



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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FCC ADOPTS TELEPHONE NUMBERING SYSTEM AND E-911 REQUIREMENTS FOR PROVIDERS OF INTERNET-BASED TELECOMMUNICATIONS RELAY SERVICES

Washington, DC -- The Commission today took important steps toward providing Americans with hearing and speech disabilities with access to the telephone network that is “functionally equivalent” to voice telephone services.

Telecommunications Relay Service (TRS), and newer, Internet-based forms of TRS, including Video Relay Service (VRS) and Internet Protocol (IP) Relay, allow persons with hearing and speech disabilities to communicate with hearing users of voice services. Until today, there was no uniform, consistent way for voice telephone users to call Internet-based TRS users. Further, TRS typically has not provided the same access to emergency services as compared to traditional telephone services.

The Order adopts a system for assigning traditional ten-digit telephone numbers to Internet-based TRS users. This means that Internet-based TRS users will be able to reach and be reached by both hearing users of the traditional telephone network and other Internet-based TRS users by doing something most Americans take for granted – dialing a ten-digit phone number. Internet-based TRS users will also be able to port their numbers from one provider to another, and users will be able to use any Internet-based TRS provider they choose.

In addition, to ensure that Internet-based TRS users have functionally equivalent access to emergency services, the Order requires providers to obtain and maintain the physical location of their users — the same obligation the Commission has imposed on interconnected voice over IP providers — and to automatically route emergency calls from Internet-based TRS users to the appropriate emergency services authorities using such information. The Order also directs Internet-based TRS providers to notify their users of these changes.

Providers of Internet-based TRS must comply with the Order’s requirements no later than December 31, 2008.

In the Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, the Commission seeks additional comment on related implementation issues, including, for example, the potential application of anti-slamming protections to protect relay consumers, and whether and to what extent the customer proprietary network information (CPNI) rules should apply to TRS providers.

Action by the Commission, June 11, 2008, by Report and Order and Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (FCC 08-151). Chairman Martin, Commissioners Copps, Adelstein, Tate and McDowell with Commissioners Copps, Adelstein and Tate issuing separate statements.

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