

Timely upgrades of SMATV systems for co-existence with 5G networks

The Office of the Communications Authority (OFCA) today (March 12) urged contractors and owners of Satellite Master Antenna Television (SMATV) systems to upgrade their respective systems as soon as possible for co-existence with the mobile networks supporting fifth generation mobile (5G) services, which may be launched as early as April 1, 2020.

"We are about to enter the 5G era with massive rollout of 5G networks by mobile network operators. In accordance with the decision made by the Communications Authority in March 2018, the radio spectrum in the 3.4 – 3.7 GHz band will be reallocated from fixed satellite services to mobile services after a notice period of two years and with effect from April 1, 2020, for provision of 5G services in Hong Kong. In this regard, satellite services, including SMATV systems for receiving and distributing satellite TV signals to occupants in buildings/estates, should only operate in the 3.7 – 4.2 GHz band thereafter," a spokesman for OFCA said.

"In order for SMATV systems to co-exist with 5G networks and avoid any service disturbance, we urge SMATV contractors and owners who have yet to perform the necessary technical upgrade of their systems to take immediate action," the spokesman continued.

To support the upgrading work for SMATV systems, OFCA has launched a subsidy scheme on November 27, 2019, with funding provided by 5G operators assigned with radio spectrum in the 3.4 – 3.6 GHz band. SMATV systems covered by existing SMATV licences on or before March 28, 2018, are eligible for a subsidy of \$20,000 per SMATV system. SMATV owners are invited to make applications before the deadline of November 26, 2020.

OFCA has separately issued a consumer alert on this issue today on its website (www.ofca.gov.hk/en/consumer_focus/education_corner/alerts/tbs/satellite_tv_programmes/index.html). More information about the upgrading of SMATV systems can also be found on OFCA's website (www.ofca.gov.hk/en/industry_focus/broadcasting/television_broadcasting/satellite_tv/index.html).