



PUBLIC NOTICE

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION

445 12th STREET, S.W.

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COMMON CARRIER BUREAU OUTLINES DATES FOR HEARING AID COMPATIBILITY COMPLIANCE FOR TELEPHONE EQUIPMENT

By this Public Notice, the Common Carrier Bureau reminds telephone manufacturers that all telephones, including cordless telephones, manufactured in the United States (other than for export) or imported for use in the United States, must have a volume control feature consistent with the technical standards in 47 C.F.R. § 68.317 by January 1, 2000. *See* 47 C.F.R. § 68.6. In addition, the Common Carrier Bureau outlines the previous and upcoming dates for hearing aid compatibility compliance for telephone equipment, as set forth in Part 68 of the Commission's rules, 47 C.F.R. Part 68. Examples of entities and parties that may be affected by these dates include telephone manufacturers, hospitals, nursing homes, hotels/motels, and employers.

The Hearing Aid Compatibility Act of 1988 ("HAC Act") requires the Commission to ensure that all "essential" telephones are hearing aid compatible. *See* 47 U.S.C. § 610. The statute defines "essential" phones as "coin-operated telephones, telephones provided for emergency use, and other telephones frequently needed for use by persons using such hearing aids." *See* 47 U.S.C. § 610(b)(4)(A). Under the Commission's rules, "telephones provided for emergency use" include workplace telephones, telephones in confined settings (such as hospitals and nursing homes), and telephones in hotel and motel guest rooms. *See* 47 C.F.R. § 68.112(b). Secure telephones, as well as telephones used with public mobile services or private radio services, are exempt from the requirements of the HAC Act. *See* 47 U.S.C. § 610(b)(2)(A).

As defined by 47 U.S.C. § 610(b)(1)(B), a telephone is hearing aid compatible if it has an internal feature that allows the use of hearing aids designed to be compatible with telephones that meet the technical standards codified at 47 C.F.R. § 68.316. This is usually accomplished by inserting a telecoil in telephones that detects, or is compatible with, a similar telecoil in the hearing aid, and thus allows the hearing aid to "couple" with the telephone through an electromagnetic field. The following are the published deadlines for compliance with the Commission's hearing aid compatibility rules:

Manufacturers: The Commission began its implementation of the HAC Act by requiring that all telephones, except for telephones used with public mobile services or private radio services, and cordless and secure telephones, manufactured in the United States (other than for export) or imported for use in the United States be hearing aid compatible by August 16, 1989. *See* 47 C.F.R. § 68.4(a)(1). In addition, all credit card-operated telephones, whether located on public property or in a semipublic location, were required to be hearing aid-compatible by May 1, 1991 or when replaced, whichever came sooner. *See* 47 C.F.R. § 68.112(b)(4). Furthermore, cordless telephones manufactured in the United States (other than for export) or imported for use in the United States were required to be hearing aid compatible by August 16, 1991. *See* 47 C.F.R. § 68.4(a)(1). All registered hearing aid-compatible phones, including cordless telephones, manufactured in the United States (other than for export) or imported for use in the United States were required to be permanently affixed with the letters "HAC" as of April 1, 1997. *See* 47 C.F.R. § 68.300(c).

Hotel and Motels: Beginning on October 23, 1996, if a hotel or motel guest room is to be renovated or newly constructed, or a guest room telephone is to be substantially and internally repaired, then the telephone for that room must be hearing aid compatible, including being equipped with volume control on or after January 1, 2000. *See* 47 C.F.R. § 68.112(b)(6)(i). By April 1, 1997, at least twenty percent of a hotel or motel's guest rooms were to be equipped with hearing aid compatible telephones. *See* 47 C.F.R. § 68.112(b)(6)(ii). The Commission has ruled that all telephones in hotels and motels must be equipped with hearing aid compatible technology by November 1, 1998, for establishments with eighty or more beds, and by November 1, 1999, for establishments with fewer than eighty beds, unless the telephones have been purchased between the period from January 1, 1985, through December 31, 1989. *See* 47 C.F.R. § 68.112(b)(6).

Telephones in hotels and motels, and in any other establishment open to the general public for the purpose of overnight accommodation for a fee, with fewer than eighty guest rooms, will be required to have all hearing aid compatible telephones by November 1, 1999 unless the telephones were purchased during the period January 1, 1985, through December 31, 1989. *See* 47 C.F.R. § 68.112(b)(6). If purchased during the period January 1, 1985, through December 31, 1989, the telephones in at least twenty-five percent of the guest rooms must be hearing aid compatible by November 1, 1999. *See* 47 C.F.R. § 68.112(b)(6)(iii)(B). Hotels or motels with eighty or more guest rooms that purchased telephones during the period January 1, 1985, through December 31, 1989, have until January 1, 2001 to provide hearing aid compatible telephones to one-hundred percent of its guest rooms. *See* 47 C.F.R. § 68.112(b)(6)(iii)(C). Hotels with less than eighty guest rooms have until January 1, 2004 to comply with this requirement. *Id.*

Workplace: All non-common area workplace telephones must be hearing aid compatible by January 1, 2000, except for those telephones located in establishments with less than fifteen employees; and except for those telephones purchased between January 1, 1985, through December 31, 1989, which will have until January 1, 2005 to be replaced with hearing aid compatible telephones. Non-common areas include private offices, work stations, and mail rooms. *See* 47 C.F.R. § 68.112(b)(3). Employers with fifteen or more employees, however, must provide, during the period from October 23, 1996, until the applicable date of January 1, 2000 or 2005, telephones for emergency use by employees with hearing disabilities. *See* 47 C.F.R. § 68.112(b)(3)(v).

Confined Settings: Establishments, such as hospitals, residential health care facilities for senior citizens, and convalescent homes, with fifty or more beds, were required to have hearing aid compatible telephones in patient rooms by November 1, 1997. *See* 47 C.F.R. § 68.112(b)(5)(i)(A). Establishments with fewer than fifty beds were required to have hearing aid compatible telephones by November 1, 1998, unless the telephone was replaced before that time. *See* 47 C.F.R. § 68.112(b)(5)(i)(B).

Copies of the Commission's rules may be obtained from the International Transcription Service (ITS), 1231 20th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036, (202) 857-3800, TTY (202) 293-8810. Alternative formats (computer diskette, large print, audio cassette, and Braille) are available to persons with disabilities by contacting Martha Contee at (202) 418-0260, TTY (202) 418-2555, or at mcontee@fcc.gov. This Public Notice can be downloaded at: <http://www.fcc.gov/dtf/> and frequently asked questions regarding HAC and volume control can be downloaded at: http://www.fcc.gov/Bureaus/Common_Carrier/FAQ/faq_hac.html.

For further information contact Marilyn Jones at (202) 418-2357, majones@fcc.gov, or Debra Sabourin at (202) 418-0976, dsabouri@fcc.gov, of the Common Carrier Bureau, Network Services Division, TTY Number: (202) 418-0484.

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