

# Some Dish channels go dark due to spat with their owner

August 26 2015, byTali Arbel

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Dish said Wednesday that some channels have gone dark for more than 5 million of its customers because of a fight with the channels' owner, Sinclair Broadcasting. Dish said that 129 local stations in 79 different markets are affected.

Sinclair is one of the largest TV broadcasting companies in the U.S., and its channels include affiliates of ABC, CBS, CW, Fox and NBC in markets throughout the country, including Washington DC, Seattle/Tacoma, Minneapolis, St. Louis and Pittsburgh.

Cable and satellite TV companies negotiate with channel owners over issues including how much to pay for the channels. Sometimes that leads to fights that result in channel blackouts, which can last less than a day or drag on. In 2013, Time Warner Cable customers lost access to CBS channels for a month.

Dish said the Sinclair channels went dark for its customers on Tuesday afternoon because of its fight with Sinclair over terms for an unidentified cable channel that Sinclair "hopes to acquire, but does not even own today."

In a statement Wednesday, Federal Communications Commission Chairman Tom Wheeler said that he had asked the Media Bureau of the FCC to call an "emergency meeting" with Dish and Sinclair to help get the channels back on for Dish customers. The meeting is expected to happen Wednesday, said FCC spokesman Neil Grace.

Dish had said that Sinclair rejected an extension offer to the existing contract that would have left the channels up while negotiations continued.

In a statement, Sinclair said it is willing to negotiate a fair deal with Dish and that it would be open to an extension if Dish "was not simply asserting take it or leave it positions." The Hunt Valley, Maryland-based company also noted that the blacked-out channels are available "over the air"—you can watch them with an antenna.

In an email, Barry Faber, Sinclair's general counsel, declined to comment further on details of the dispute.

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