

11. A method as claimed in claim 10 wherein said assigned class identifier is either one of a plurality of regular user class identifiers or one of a plurality of special user class identifiers, said method further comprising the steps of:

- identifying a geographic area likely to exhibit overload during a planning interval, said node expected to service said geographic area during said planning interval;
- determining a percentage of subscriber units having regular users class identifiers in said geographic area to be temporarily blocked from accessing said communication system;
- forming a set of said class identifiers to temporarily inhibit in said geographic area based on said percentage; and
- varying said temporarily inhibited class identifiers of said set, wherein subscriber units having different of said class identifiers are inhibited on a substantially uniform basis.

12. A method of limiting access to users of a communication system which is accessible through subscriber units, each of said subscriber units having an assigned class identifier of a plurality of class identifiers embedded therein, said method comprising the steps of:

- determining class identifiers of said plurality to temporarily inhibit when an available number of traffic channels is below a predetermined threshold;
- receiving from said communication system at said subscriber unit a parameter set which includes said temporarily inhibited class identifiers;
- determining by said subscriber unit if said assigned class identifier is one of said temporarily inhibited class identifiers; and
- displaying a message to inform a user of said subscriber unit, when said assigned class identifier is one of said temporarily inhibited class identifiers, that service is not presently available.

13. A method according to claim 12 further comprising the steps of:

- selecting by one of said subscriber units, a strongest antenna beam from a plurality of antenna beams, said plurality of antenna beams being associated with at least one node of said communication system, said antenna beams having a broadcast channel, a traffic channel and an acquisition channel associated therewith;
- c1) determining if a second antenna beam of said plurality of antenna beams is available when said class identifier associated with said one subscriber unit is one of said temporarily inhibited class identifiers, said determination based in part on a signal strength of other of said antenna beams;
- c2) selecting by said one subscriber unit, said second antenna beam if said second antenna beam is available;
- c3) receiving at said one subscriber unit in said broadcast channel associated with said second antenna beam, a second parameter set which includes a second list of temporarily inhibited class identifiers; and
- c4) determining by said one subscriber unit if said assigned class identifier associated with said subscriber unit is one of said assigned inhibited class identifiers received in said second parameter set.

14. A method as claimed in claim 13 further comprising the steps of:

- initiating an access protocol on said acquisition channel associated with said strongest antenna beam when said

assigned class identifier is not one of said temporarily inhibited class identifiers received in said parameter set; and

receiving on said acquisition channel, an assignment of a traffic channel upon successful completion of said access protocol, said traffic channel being associated with said strongest antenna beam.

15. A method as claimed in claim 12 wherein said assigned class identifier is either one of a plurality of regular user class identifiers or one of a plurality of special user class identifiers, and wherein the method further comprises the steps of:

- a1) initiating by said subscriber unit, a request for service; and
- a2) changing said assigned class identifier from a regular user class identifier to an emergency service class identifier when said request for service is a request for emergency service, said emergency service class identifier being one of said special user class identifiers.

16. A method as claimed in claim 15 wherein said assigned class identifier is embedded within said subscriber unit, and wherein said regular user class identifiers are assigned at random and, said special user class identifiers identify an associated subscriber unit as one of a class of special users including a system test user, a system maintenance user, an emergency service user, or a privileged user, and wherein said regular user class identifiers that are inhibited are varied so that subscriber units having different of said regular user class identifiers are inhibited on a substantially uniform basis.

17. A method of operating a node in a communication system that communicates with subscriber units, said node having a plurality of antenna beams associated therewith, each antenna beam of said plurality of antenna beams having a demand for communication services associated therewith, and said antenna beams having broadcast channels, traffic channels and acquisition channels associated therewith, each of said subscriber units having an assigned class identifier stored therein, said assigned class identifier being either one of a plurality of regular user class identifiers or one of a plurality of special user class identifiers, said method comprising the steps of:

- receiving from said communication system, a parameter set associated with at least one antenna beam of said plurality of antenna beams which includes a list of inhibited class identifiers for said one antenna beam;
- determining if an available number of traffic channels associated with said at least one antenna beam is below a reserve threshold;
- modifying said parameter set to include some of said regular user class identifiers when said available number of traffic channels in said at least one antenna beam is below said reserve threshold; and
- broadcasting said parameter set in an associated broadcast channel of said at least one antenna beam.

18. A method according to claim 17 wherein one of said special user class identifiers is a maintenance mode class identifier, and wherein said method further comprises after said receiving step, the steps of:

- determining if said node is in a maintenance mode; and
- modifying said parameter set to include all of said regular user class identifiers and all of said special user class identifiers except a maintenance class identifier when said node is in said maintenance mode, wherein only subscriber units having said maintenance mode class identifier may access said node of said communication system.