Study: Sirius-XM Merger Would Not Add Program Choices

The proposed merger between Sirius and XM would not allow existing customers to have access to more programming without buying a new satellite radio, according to a NAB-commissioned study from the consulting engineering firm of Meintel, Sgrignoli & Wallace (MSW). An article in today's Washington Post also highlights many of the technical challenges and reports each company is "straining their systems' transmission capacities even before they try to add each other's content."

The MSW study emphasizes the significant technical differences between the two satellite systems, which prevent Sirius radios from receiving programming from XM, and vice versa. In addition, the study shows that the two satellite systems cannot be expanded to fit in more channels beyond their current level without incurring loss of audio quality. And, taking a program channel from one system and adding it to the other would likely require incumbent program channels to be removed to make room.

The report also notes that, as a condition of their original license, the satellite radio operators were required to deliver designs for interoperable radios. As of today, no radio that is interoperable between both systems has ever been made commercially available. (03-19-07)