



NEWS

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This is an unofficial announcement of Commission action. Release of the full text of a Commission order constitutes official action.
See MCI v. FCC, 515 F 2d 385 (D.C. Circ 1974).

For Immediate Release:
May 28, 2004

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FCC REMINDS VIDEO PROGRAMMING DISTRIBUTORS THEY MUST MAKE EMERGENCY INFORMATION ACCESSIBLE TO PERSONS WITH HEARING OR VISION DISABILITIES

Washington, DC -- As part of its continuing efforts to ensure that people with hearing or vision disabilities are kept informed about emergency situations that arise in their communities, the FCC has issued a Public Notice reminding video programming distributors, including broadcasters, cable operators, and satellite television services, of their obligation to make emergency information accessible to persons with hearing and vision disabilities.

In the case of persons who are deaf or hard of hearing, emergency information that is provided in the audio portion of the programming must be provided using closed captioning or other methods of visual presentation, such as open captioning, crawls, or scrolls that appear on the screen. Emergency information provided by these means should not block any closed captioning, and closed captioning should not block any emergency information provided by crawls, scrolls, or other visual means. This rule regarding access to emergency information for persons with hearing disabilities became effective on August 29, 2000.

The same information must also be provided in a manner that is accessible to persons who are blind or have low vision. Specifically, emergency information that is provided in the video portion of a regularly scheduled newscast or a newscast that interrupts regular programming must be made accessible. This requires the oral description of emergency information in the main audio, such as open video description. If the emergency information is being provided in the video portion of programming that is not a regularly scheduled newscast or a newscast that interrupts regular programming (e.g., the programmer provides the emergency information through "crawling" or "scrolling" during regular programming), this information must be accompanied by an aural tone. This tone is to alert persons with vision disabilities that the video programming distributor is providing emergency information, and alert such persons to tune to another source, such as a radio, for more information. This rule regarding access to emergency information for persons with vision disabilities became effective February 2, 2001.

For more information on the FCC's rules on accessibility of emergency video programming to persons with hearing and visual disabilities, visit the FCC's web site at <http://www.fcc.gov/cgb/consumerfacts/emergencyvideo.html>, or contact Traci Randolph, (202) 418-0569 (voice); (202) 418-0537 (TTY); e-mail traci.randolph@fcc.gov.

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