

Closed Captioning Display Requirements for Equipment

Closed captioning is the visual display of the audio portion of video programming. Captioning provides access to individuals who are deaf or have hearing loss and is often used in places where it is difficult to hear a TV program, such as restaurants and exercise facilities. The Twenty-First Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act mandates giving consumers access to closed captions through various types of video devices in addition to television monitors 13 inches or larger.

What are the FCC captioning requirements for equipment?

- Equipment manufactured after Jan. 1, 2014 that receives or plays back video programming using a picture screen of 13 inches or larger (measured diagonally) must be capable of displaying closed captions, if technically feasible. Equipment with screens of less than 13 inches in size must be capable of displaying closed captions, if doing so is technically feasible as well as achievable with reasonable effort or expense.
- If achievable with reasonable effort or expense, equipment manufactured after Jan. 1, 2014 that records video programming must either enable the display of closed captions or pass through closed captions to the equipment used to view the programming. Viewers must be able to turn on and off the closed captions as the video programming is played.

What equipment is covered by the rules, and what is not?

- Physical devices designed to receive and play back video programming, including smartphones, tablets, personal computers, and television set-top boxes, are covered by the rules.
- Equipment includes software installed by the manufacturer before the equipment is sold, as well as software that the manufacturer requires the consumer to install after the equipment is purchased.
- All recording devices and removable media players are covered by the rules, but the compliance deadline for those DVD players that do not render or pass through captions and Blu-ray players has been extended.
- Professional and commercial equipment is not covered by the rules.
- Display-only monitors are not covered by the rules.
- Manufacturers may seek waivers from the rules for any equipment that may be capable of receiving or playing video programming, but is primarily designed for other purposes.
- The rules require covered devices to enable consumers to adjust closed captions in a variety of ways, including their color (both text and background color), size, fonts, opacity, edge attributes and language selection.

Filing a complaint

You have multiple options for filing a complaint with the FCC:

- File a complaint online at <https://consumercomplaints.fcc.gov>
- By phone: 1-888-CALL-FCC (1-888-225-5322); TTY: 1-888-TELL-FCC (1-888-835-5322); ASL: 1-844-432-2275

- By mail (please include your name, address, contact information and as much detail about your complaint as possible):
Federal Communications Commission
Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau
Consumer Inquiries and Complaints Division
445 12th Street, S.W.
Washington, DC 20554

Accessible formats

To request this article in an accessible format - braille, large print, Word or text document or audio - write or call us at the address or phone number at the bottom of the page, or send an email to fcc504@fcc.gov.

Last Reviewed March 7, 2016

