

POLICY BRIEF

SILENT STATION POLICY

One of the most important station information updates a broadcaster may report to us regards when the radio station is not broadcasting. While some in radio use the terms “technical difficulty,” “dark,” and “off-air” interchangeably, each term has a specific meaning to Nielsen with different policies applicable to each. This policy brief offers definitions and an overview of our silent station policies.

“TECHNICAL DIFFICULTY”

We use the term ‘Technical Difficulty’ to refer to a brief, unplanned period where a radio station was not broadcasting or broadcasting at significantly reduced power. The term Technical Difficulty connotes that the station experienced an equipment failure.

We do not adjust a station’s estimates for any Technical Difficulty period. The radio station remains eligible to receive listening credit and remains eligible to be reported during a survey or report period where it experienced a Technical Difficulty.

Technical Difficulties have the potential to depress a station’s estimates and therefore, we offer the station the option of reporting the details of the incident in a ‘Technical Difficulty Notice’ placed in the Special Notice section of the applicable Radio Market Report/eBook. Users of the data may wish to consider the information presented in the Technical Difficulty Notice when evaluating the reported data.

There are no set guidelines for the duration of a Technical Difficulty that is appropriate for a Technical Difficulty Notice. Generally speaking, the Technical Difficulty classification can be considered appropriate for incidents that range from a few minutes to several days in duration.

“DARK”

When a station is unable to broadcast or has chosen to suspend broadcasting for an extended period of time, the station may request that we classify it as ‘Dark.’

We will not report audience estimates for stations that notify Nielsen that they have chosen to classify themselves as Dark. In these cases, any listening credit assigned to the dark station will be credited to Persons Using Radio / Persons Using Measured Media.

By requesting Dark status, a station’s manager chooses to exclude the station from measurement and reporting in the current survey. Dark status preserves the station’s reference data and listening history and it is an option best-suited for stations that are silent for a period of weeks to months and intend to return to air.

Considering the business implications associated with not being reported by Nielsen, Station managers should carefully evaluate whether or not to request Dark status. Please contact your Customer Solutions representative to set up a call with Nielsen’s Policy and Guidelines team to discuss what this might mean for your situation.

Since Dark status excludes a station from reporting, we will not honor a request to classify a station as Dark from any third party, nor will we accept anecdotal evidence provided by a third party as ‘proof’ that a station should be classified as Dark.

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“OFF-AIR”

‘Off-Air’ is the end of a radio station’s life-cycle in our data and services. We will classify a station as Off-Air upon notice from the station that it has permanently ceased broadcasting or that the broadcaster has surrendered its FCC license.

Once we classify a station as Off-Air, the station is excluded from reporting in the current (and future) surveys and the station’s historical data is locked. Classifying a station as Off-Air ‘closes the book’ on that radio station forever.

We will never classify a station as Off-Air without having received confirmation from the station’s management that they do plan to return to air and/or from the FCC confirming that it has reassigned the Off-Air station’s call sign to another station (or returned the call sign to the pool of available call signs).

In the rare instance that an Off-Air station received listening credit in the current survey or report period prior to being classified as Off-Air, our systems will automatically delete the Off-Air station’s credit from our database. This listening will not count towards Persons Using Radio / Persons Using Measured Media.

CONTACT

To notify us of a Technical Difficulty or to request Dark status, please contact our Station Relations Team by emailing rsimail@nielsen.com or dialing 667-786-4710.

For all other station information updates, please visit the Nielsen Answers website. Click Nielsen Audio Electronic Station Information from the My Tools area.

For additional information on our crediting or reporting policies, contact: John Budosh, Director, Policy: john.budosh@nielsen.com.

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