

**Everything's go.** Comstar D-4, the fourth satellite of Comsat's Comstar satellite system, has been successfully launched into space aboard an Atlas Centaur rocket by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration. Like the other three satellites of the system, Comstar D-4 will be leased to AT&T, which uses the system for transmission of voice, data and video. Comstar D-4, the former ground spare, is scheduled to become operational on May 1. Comstar D-4 is taking over the orbital slot of Comstar D-1 at 127 degrees west longitude, and Comstar D-1 is being co-located with Comstar D-2 at 95 degrees west. According to a Comsat spokesman, the co-location will conserve the power of the two aging satellites, launched in 1976. Half the transponders on each satellite will be turned off. By sharing the available transponder channels, the two satellites, in effect, function as one. The co-location, it is hoped, will insure the lives of the satellites until 1983, after which they will be replaced by Telstar satellites launched and operated by AT&T.

might make its ultimate decision on whether to back the U.S. 9 khz proposal, which would require stations to move no more than 4 khz, or the Canadian plan, which would require shifts of up to 9 khz, in May. The latter would be more costly to existing stations, but would provide for more new stations in major markets. Louis Stephens, of the FCC's Policy and Rules Division, who heads the advisory committee's subcommittee on allocations, noted that studies on the costs of the 9/9 plan and the relative benefits of the two plans will be delivered to the commission by mid-April. "We'll go to the commission [with the results] in May," Stephens said. That would be at least a month before the IFRB is scheduled to finish its work in Geneva. A decision then would precede by at least a month the completion in Geneva of the comparative studies of the 10 khz and two 9 khz plans.

Meanwhile, the commission has aggregated 3,800-3,900 "instances of need," as Stephens put it, or "potential demand," for new AM stations. The total is "a global pool" from which the commission will select proposals for inclusion in a five-year (January 1983-December 1987) plan. It is to be submitted, along with the plans of other Region 2 countries, to the con-

ference on May 31. The total includes proposals of minority groups, National Public Radio, and daytime broadcasters, as well as a list the commission staff compiled in examining communities of fewer than 2,500 people with no local service and at least 10 miles from a city of 25,000 population.

The meeting produced another flap involving the industry members, many of them engineers, and the commission staffers, over what the industry representatives felt was the lack of a needed study. Has a study been done of the costs to the public of the interference that adjacent-channel stations would suffer as a result of a reduction in channel spacing from 10 khz to 9? Not a specific one. But, Stephens noted, no industry representative has provided a study to rebut commission estimates that the costs would be slight.

Such a study "would be tremendously costly," Jules Cohen, an engineer retained by NAB, said. The government should undertake it. But LaFollette indicated the staff was not eager to suggest such a project. The issue ended with NAB Senior Vice President and General Counsel Erwin Krasnow saying "a formal request" for such a study would be prepared for the commission.

## In Sync

**Squeeze technique.** How can too-long or too-short commercials or programs be made to fit specific time slots? As alternative to re-editing or re-shooting, Lexicon Inc., Waltham, Mass., suggests using its new audio time compressor-expander, which allows playback of recorded material at faster or slower speeds without changing original pitch of audio. Model 1200 permits time compression of up to 25%. Digital device can also be used creatively, Lexicon says. "Dramatic effects may be added by speeding up program segments. Slow-paced programs can be given higher energy levels. News reports can be made to sound more brisk and exciting." Lexicon says 18 advertising agencies have already made time-compressed commercials with prototypes of Model 1200.

**Putting cable's best foot forward.** Videovision Inc., marketing/production services firm, has entered cable TV market with new aid to system owners seeking additional subscribers. Main thrust of Videovision's service is videotape presentation that spotlights all features cable TV offers as well as testimonials from satisfied customers. Presentation can be displayed in homes of prospective subscribers by means of new portable Video Showcase, recently introduced by Technicolor Inc. Package, which includes market analysis, video presentation and training for sales force of system, is currently being test-marketed in Ohio by Warner-Amex. Information: Les Bortel, Advance Video, 3293 Spring Valley, Suite A, Bath, Ohio 44313; (216) 867-6867.

**Test time.** Society of Broadcast Engineers will administer SBE certification exams from June 6 to June 20. For applications and list of SBE chapters where tests can be taken: Certifications Secretary, SBE, P.O. Box 50844, Indianapolis 46250.

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