

KTEQ Frequency Change:

88.1 MHz → 91.3 MHz

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In 1971, KTEQ began transmitting at a power of 10-watts on 88.1 MHz from KBHE's (TV Channel 9) tower on Skyline Drive. KTEQ's 10 watts was weak compared to the commercial stations that operated in the thousands of watts. In fact, most of SDSM&T could not receive KTEQ's signal due to shadows cast by surrounding terrain, thus obstructing a direct line of sight to the transmission point. By 1979, the FCC mandated KTEQ, and all other non-commercial educational stations, to increase their effective radiated power (ERP) or lose their license. The FCC was overwhelmed with applications due to this policy change, so KTEQ had to wait until 1981 to increase its ERP. Not only was KTEQ increasing its ERP from 10 to 710-watts, but it was moving its transmission point to a new tower, KOTA-TV's 300 foot auxiliary tower on Skyline Drive. These changes enabled KTEQ's signal to reach more people and its signal strength increased in areas where reception was almost non-existent.

Soon after KTEQ began transmission at the higher power from the new location trouble started. The local cable company in the area, TeleCommunications Inc. (TCI), had HBO programming on their Channel-6. Surprisingly, KTEQ's signal could be heard on HBO loud and clear. A properly installed and maintained cable TV system is shielded and prevents stray signals from entering or leaving. This shielding is paramount because the radio spectrum has one frequency where TV audio and FM overlap. It is 88.1 MHz (KTEQ's frequency) that can be received as audio on TV Channel 6. Steve Morgenstern, KTEQ's manager at the time said, "...all their customers could hear KTEQ blasting away. The Sex Pistols "God Save the Queen" and Disney's "Old Yeller" didn't exactly go well together!" Understandably, TCI was very upset and in a total panic.

Morgenstern found himself in Dean Pete's office the following Monday morning. TCI insisted KTEQ was the culprit and demanded action. Once the technical facts were explained to TCI, they backed-off and asked KTEQ nicely for help. KTEQ opted to temporarily lower its ERP to 175-watts to ease TCI's problem. The administration backed KTEQ 100%. After a few days, TCI confirmed that indeed they were at fault and something within their system allowed KTEQ to bleed through. Morgenstern, Dean Pete, and SDSM&T President Richard Schleusener brokered a deal with TCI: TCI would provide funds to move KTEQ to a new frequency, thus eliminating the interference. Not only would TCI pay for the necessary hardware purchases, but they would also provide all the FCC legal work involved. From the very beginning KTEQ established a professional working relationship with TCI and would not be bullied around. KTEQ demanded the FCC Construction Permit be finalized by March 1, 1982 or else KTEQ would resume broadcasting at full power. The cable company agreed to KTEQ's terms and immediately placed \$10,000 in an escrow account in exchange for Morgenstern's signature on the FCC Construction Permit application.

On February 1, 1982, TCI notified KTEQ that it would be unable to meet the March 1st deadline. Morgenstern reminded the cable company of KTEQ's terms: KTEQ would resume broadcasting at 710-watts and provide HBO viewers KTEQ's programming. Another meeting was established among Morgenstern, Dean Pete, President Schleusener, and TCI's district manager from Denver. The cable company wanted to determine how serious KTEQ was in keeping the deadline—KTEQ held its position and as always, the administration stood behind KTEQ's decision. It was a very tense meeting for TCI. The icing on the cake was TCI being greeted by a KOTA news crew in the hallway afterwards. Within a day, TCI's big dollar attorney, based out of Washington D.C., contacted Morgenstern in an attempt to change his mind. It did not work. Morgenstern told the attorney that the principal of meeting an agreement was at stake and the money was secondary. This triggered another "panic" meeting called by TCI. Tensions eased when Morgenstern explained that KTEQ was always ready to negotiate an extension but not for free. This time, Morgenstern insisted, the negotiations would be between TCI and the KTEQ management staff.

After some haggling, KTEQ management agreed to extend the deadline by one month if TCI agreed to provide desperately needed office furniture for KTEQ. The cable company held its end of the deal and by early April, KTEQ was back to full power and broadcasting at its new frequency, 91.3 MHz.

Since both parties held up their ends of the deal, it was time for the \$10,000 to change hands. Morgenstern and the newly installed KTEQ co-managers Jon Christopherson and Steve “Punk” Bintliff decided to cash the \$10,000 escrow check just for fun. \$100 bills would suffice. The group headed to Dean Pete’s office and presented him with the wad of Franklin’s. Dean Pete insisted on showing everyone in the Administration Building KTEQ’s big wad of money and was very disruptive of normal business activities in doing so. Even by today’s standards, \$10,000 is a considerable sum for a collegiate student organization to be awarded in one day (in 1982 \$10,000 could buy a new Pontiac Firebird). Needless to say, the Foundation Office was not happy with securing so much cash overnight!

In the final analysis, the frequency change would require only \$2,000 for a new antenna and quartz-crystals to reconfigure the transmitter. The remaining funds were used for various station improvement projects over the years to come.