



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).

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INTERNET PROTOCOL CAPTIONED TELEPHONE SERVICE ELIGIBLE FOR COMPENSATION FROM INTERSTATE TRS FUND

Service represents important step towards functional equivalency

Washington, D.C. – Today the Commission adopted a Declaratory Ruling finding that Internet Protocol (IP) captioned telephone service (IP CTS) is a type of telecommunications relay service (TRS) eligible for compensation from the Interstate TRS Fund (Fund). The Commission acted in response to a petition by Ultratec, Inc., that was widely supported by the disability community.

An IP captioned telephone call can be set up similar to a two-line captioned telephone call, except that the line from the user to the provider would be via the Internet, not a second PSTN line. The consumer would make a voice to voice call to the other party on a standard telephone and the PSTN; at the same time, the voice of the called party is directed from the consumer's telephone to a personal computer (or similar device) that routes it to the provider via the Internet. The provider, in turn, sends back to the consumer the text of what was spoken. As a result, the consumer can both hear (to the extent possible) what the called party is saying over the standard voice telephone headset, and read the text of what the called party said on the computer or similar device.

IP CTS will benefit consumers by giving them the flexibility of using a computer, PDA, or wireless device to make such a call, without having to purchase special telephone equipment. In addition, captions provided on a computer screen can accommodate a much wider group of individuals, including persons with low vision, because they can take advantage of the large text, variable fonts, and variable colors that are available.

This service must meet applicable TRS mandatory minimum standards. The Commission said it expects that, as with captioned telephone service, the service will be provided in a way that is automated and invisible to both parties to the call, and where the captions are delivered via an IP network to the user fast enough so that they keep up with the speed of the other party's speech. Further, the Commission conditioned its approval of the petition on Ultratec's representation that it will license its captioned telephone technologies, including technologies related to IP CTS, to all providers at reasonable rates.

IP CTS calls will be compensated, on an interim basis, at the IP Relay compensation rate. The Commission also concluded that providers seeking to offer this service and be compensated from the Fund may seek certification from the Commission as an eligible provider. The Commission noted that this is an interim measure and that it intends to revisit the cost recovery methodology for this service in the future, including jurisdictional separation of costs.

Action by the Commission December 20, 2006, by Declaratory Ruling (FCC 06-182). Chairman Martin, Commissioners Copps, Adelstein, Tate and McDowell, with Chairman Martin and Commissioners Copps, Adelstein, Tate and McDowell issuing separate statements.

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