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# 50pc of firms rejected in satellite TV dish battle

By OWEN HUGHES

ALMOST half of the 83 companies that applied to install satellite television dishes have been turned down by the Post Office and Telecommunications Authority.

Last night it issued a list of 47 companies that have been given the go-ahead to retail and install satellite master television (SMATV) systems, which link a communal rooftop receiver dish with television sets throughout a block of flats.

The system is thought to be suitable for about 85 per cent of properties in Hongkong.

The Postmaster-General, Mr Dominic Wong Shing-wah, said 18 applications had been rejected outright and 18 others had been asked to supply further information.

The response showed there was "considerable interest" in installing the dishes and it meant there would be "healthy competition in the market", Mr Wong added.

"The companies that were re-

jected failed to meet the financial, technical and managerial requirements that we announced last month.

"Other companies were turned down because they were not registered in Hongkong."

Companies which completed the remaining formalities could receive their licences and start installations by the end of next week.

However, Mr Wong said the date for the first licensed SMATV dish installation would depend on the reaction of consumers. He

advised customers to shop around for the best price.

One successful applicant said the companies that did not get a licence had probably failed to meet technical standards.

"The Post Office had to be assured that they had the know-how to cope safely with the equipment requirements," he said.

Each applicant was asked to submit a detailed description of their equipment as well as a three-year business plan. The staff had to include a qualified structural

engineer to assess the load on rooftops supporting dishes up to 12 metres across.

All the installers will have to take out insurance policies with a minimum \$5 million worth of cover against the chance of a dish coming away from its mounting and causing deaths and injuries.

Among the successful applicants were the Hutchison Whampoa-owned Fortress Satellite Systems, Hongkong and Shanghai Hotels, Hongkong Telecom CSL, Rediffusion Hongkong, Millicom

Satellite Television. Chubb Hongkong and Swire Engineering.

It has been estimated that the minimum cost of a SMATV system capable of receiving the five channels planned by the Hongkong-based Satellite Television Asia (STAR TV) service will be \$100,000.

STAR TV is owned by Hutchison Whampoa and a family concern headed by Hutchison Whampoa chairman Mr Li Ka-shing.