

Media Contact:

Cecilia Sulhoff, 202-418-0587

cecilia.sulhoff@fcc.gov

For Immediate Release

**FCC ENSURES HEARING AID COMPATIBILITY FOR ALL
WIRELESS VOICE TECHNOLOGIES**

Commission Also Proposes to Adopt a Landmark Agreement Between Consumer Advocates and Industry Associations as the Pathway to Compatibility for 100% of Wireless Devices

WASHINGTON, November 19, 2015 – Today, the Federal Communications Commission took major steps to ensure greater access to wireless communications services and handset devices for the tens of millions of Americans with hearing loss. New rules and proposed rules passed today reflect a consensus-driven approach to foster accessibility for individuals who are deaf and hard of hearing while promoting innovation and investment by the wireless industry.

The action taken today has two parts. First, the *Fourth Report and Order* expands the scope of the hearing aid compatibility rules to cover the wireless technologies of today and tomorrow. Until now, the hearing aid compatibility rules generally were limited only to handsets that used traditional cellular networks. Recognizing that wireless voice communications increasingly operate via alternative technologies, the Commission has expanded the rules to cover IP-based communications services like Wi-Fi Calling and Voice-over-LTE. In addition, the new rules will require that future technologies comply with current and future hearing aid compatibility rules, encouraging manufacturers to consider hearing aid compatibility at the earliest stages of the product design process, ensuring that consumers with hearing loss are not always trying to catch up to technology and providing industry with additional regulatory certainty.

Second, the *Notice of Proposed Rulemaking* seeks comment on a landmark consensus plan that would, for the first time, establish a consensus path to ensure that all wireless handsets are accessible to and usable by people who use hearing aid devices and cochlear implants. The consensus plan was developed through collaborative discussions between consumer and industry representatives. The current hearing aid compatibility rules require service providers and handset manufacturers to ensure that a specified fraction or number of their offerings are hearing aid compliant. The consensus approach would give consumers with hearing loss the same range of device choices available to any other consumer while at the same time preserving industry's ability to innovate.

Action by the Commission November 19, 2015 by Report and Order and Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (FCC 15-155). Chairman Wheeler, Commissioners Clyburn, Rosenworcel, Pai and O'Rielly approving. Chairman Wheeler, Commissioners Clyburn, Rosenworcel, Pai and O'Rielly issuing statements.

(WT Docket No. 07-250)

###

Office of Media Relations: (202) 418-0500

TTY: (888) 835-5322

Twitter: @FCC

www.fcc.gov/office-media-relations

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. Cir. 1974).