



TV Station Profiles & Public Inspection Files

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FAQ

Q: How do members of the public access the Commission-hosted online public inspection files of television broadcast stations?

A: Simply go to the Commission's website at www.fcc.gov/public-inspection-file or stations.fcc.gov.

Q: How do television broadcasters access their station's page so they can upload documents and review and edit their files?

A: There are two login screens for broadcasters at <https://stationaccess.fcc.gov>. The first, Facility Sign In, accepts a facility and passcode to provide manage to a single station's Public Inspection File. The second, FRN Sign In, allows the FRN holder to use their primary FRN and associated password to see their stations' facility ids and associated passcodes and to track the history of each station's Public Inspection File. There is a link on the Facility Sign In to switch to the FRN Sign In screen. The primary FRN is the FRN you have used to pay fees and file other applications with CDBS. (If you are not sure of your primary FRN, please contact the FCC helpline.)

Q: How does a television station acquire a passcode?

A: Stations will receive their passcode from the individual responsible for the organization's FRN. There is a link on the Facility Sign In to switch to the FRN Sign In screen. The FRN holder can sign in with the organization's primary FRN (e.g., filing FRN) and associated password to see their stations' facility ids and associated passcodes.

Q: When can stations begin to actually upload files to the online public inspection file site?

A: On August 2, 2012. The Commission, on that date, will post to its main website page an announcement as soon as the system is up and available for use.

Q: What are the parts of the public inspection file?

A: A list of the files required to be in a station's public file, a brief description of the file and the rule section or sections requiring each file to be in the public file can be found at [\[link to list in main text\]](#)

Q: Did the Commission's recent order make any changes to what is required to be in a station's public file? Did it change any retention periods?

A: No, the Commission made no such changes. Rather, the Commission's order simply required that the public file that has historically been kept at the station be made available online at the Commission. There are some exceptions to this uploading requirement, however, which are described in the next FAQ below.

Q: What public file documents have to be uploaded beginning on August 2, 2012?

A: With the exceptions noted here, **all** stations must upload their public inspection file documents to the Commission's site on a "going-forward" basis starting on August 2, 2012 (that is, documents being placed in the public file on or after August 2, 2012, must be uploaded). Public file documents that are already in the local public file on August 2, 2012, must be uploaded to the Commission's site sometime during the 6 months following August 2, 2012. The important exceptions to these general requirements are as follows: (1) only stations affiliated with the top four national television networks (ABC, CBS, NBC and Fox) and located in the top 50 Designated Market Areas (DMAs) must begin, on a going-forward basis, uploading documents to their online political file on August 2, 2012; (2) all other stations will keep their political file at their station and begin uploading, on a going-forward basis, their political files to the online file on July 1, 2014; (3) no station ever has to upload to the online file its political files that pre-date August 2, 2012; (4) letters and emails received from the public by a station should be retained in a local paper or electronic file and not uploaded to the online file; (5) materials related to a Commission investigation or complaint that have been expressly exempted by the Commission from the requirement to place them in the public file.

Q: Why did the Commission limit the political file uploading requirement only to stations that are affiliated with the top four national networks (CBS, ABC, NBC, and Fox) and that are located in the top 50 DMAs (Designated Market Areas)?

A: The Commission concluded that it could best ensure a smooth transition to the online public file system if only a subset of larger, network-affiliated stations were subject to the political file uploading requirement at the outset because this would impose the filing obligation on those stations with substantial political time experience and substantial resources and that would, therefore, be best able to address any unforeseen start-up difficulties, should they occur. On and after July 1, 2014, all television stations will be required to upload their political files to the Commission's site.

Q: Why did the Commission not require stations to upload political file documents from before August 2, 2012?

A: The Commission concluded that the burden on television stations of uploading all pre-August 2, 2012 political files, particularly given the relatively short retention period for political files, was not warranted. These files must be retained, however, in the station's local public inspection file until their file retention period under the rules expires.

Q: Can a station not required to upload its political files until July 1, 2014, voluntarily upload its files to the Commission's website before that date?

A: Not at present. We may reconsider whether to permit such filing in the future, but stations in this category should not attempt to upload political files unless and until the Commission indicates it will accept them.

Q: Can a station voluntarily upload its pre-August 2, 2012 political files and stop affording access to them locally?

A: Not at present. We may reconsider whether to permit such filing in the future.

Q: If a station completes uploading those public files it is required to upload before the end of the six-month period for doing so, can it then stop maintaining the corresponding local public files?

A: Yes; whenever the station's public file upload is complete, those files that have now been made available online no longer need be maintained locally for public inspection. As noted elsewhere, however, there are some files that will always be at the station and must remain available to the public.

Q: How do television stations that are not required to begin uploading their political files until July 1, 2014 (stations outside the top 50 DMA markets and non-top four network affiliates in the top 50 DMA markets) comply with the politically related sponsorship identification requirements in Section 73.1212(e) of the Commission's Rules?

A: Section 73.1212(e) of the Commission's rules requires all television stations to place in their public file a list of "the chief executive officers or members of the executive committee or board of directors", as applicable, of any entity that has paid for or furnished television broadcast programming that is "political matter or matter involving the discussion of a controversial issue of public importance." The website provides a separate folder for this material under the title "Sponsorship Identification - Political Matter and Controversial Issues of Public Importance (as required by Section 73.1212(e))." Stations that are not initially required to upload their political files, where this material may often have been stored locally, are nonetheless required to comply with this Section 73.1212(e) requirement and should use this folder. Stations that are required to upload their political files beginning on August 2, 2012, may elect to place this sponsorship information in their political files, consistent with common industry practice, or in the Sponsorship Identification file, at their discretion. Section 73.1212(e), unlike the political file rule in Section 73.1943, does not include a requirement that the information be placed in the file as soon as possible.

Q: Which documents will the Commission upload and which documents will the stations upload?

A: Stations must upload any required public file document that has not already been filed with the Commission. The Commission will upload to stations' online public files any required documents that have been filed with the Commission in other contexts (such as renewal, assignment and transfer applications, filed in the Commission's Consolidated DataBase System).

Q: Do I need any special technology to upload documents?

A: No special technologies are needed beyond access to the Internet and modern browser. The application has been tested with Internet Explorer (versions 7 and higher), Firefox, Chrome, and Safari. Please note that drag and drop filing is available only with Firefox, Chrome, and Safari at the current time.

Q: Will all the folders that the stations need to upload documents be on the Commission's public file site?

A: Yes, there are folders for all components of the public file. The political file folder will contain subfolders for federal, state, and local candidates and for non-candidate issues. Stations are able to add subfolders for local candidates and for additional candidates if the need arises.

Q: What file naming conventions are required for documents uploaded to the public file site?

A: As noted above, the Commission will populate the online public file with appropriately named folders, and to some extent sub-folders, but there is no requirement that individual files be named in any particular way.

Q: Is a station required to post a link on its website to the station's public inspection file at the Commission?

A: Yes, if a station has website, it must post a link to its Commission online public file on its own website's home page.

Q: Can more than one person at a station be on the Commission site for that station at the same time?

A: Yes. However, each user should only sign into a single station at a time.

Q: Are television stations required to make a computer available for the public to access the Commission-hosted public file at the local station?

A: No, but stations must make a computer terminal available to members of the public so they can access any local public inspection files, such as letters and emails from the public and pre-Aug 2, 2012 political files that the stations elect to maintain in a computer database or electronic form.

Q: How will the Commission deal with documents that no longer must be maintained in the public file [e.g., because the retention period for a file has expired or a station has uploaded a corrected version of a document]?

A: Stations are responsible for maintaining their online public file. If a document has been replaced or a contract has expired or the rules no longer require that a particular document be part of the public file, the stations will be responsible for taking appropriate action to reflect these changes. The Commission will, however, work with broadcasters to develop, where feasible, technological solutions to some of these maintenance issues.

Q: What format will the stations use to upload their documents to the Commission's online public file?

A: Stations must upload electronic documents in their existing or native format to the extent feasible. For example, if a required document already exists in a searchable format - such as the Microsoft Word .doc format or a non-copy protected text-searchable .pdf format for text filings, or native formats such as spreadsheets in Microsoft .xml format for non-text filings - broadcasters are expected to upload the filing in that format unless it is technically unable to do so.

Q: What assurance can the Commission provide that unauthorized people will be unable to access the "broadcaster side" of the public file (i.e., that part of the site where broadcasters upload and edit or remove documents from their online public file)?

A: The Commission's security tools and safeguards, including passcodes, will prevent unauthorized access.

Q: If a station mistakenly uploads an incorrect document or the wrong document to the online site, what can the station do about it?

A: A station may easily delete any document from its online public file so that it will no longer be viewable by members of the public accessing their file. Licensees have the ability to permanently delete, or purge, a file from the system so that it no longer exists on the Commission's system. To permanently delete a file, a Licensee must sign in through the FRN Sign In page and visit the recycle bin.

Q: Do these online filing requirements apply to cable or satellite video delivery systems?

A: Not at this time.

Q: Is a station required to maintain a backup file of its online public inspection file?

A: Stations do not have to maintain a backup of their entire online public file. Because of its highly time-sensitive nature, however, stations are required to maintain an electronic backup of their political files and be able to make those files available to candidates and the public in the event the Commission's file system becomes unavailable. The Commission will make available in the very near future the ability for a station to directly mirror its public inspection file from the Commission's site.

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