

What's the Problem with Region Codes and Phase II DVD-ROM drives?

DVD-ROMs have historically ignored the region codes. The task of obeying the region code limitations was delegated to the Player software. Unfortunately, cracks to defeat these players were widely spread via the Internet. The DVD Forum took action and changed the requirements for all new DVD-ROM drives - the region codes are now handled in the drive hardware.

All the new DVD-ROM drives manufactured in 2000 have to conform to Phase II Regional Playback Control (RPC). This feature forces the user to assign a region to the drive so that it can only play or read discs from that region only. You are allowed to change the region code on the drive 5 times. The Pioneer firmware version 2.00 has this phase II RPC feature - so *simply updating the firmware in your existing drive will eliminate your ability to deal with multiple region codes*. So if you can, you should try to get drives with firmware versions before 2.00. See <http://www.dvdcca.org/rpc.html> for more explanation of RPC II.

This is a serious problem for premastering, mastering and QC operations. Worst case - you will now need to have one DVD-ROM drive dedicated for each region code your facility supports.

Eclipse is researching this problem to see if there's some practical solution or workaround. At the moment, the outlook is bleak.