

Launch of subsidy scheme for upgrading SMATV systems

The Office of the Communications Authority (OFCA) today (November 27) announced the launch of a subsidy scheme to support the upgrading of Satellite Master Antenna Television (SMATV) systems operating in the 3.4 – 4.2 GHz band and invited applications by eligible applicants.

On March 28, 2018, the Communications Authority (CA) issued a statement announcing that the radio spectrum in the 3.4 – 3.7 GHz band would be re-allocated from fixed satellite service to mobile service with effect from April 1, 2020, for assignment to the fifth generation (5G) mobile services in Hong Kong. SMATV systems should only be operated in the 3.7 – 4.2 GHz band thereafter. As a result of the frequency re-allocation and as per the outcome of a consultancy study commissioned by OFCA, existing SMATV systems need to be upgraded in order to co-exist with the prospective 5G systems to be rolled out on or after April 1, 2020. The baseline requirements for upgrading SMATV systems are set out in an information note issued by OFCA.

As promulgated in the joint statement of the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development and the CA issued on December 13 last year, the CA would implement a subsidy scheme to be funded by the prospective 5G mobile network operators using the 3.4 – 3.6 GHz band. Details of the subsidy scheme are given in the information memorandum for auction of radio spectrum in the 3.5 GHz band for the provision of public mobile services. According to the scheme, SMATV systems covered by existing SMATV licences on or before March 28, 2018, are eligible for receiving the subsidy. Owners of each eligible SMATV system may apply for a subsidy of \$20,000 to subsidise the upgrade of the SMATV system concerned.

OFCA will send out application forms to owners of eligible SMATV systems by post before December 11. Such information can also be downloaded from OFCA's website (www.ofca.gov.hk/en/industry_focus/broadcasting/television_broadcasting/satellite_tv/index.html) or be obtained by calling 8102 4387. Applications should be submitted to OFCA by post from now to November 26, 2020. Late applications will not be accepted.