

**TOPIC:**  
**FCC Ruling for Cell Phone  
Amplifiers**

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## New FCC Ruling Makes Wireless Accessible to all Consumers

Last month, the FCC reduced the restrictions on signal boosters for consumers, allowing greater access to these devices for residential, business, and school use.

We all know the inconvenience of a dropped call or interruptions in our internet service. As [FCC Chairman Ajit Pai said](#), “Signal boosters are one tool in the toolbox for providing ubiquitous wireless coverage to the American people. And with our action today, we aim to make that tool a more powerful means of meeting our goal of expanding wireless connectivity. Someday, hopefully soon, failed calls can be relegated to the silver screen.”

Consumers have come to not only expect, but *depend* on wireless service for their personal, business, educational and safety needs. It is in that respect that signal boosters provide a valuable benefit: reliability.

It’s no longer about just dropping a call to your best friend or texting your kids. A smartphone is the lifeblood of a small business, connecting business owners with customers, teams, calendars, and sensitive data. Teachers depend on wireless connections to explain lessons and connect with students in distance-learning programs. And where would we be if we couldn’t contact a first responder in the event of a life-threatening emergency?

The newest FCC changes help signal boosters help you to be more connected, efficient, and safe by reducing barriers. Now more than ever it’s easier (and more affordable) to purchase and install a signal booster in your home, vehicle, office, or classroom. No more worries about the 10-story building next door blocking your signal or being 50 miles away from the nearest cell tower.

In the past, signal boosters were registered with the carrier for one owner and only that single owner was permitted use that booster. The only alternative was to install an “industrial booster” meant for multiple users, which was more expensive to purchase, install and use.

The new ruling broadens the use of the booster, where one person can register the device, but many people can use it. This is a benefit to business owners who can buy a booster in their name but allow all of their employees to use it. Devices must still be registered with their carrier, but with this ruling, more people have access to the benefits of the booster.

Why is this newest ruling important? Let’s take a brief look at how signal boosters have driven legislation in recent years.

### A Brief History of Signal Boosters and the FCC

- **2011** – The FCC states their concern that cell phone boosters will interrupt carrier signals and tightens the regulation for booster devices in FCC-11-53A-1 [Notice for Proposed Rulemaking](#). Booster manufacturers cited the benefits of increased access while wireless carriers stated their concern over increased signal interference by these devices. [FCC](#) supported the development and deployment of well-designed boosters, asking manufacturers to self-monitor and turn off

the booster if a cell tower was detected nearby and to shut off within 10 seconds if not functioning properly. Acclaimed manufacturers, like [Wilson Electronics](#), were happy to support the ruling.

- **2013** – The FCC issued [rules](#) and policies on the manufacture and use of signal boosters to ensure that underserved areas (like rural and urban areas) are served by signal boosters without interfering with wireless networks. The intent is to provide consumer boosters, registered to a single person (an operator), for sole use by that operator, and for these boosters not to interfere with carrier signals, ultimately increasing convenience for consumers and accommodating wireless carriers.
- **2014** – The FCC issues [new rules](#) about cell phone and wireless boosters to address the problem of interference with wireless signals. The FCC also issues a [consumer advisory](#) which stated that a) The FCC or wireless carrier could ask you to turn off your booster if it interfered with carrier signals; b) that boosters that met their standards were not yet available; and c) consumers were required to register their booster devices with their carrier. Manufacturers are now required to have specific labeling that indicates what the booster is and the consumer’s responsibility for registering it.
- **2015-2016** – The FCC requests public disclosure reports from all four wireless carriers on the state of consumer boosters. Both providers and manufacturers of boosters reported positive results. According to the recent [FCC report](#), T-Mobile stated, “the lack of any known serious widespread incidents demonstrates that the process has worked well and generally prevented poorly designed consumer devices from entering the market, while making signal boosters widely available and easily usable by consumers.” Verizon registered more than 10,000 units as of March 2016, and stated, that the new rules “have all but eliminated the interference problems caused by signal boosters manufactured prior to the rules taking place...” Wilson Electronics, a major booster manufacturer, reported shipments of over 750,000 boosters with no reports of carrier interference. In short, booster rules provided more access to individuals, offered better quality devices, and didn’t interfere with carrier signals – which was the original intent of the 2013 ruling.
- **2018** – Now that booster manufacturing quality has increased and registration protocols are in place, the FCC is confident it can expand access to a wider array of users. The FCC expands the types of consumers who use signal boosters to include businesses, schools, and public safety agencies. The lifting of the “provider-specific” ban also increases access to more users since a single operator who registers their booster with the carrier can allow multiple users to use the device.

## 2018: What this new ruling means to you

1. **Restrictions lifted on “Provider-Specific” Signal Boosters.** A “provider-specific” signal booster is a device compatible and registered with a single carrier. This new ruling opens the doors for a single device to be registered with multiple carriers. The [FCC report](#) provided an example. If your wireless plan is with AT&T, and your housemate uses T-Mobile, but you both use a single booster, you can both submit registration to AT&T and T-Mobile for the same device.
2. **Expanded definition of who can register a device.** In the past, only individuals were allowed to register devices. The [FCC report](#) expanded the ruling to include “non-individuals” which are defined as “a partnership and each partner is eighteen years of age or older; a corporation; an association; a state, territorial, or local government unit; or a legal entity.”
3. **Expanded access to boosters.** Until now, the FCC had a 1-to-1 policy: a single individual (operator) could use a single device. The policy now is a 1-to-many device, where a single individual or organization can register the device and allow multiple people to use the device. This March 2018 ruling expands access to larger populations of people, creating an “enterprise” use of the device. Business owners open access to employees, schools open access to teachers and students, and public safety institutions open access to employees and members.
4. **Carrier registration is still mandatory.** While the FCC allows more individuals to use a device, it still mandates that boosters must be registered with the carrier. The registration prevents unauthorized operation and ensures compliance with FCC signal booster rules. Registration prevents the booster being used on a wireless spectrum without the carrier’s consent and allows the carrier to take action when an operator violates the rules.
5. **The FCC will continue to review barriers.** The FCC invites comment on this *Second Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking*, in three specific areas. First, the use of additional spectrum bands that may be opened due to future technological advances, new wireless devices, and new spectrum offerings. The FCC wants to ensure continued carrier support in these areas without increased cost or more rulemaking. Second, they invite comment on boosters that come pre-installed, or “embedded”, in a vehicle by the manufacturer. Presently, the consumer cannot view any labeling, warnings, or registration requirements for the device, nor can they inform future owners if the vehicle is re-sold. The FCC does not want to hinder the manufacturers but at the same time, wants to make it easier for the consumer to be informed. Finally, the FCC invites discussion on allowing consumers to use wideband boosters (a type different from Provider-Specific boosters) and to further widen access of Provider-Specific boosters by allowing access to *any* carrier on a consumer booster, not just the one the operator subscribes to.

While this *Second Further Notice* was adopted on March 23, 2018, comments on the act will be received for 30 days, until April 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2018, at which time the FCC has another 30 days to respond to those comments. For further detail, we have provided links to this extensive document, file FCC-35A-1, located at on the [FCC](#) website.

## Who Benefits from the FCC Ruling?

As the FCC removes the barriers, consumers will see increased benefits from the use of Signal Boosters. Here's who will benefit:

- **Individuals** – We can all benefit from increased reliability of cell signals for personal communications, safety, and enjoyment on mobile devices. We can now share their devices with family members, visitors, and others who want access to a stronger signal, much like we do with a wi-fi.
- **Business Owners** – Whether you are a one-person shop operating out of your garage or a one-million dollar firm operating out of a in a small office space, signal boosters increase productivity. A dependable signal, with the help of a signal booster, can increase the flow of business.
- **Schools** – Protecting our children and teaching staff is paramount, as witness by recent events. Ensuring that classrooms have dependable wireless access not only for emergency situations but also for the sharing of information in classrooms is critical. Boosters provide the flexibility to position these devices where needed – classrooms, lunchrooms, and auditoriums – and limit the signal to create intentional no-signal zones.
- **Public Safety** – Our personal, community, and national safety depends on our first responders to act when they receive the call. But in dead zones, urban and rural areas where wireless signals are blocked, it is imperative to enhance the signal so these emergency personnel can respond. As reported in our previous post, [Public Safety Boosters: All You Need To Know](#), building codes and responder networks are evolving to ensure safety for those who gather in public areas. In the interim, signal boosters can ensure that they receive the call when you need them.

This newest FCC ruling is a great benefit to all wireless users by increasing the dependability of their device's signal. At [SignalBooster.com](#), we offer you a wide array of solutions to expand your reach and increase the reliability of your wireless devices.