



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 TAKES STEPS TO EMPOWER CONSUMERS WITH HEARING LOSS BY ENCOURAGING HANDSET DEVICE INNOVATION

Washington, D.C. -- Today, the Federal Communications Commission took important steps to ensure that the latest wireless phones are hearing aid-compatible, expanding access to mobile networks and services for the 8 million Americans who use hearing aids. Today's actions encourage innovation and investment and foster an environment that enables Americans with hearing loss to have meaningful access to 21st century mobile technology by allowing industry the flexibility to devise a range of solutions that meet consumers' needs.

The *Second Report and Order* adopted today clarifies that the hearing aid compatibility rules cover customer equipment that contains a built-in speaker and is designed to be typically held to the ear. *Order* also modifies the *de minimis* exception in the existing rule so that all large entities are required to offer at least one hearing aid-compatible model after a two-year initial period. The *Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking* seeks comment on extending the hearing aid compatibility rules to cover new handsets and air interfaces.

The FCC also adopted a *Policy Statement* that emphasizes to developers of new technologies the necessity of considering and planning for hearing aid compatibility at the earliest stages of the product design process. By focusing on the development stage, innovators and entrepreneurs can account for compatibility issues before their first device is ever produced.

To ensure that these policies yield real-world results, the FCC announced that it will convene a roundtable of industry and disability group leaders to renew the collaborative process between developers and consumers to address the challenges of hearing aid compatibility. This roundtable will provide an open forum for an exchange of ideas and strategies aimed at ensuring that the drive for innovative new products and the need for hearing aid compatibility are in sync.

Today's actions further the intent of the Hearing Aid Compatibility Act and are also consistent with a recommendation in the National Broadband Plan that the Commission update its hearing aid compatibility rules to allow Americans with disabilities to experience the full benefits of broadband.

Action by the Commission August 5, 2010, by Policy Statement, Second Report and Order and Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (FCC 10-145). Chairman Genachowski, Commissioners Copps, McDowell, Clyburn, and Baker. Separate statements issued by Chairman Genachowski, Commissioners Copps, McDowell, Clyburn and Baker.

WT Docket No. 07-250.

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