

Date: Friday, May 29, 2015

Subject: Emergency Information on Television – Accessibility for Individuals who are Blind or Visually Impaired

This announcement describes two actions taken by the FCC relating to the accessibility of emergency information on television for individuals who are blind or visually impaired.

In the first action, taken on May 21, 2015, the FCC expanded its rules to make sure individuals who are blind or visually impaired get critical details about emergencies shown on television. In the second action, taken on May 26, 2015, the FCC addressed two petitions regarding the deadline for compliance with the FCC's rules requiring televised emergency information to be accessible to individuals who are blind or visually impaired.

These actions relate to rules adopted by the FCC in 2013, which require emergency information that appears visually during a non-news program (such as in a text crawl displayed during a regularly scheduled program) to be provided aurally on the secondary audio stream. These requirements stem from the Twenty-First Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act, which was signed into law by President Obama in 2010.

FCC Expands Emergency Information Accessibility Requirements

On May 21, 2015, the FCC expanded its rules to make sure individuals who are blind or visually impaired get critical details about emergencies shown on television.

The new rules adopted by the FCC require that emergency information be made accessible on a secondary audio stream on "second screens," such as tablets, smartphones, laptops, and similar devices when subscription television providers, such as cable and satellite operators, permit consumers to access scheduled programming over their networks using an app on these devices. In addition, the new rules require that the equipment used to receive and play back television programming, such as set-top boxes, have a simple and easy-to-use mechanism to switch from the main program audio to the secondary audio stream to hear audible emergency information.

The FCC also seeks comments on additional issues related to the accessibility of emergency information for individuals who are blind or visually impaired. We will announce the deadlines for comments and reply comments after the notice is published in the Federal Register.

The followings are links to the Second Report and Order and Second Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, the Press Release, and the statements of Chairman Wheeler and Commissioners Clyburn, Rosenworcel, Pai, and O'Rielly.

Second Report and Order and Second Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking

Word: https://apps.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/FCC-15-56A1.doc

PDF: https://apps.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/FCC-15-56A1.pdf

Text: https://apps.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/FCC-15-56A1.txt

Press Release

Word: https://apps.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/DOC-333600A1.doc

PDF: https://apps.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/DOC-333600A1.pdf

Text: https://apps.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/DOC-333600A1.txt

Statement of Chairman Wheeler

Word: https://apps.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/DOC-333600A2.docx

PDF: https://apps.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/DOC-333600A2.pdf

Text: https://apps.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/DOC-333600A2.txt

Statement of Commissioner Clyburn

Word: https://apps.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/DOC-333600A3.docx

PDF: https://apps.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/DOC-333600A3.pdf

Text: https://apps.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/DOC-333600A3.txt

Statement of Commissioner Rosenworcel

Word: https://apps.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/DOC-333600A4.docx

PDF: https://apps.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/DOC-333600A4.pdf

Text: https://apps.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/DOC-333600A4.txt

Statement of Commissioner Pai

Word: https://apps.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/DOC-333600A5.docx

PDF: https://apps.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/DOC-333600A5.pdf

Text: https://apps.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/DOC-333600A5.txt

Statement of Commissioner O'Rielly

Word: https://apps.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/DOC-333600A6.docx

PDF: https://apps.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/DOC-333600A6.pdf

Text: https://apps.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/DOC-333600A6.txt

FCC Addresses Two Petitions for Waiver of Emergency Information Accessibility Requirements

On May 26, 2015, the FCC's Media Bureau addressed two petitions that asked the FCC to waive the FCC's rules requiring emergency information provided visually during non-news programs to be audibly accessible on the secondary audio stream.

First, the Media Bureau granted the request of the American Cable Association (ACA) to allow certain digital/analog hybrid cable systems to comply with these FCC's emergency information accessibility rules by providing free equipment to their analog service customers who are blind or visually impaired to enable access to the digital service secondary audio stream. It also granted ACA's request to extend the deadline for compliance with these emergency information accessibility rules for analog-only cable systems until June 12, 2018.

Second, the Media Bureau granted the request of the National Association of Broadcasters (NAB) to extend the deadline for broadcasters to comply with the requirement to make emergency information accessible through the secondary audio stream for six months, until November 30, 2015. The Media Bureau also granted NAB's request to waive the requirement to aurally describe visual but non-textual emergency information, such as maps or other graphic displays, for 18 months. Finally, the Media Bureau granted NAB's request to allow broadcasters to exclude school closings information from the above accessibility requirements while the FCC reconsiders this requirement as part of the Second Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (described in the announcement above).

Links to the Memorandum Opinion and Order

Word: https://apps.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/DA-15-632A1.docx

PDF: https://apps.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/DA-15-632A1.pdf

Text: https://apps.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/DA-15-632A1.txt

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