



# PUBLIC NOTICE

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## CLOSED CAPTIONING REQUIREMENTS FOR COMPUTER SYSTEMS USED AS TELEVISION RECEIVERS

Several manufacturers have requested information on the requirements for displaying closed captioning as they apply to computers that have the capability to receive television signals. This Public Notice describes the Office of Engineering and Technology's (OET) interpretation of the requirements of the Television Decoder Circuitry Act of 1990, and the rules implementing that Act, as they apply to computer systems. As indicated below, computer systems that are sold with a monitor that has a "viewable picture" size of 13 inches or greater and that have the capability to receive television service must be able to display closed captions transmitted on television signals. Closed captioning capability is not required for smaller monitors, for systems without television reception capability, for computers sold without monitors, or for "plug-in" circuit boards that add television reception capability.

Section 15.119 of the Commission's rules, and the Television Decoder Circuitry Act of 1990 (Pub. L. 101-431) upon which this rule section is based, require that all devices designed to receive television pictures broadcast simultaneously with sound be equipped with built-in decoder circuitry designed to display closed-captioned television transmissions when such a device is manufactured in the United States or imported for use in the United States, and its television picture screen is 33 cm (13 inches) or greater in size. See 47 CFR §15.119 and 47 U.S.C. §§303(u) and 330(b).

Personal computers can now be equipped to receive and display broadcast television programming. This capability can be marketed in a variety of ways. For example, built-in TV receiver capability can be included in personal computers that are marketed as complete systems, e.g., systems that include both a computer and monitor. Built-in TV receiver capability can also be included in personal computers sold without a monitor. In addition, TV receiver capability can be provided on plug-in circuit cards that can be used to add TV reception capability to an existing personal computer.

The screen sizes for TV receivers and monitors used with personal computers traditionally have been measured differently by manufacturers in the two industries. TV receiver screen size is measured on the basis of the "viewable picture" area, in accordance with Federal Trade Commission (FTC) regulations. See 16 CFR §410. Computer monitors traditionally are measured on the basis of the overall physical size of the picture tube. In many cases,

computer monitors marketed as 14 inches or larger actually have a viewable picture size of less than 33 cm (13 inches). We note that the majority of computer monitors being sold now have a viewable picture size that is smaller than 33 cm (13 inches), although the number of models with larger picture sizes is increasing.

OET interprets that the requirements of Section 15.119 apply to computer systems that have the capability to receive TV broadcast signals and include a monitor that has a "viewable picture" size of 33 cm (13 inches) or larger, as measured in accordance with the FTC regulations, 16 CFR §410. For purposes of this interpretation, a computer system may be a single unit, with the computer and monitor in the same housing, or separate computer and monitor units:

As a practical matter, computers and monitors sold together as systems are often marketed with separate prices. This allows consumers greater flexibility in choosing a system that meets their needs. OET interprets that where computers and monitors are priced separately but sold together, *i.e.*, as part of the same business transaction, they are nonetheless computer systems for purposes of the closed caption display capability requirements and must comply with those requirements if the "viewable picture" of the monitor is 33 cm (13 inches) or larger.

The requirements of Section 15.119 do not apply to:

- Computers or computer systems that do not have the capability to receive TV broadcast signals;
- Computers sold without monitors;
- Computer systems with monitors that do not have a viewable picture of 33 cm (13") or larger; or,
- Separate "plug-in" circuit boards.

In issuing this interpretation, we wish to emphasize that we recognize the importance of closed captioning display as a feature of TV reception capability included in personal computers. We therefore will monitor the practices of the computer industry with regard to this feature, particularly with regard to the practices of selling computers and monitors together, and will consider appropriate action in the future as may be necessary to ensure this feature is adequately available to the public.

By the Chief, Office of Engineering and Technology

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