§ 312.11 Safe harbor programs.

(a) In general. Industry groups or other persons may apply to the Commission for approval of self-regulatory program guidelines (“safe harbor programs”). The application shall be filed with the Commission’s Office of the Secretary. The Commission will publish in the FEDERAL REGISTER a document seeking public comment on the application. The Commission shall issue a written determination within 180 days of the filing of the application.

(b) Criteria for approval of self-regulatory program guidelines. Proposed safe harbor programs must demonstrate that they meet the following performance standards:

(1) Program requirements that ensure operators subject to the self-regulatory program guidelines (“subject operators”) provide substantially the same or greater protections for children as those contained in §§ 312.2 through 312.8, and 312.10.

(2) An effective, mandatory mechanism for the independent assessment of subject operators’ compliance with the self-regulatory program guidelines. At a minimum, this mechanism must include a comprehensive review by the safe harbor program, to be conducted not less than annually, of each subject operator’s information policies, practices, and representations. The assessment mechanism required under this paragraph can be provided by an independent enforcement program, such as a seal program.

(3) Disciplinary actions for subject operators’ non-compliance with self-regulatory program guidelines. This