



EchoStar, OpTel Form Alliance to Provide DISH Network Satellite Television Services to Multi-Family Residential Complexes

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EchoStar, OpTel to Deliver DISH Network Satellite Television Services to Apartments Served by Leading Private Cable

and Residential MDU Telephone Service Provider

EchoStar Communications Corp. (NASDAQ: DISH, DISHP) and OpTel, Inc., the largest U.S. private cable and competitive residential phone service provider, announced today a joint agreement that will offer EchoStar's DISH Network™ digital satellite entertainment television to residents of apartments and other multi-family residential complexes served by OpTel. This agreement facilitates the opportunity for EchoStar to expand into the multiple dwelling unit (MDU) market by potentially exposing more than 400,000 apartment and condominium units serviced by OpTel to the hundreds of channels offered by DISH Network.

OpTel's MDU customers will have the opportunity to receive DISH Network programming in addition to OpTel's on-property cable channels. OpTel will receive customer orders, provide billing services and distribute DISH Network satellite receivers to customers who subscribe to the service.

Where offered, the DISH Network digital television programming packages will be an optional additional tier of service available to OpTel's basic and expanded basic cable customers. DISH Network has over 300 programming services with crystal-clear, CD-quality audio and video channels providing entertainment television, local broadcast TV networks and international programming.

DISH Network serves over 2 million customers. OpTel's services are available in over 400,000 apartment and condominium units.

"EchoStar is pleased to partner with OpTel, the largest private MDU telecommunications service provider in the U.S.," said Jim DeFranco, EchoStar's executive vice president. "This agreement gives OpTel a more cost effective way to expand its pay television services while at the same time demonstrating EchoStar's desire to increase its sales efforts into the MDU market. EchoStar will now have access to a larger number of MDU customers who will have full advantage of the more than 300 channel choices DISH Network has to offer."

"We are delighted to have entered into an alliance with EchoStar," said Louis Brunel, president and CEO of OpTel. "This enhancement of our service offering is a key component of our mission to provide analog cable, digital satellite video, local and long distance telephone and high speed internet services to multi-family residential communities." He noted that he expects OpTel to begin this new service on selected properties in the next few months.

EchoStar Communications Corp., includes three interrelated business units:

- DISH Network™ is EchoStar's state-of-the-art DBS system that offers customers over 300 channels of digital video and CD-quality audio programming, fully MPEG-2/DVB compliant hardware, installation, financing and leasing.

- EchoStar Technologies Corporation (ETC, formerly HTS™ - Houston Tracker Systems, Inc.), designs, manufactures and distributes DBS set-top boxes, antennas and other digital equipment for DISH Network and various international customers that include ExpressVu Canada and Telefonica's Via Digital system in Spain. ETC also provides uplink-center design, construction oversight and project-integration services for customers internationally.

- Satellite Services provides the delivery of video, audio and data services to business television customers and other satellite users. These services include satellite uplink, satellite transponder space-usage and other services. Satellite Services also administers SKY VISTA, a direct broadcast satellite service offering up to 27 channels of popular digital satellite television programming to viewers in Alaska, Hawaii, Puerto Rico and the U.S. territories in the Caribbean.

DISH Network currently serves over 2 million customers. DISH Network is a trademark of EchoStar Communications Corporation. HTS is a trademark of Houston Tracker Systems, Inc. DISH Network is located on the Internet at:

OpTel:

OpTel is a leading network-based provider of integrated communications services, including local and long distance telephone and cable television services to residents of multiple dwelling units in the United States. OpTel currently provides cable television and telecommunications services in several metropolitan areas, including Los Angeles; San Diego; San Francisco; Denver; Phoenix; Houston, Dallas-Fort Worth; Austin, Texas; Chicago; Atlanta; Miami-Ft. Lauderdale; Tampa and Orlando, Fla., and Indianapolis, Ind. OpTel is majority owned by Le Groupe Videotron Ltee, owner of the second largest cable television operator in Canada.

For more information, contact Stephen Dube' at 214-634-3856, or visit www.optelinc.com. OpTel's high-speed internet service is featured at www.optelnow.com.

Certain matters discussed in this statement are "forward looking statements" intended to qualify for the safe harbors from liability established by the Private Securities Litigation Reform Act of 1995. These "forward looking statements" can generally be identified as such because the context of the statement will include words such as the Company "believes," "anticipates," "expects," or words of similar import. Similarly, statements that describe the Company's future plans, objectives or goals are forward-looking statements. Such forward-looking statements are subject to certain risks and uncertainties that could cause actual results to differ materially from those currently anticipated. Such risks and uncertainties include, but are not limited to: a total or partial loss of a satellite due to operational failures, space debris or otherwise; uncertainty as to the Company's future profitability; the Company's ability to develop and implement operational and financial systems to manage rapidly growing operations; an increase in competition from cable television, Direct Broadcast Satellite ("DBS"), other satellite system operators, and other providers of subscription television services; the introduction of new technologies and competitors into the subscription television business; a merger of existing DBS competitors; the Company's ability to integrate and successfully operate acquired businesses and the risks associated with such businesses; the Company's ability to obtain financing on acceptable terms to finance the Company's growth strategy and for the Company to operate within the limitations imposed by financing arrangements; uncertainty as to the future profitability of acquired businesses; trends in the cable television, broadcast television and satellite television industries; impediments to the retransmission of local or distant broadcast network signals; a decrease in sales of digital equipment and related services to international service providers; a decrease in Dish Network subscriber growth; an increase in subscriber acquisition costs; lower than expected demand for the Company's delivery of local broadcast network signals; changes in relationships with customers; changes in the regulatory environment, such as the inability of the Company to retain necessary authorizations from the Federal Communications Commission ("FCC") or a change in the regulations governing the subscription television service industry; the outcome of pending litigation and regulatory inquiries; an unexpected business interruption due to the failure of third parties to remediate Year 2000 issues; failure to consummate EchoStar's pending acquisition with The News Corporation Limited and MCI WorldCom, Inc. whereby the Company would issue equity securities in exchange for two satellites that have not yet been completed or the failure of such satellites to be successfully launched or to become operational or a delay in such launch or operation; and the impact of accounting policies required to be adopted. Other factors that could materially affect such forward-looking statements can be found in EchoStar's periodic reports filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission. Shareholders, potential investors and other readers are urged to consider these factors carefully in evaluating the forward-looking statements. The forward-looking statements made herein are only made as of the date of this statement and EchoStar undertakes no obligation to publicly update such forward-looking statements to reflect subsequent events or circumstances.

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