



# 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. Cir. 1974).

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**  
February 20, 2014

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## FCC MOVES TO UPGRADE TV CLOSED CAPTIONING QUALITY

### *New Standards – including Accuracy, Timeliness, and On-Screen Placement of Closed Captions – Will Ensure Full Access to TV Programming for Americans Who Are Deaf and Hard of Hearing*

Washington, D.C. – The Federal Communications Commission today unanimously approved new, more comprehensive rules for TV closed captioning to ensure that viewers who are deaf and hard of hearing have full access to programming. Today's action resolves decade-long concerns from deaf and hard of hearing communities to improve captioning quality and provides much needed guidance to video programming distributors and programmers.

The new rules apply to all television programming with captions. Specifically, the Order adopts quality standards for accuracy, synchronicity (timing), program completeness, and placement of closed captions, including the requirement that captions be:

- **Accurate:** Captions must match the spoken words in the dialogue and convey background noises and other sounds to the fullest extent possible.
- **Synchronous:** Captions must coincide with their corresponding spoken words and sounds to the greatest extent possible and must be displayed on the screen at a speed that can be read by viewers.
- **Complete:** Captions must run from the beginning to the end of the program to the fullest extent possible.
- **Properly placed:** Captions should not block other important visual content on the screen, overlap one another, or run off the edge of the video screen.

The Order distinguishes between pre-recorded, live, and near-live programming and explains how the new standards apply to each type of programming. The Order finds that full compliance with the above quality standards can be achieved for pre-recorded programming because of the extra time available to review and edit captions offline. The Order recognizes the greater hurdles involved with captioning live and near-live programming.

Best practices for video programmers and captioning vendors are included in the Order, which promise to improve captioning quality for viewers. For example, video programmers can provide high-quality program audio signals to promote accurate captioning transcriptions. They can also provide captioning vendors with advance access to show scripts, proper names and song lyrics, making it easier to caption live programs. Similarly, captioning vendors can ensure the proper screening, training and supervision of their captioners and take measures to ensure that their technical systems are functional, to prevent service interruptions.

These best practices were developed based on proposals from interested parties, including the National Cable and Telecommunications Association, the National Association of Broadcasters, and several captioning agencies.

The Commission also adopted measures to ensure that people who are deaf and hard of hearing will have greater access to news programming in their local communities. The measures include requiring broadcasters who are permitted under the Commission's rules to convert teleprompter script into captions to pre-script more of their news programming, including sports, weather, and most late-breaking stories. The pre-scripting requirement will result in captioning for some news programming that previously aired uncaptioned. In addition, the new rules require that crawls and other visual information be used to provide visual access to certain news segments that can't be pre-scripted.

The Order also addresses several other issues related to closed captioning quality, including multicast channels, technical equipment monitoring, and recordkeeping.

In addition to the Report and Order, the FCC issued a Declaratory Ruling clarifying existing rules defining requirements for "on demand" programming, bilingual English and Spanish programming, obligations of low power television stations, and video programming distributor contact information.

The FCC Report and Order also is accompanied by a Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking that seeks comment on reapportioning some of the captioning responsibilities and on ways to further enhance accessibility to television programming and improve the Commission's procedural rules.

Action by the Commission February 20, 2014, by Report and Order, Declaratory Ruling and Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (FCC 14-12). Chairman Wheeler, Commissioners Clyburn, Rosenworcel, Pai and O'Rielly with Chairman Wheeler, Commissioners Clyburn, Rosenworcel, Pai and O'Rielly issuing statements.

For more information about Closed Captioning for Television, visit: <http://www.fcc.gov/guides/closed-captioning>.

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