muscular Dystrophy Association because the fundraiser was not a one-time event for a one-time crisis.

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