

Federal Communications Commission

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PART 79—CLOSED CAPTIONING AND VIDEO DESCRIPTION OF VIDEO PROGRAMMING

- Sec.
- 79.1 Closed captioning of video programming.
- 79.2 Accessibility of programming providing emergency information.
- 79.3 Video description of video programming.

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§ 79.1 Closed captioning of video programming.

(a) *Definitions.* For purposes of this section the following definitions shall apply:

(1) *Video programming.* Programming provided by, or generally considered comparable to programming provided by, a television broadcast station that is distributed and exhibited for residential use. Video programming includes advertisements of more than five minutes in duration but does not include advertisements of five minutes' duration or less.

(2) *Video programming distributor.* Any television broadcast station licensed by the Commission and any multi-channel video programming distributor as defined in § 76.1000(e) of this chapter, and any other distributor of video programming for residential reception that delivers such programming directly to the home and is subject to the jurisdiction of the Commission. An entity contracting for program distribution over a video programming distributor that is itself exempt from captioning that programming pursuant to paragraph (e)(9) of this section shall itself be treated as a video programming distributor for purposes of this section. To the extent such video programming is not otherwise exempt from captioning, the entity that contracts for its distribution shall be required to comply with the closed captioning requirements of this section.

(3) *Video programming provider.* Any video programming distributor and any other entity that provides video programming that is intended for distribution to residential households including, but not limited to broadcast or nonbroadcast television network and the owners of such programming.

(4) *Closed captioning.* The visual display of the audio portion of video programming pursuant to the technical specifications set forth in part 15 of this chapter.

(5) *New programming.* Video programming that is first published or exhibited on or after January 1, 1998.

(i) Analog video programming that is first published or exhibited on or after January 1, 1998.

(ii) Digital video programming that is first published or exhibited on or after July 1, 2002.

(6) *Pre-rule programming.* (i) Analog video programming that was first published or exhibited before January 1, 1998.

(ii) Digital video programming that was first published or exhibited before July 1, 2002.

(7) *Nonexempt programming.* Video programming that is not exempt under paragraph (d) of this section and, accordingly, is subject to closed captioning requirements set forth in this section.

(b) *Requirements for closed captioning of video programming—(1) Requirements for new English language programming.* Video programming distributors must provide closed captioning for nonexempt video programming that is being distributed and exhibited on each channel during each calendar quarter in accordance with the following requirements:

(i) Between January 1, 2000, and December 31, 2001, a video programming distributor shall provide at least 450 hours of captioned video programming or all of its new nonexempt video programming must be provided with captions, whichever is less;

(ii) Between January 1, 2002, and December 31, 2003, a video programming distributor shall provide at least 900 hours of captioned video programming or all of its new nonexempt video programming must be provided with captions, whichever is less;

(iii) Between January 1, 2004, and December 31, 2005, a video programming distributor shall provide at least an average of 1350 hours of captioned video programming or all of its new nonexempt video programming must be provided with captions, whichever is less; and

(iv) As of January 1, 2006, and thereafter, 100% of the programming distributor's new nonexempt video programming must be provided with captions.

(2) *Requirements for pre-rule English language programming.* (i) After January 1, 2003, 30% of the programming distributor's pre-rule nonexempt video programming being distributed and exhibited on each channel during each

calendar quarter must be provided with closed captioning.

(ii) As of January 1, 2008, and thereafter, 75% of the programming distributor's pre-rule nonexempt video programming being distributed and exhibited on each channel during each calendar quarter must be provided with closed captioning.

(3) *Requirements for new Spanish language programming.* Video programming distributors must provide closed captioning for nonexempt Spanish language video programming that is being distributed and exhibited on each channel during each calendar quarter in accordance with the following requirements:

(i) Between January 1, 2001, and December 31, 2003, a video programming distributor shall provide at least 450 hours of captioned Spanish language video programming or all of its new nonexempt Spanish language video programming must be provided with captions, whichever is less;

(ii) Between January 1, 2004, and December 31, 2006, a video programming distributor shall provide at least 900 hours of captioned Spanish language video programming or all of its new nonexempt Spanish language video programming must be provided with captions, whichever is less;

(iii) Between January 1, 2007, and December 31, 2009, a video programming distributor shall provide at least an average of 1350 hours of captioned Spanish language video programming or all of its new nonexempt Spanish language video programming must be provided with captions, whichever is less; and

(iv) As of January 1, 2010, and thereafter, 100% of the programming distributor's new nonexempt Spanish language video programming must be provided with captions.

(4) *Requirements for Spanish language pre-rule programming.* (i) After January 1, 2005, 30% of the programming distributor's pre-rule nonexempt Spanish language video programming being distributed and exhibited on each channel during each calendar quarter must be provided with closed captioning.

(ii) As of January 1, 2012, and thereafter, 75% of the programming distributor's pre-rule nonexempt Spanish

language video programming being distributed and exhibited on each channel during each calendar quarter must be provided with closed captioning.

(5) Video programming distributors shall continue to provide captioned video programming at substantially the same level as the average level of captioning that they provided during the first six (6) months of 1997 even if that amount of captioning exceeds the requirements otherwise set forth in this section.

(c) *Obligation to pass through captions of already captioned programs.* All video programming distributors shall deliver all programming received from the video programming owner or other origination source containing closed captioning to receiving television households with the original closed captioning data intact in a format that can be recovered and displayed by decoders meeting the standards of part 15 of this chapter unless such programming is recaptioned or the captions are reformatted by the programming distributor.

(d) *Exempt programs and providers.* For purposes of determining compliance with this section, any video programming or video programming provider that meets one or more of the following criteria shall be exempt to the extent specified in this paragraph.

(1) *Programming subject to contractual captioning restrictions.* Video programming that is subject to a contract in effect on or before February 8, 1996, but not any extension or renewal of such contract, for which an obligation to provide closed captioning would constitute a breach of contract.

(2) *Video programming or video programming provider for which the captioning requirement has been waived.* Any video programming or video programming provider for which the Commission has determined that a requirement for closed captioning imposes an undue burden on the basis of a petition for exemption filed in accordance with the procedures specified in paragraph (f) of this section.

(3) *Programming other than English or Spanish language.* All programming for which the audio is in a language other than English or Spanish, except that scripted programming that can be cap-

tioned using the "electronic news room" technique is not exempt.

(4) *Primarily textual programming.* Video programming or portions of video programming for which the content of the soundtrack is displayed visually through text or graphics (e.g., program schedule channels or community bulletin boards).

(5) *Programming distributed in the late night hours.* Programming that is being distributed to residential households between 2 a.m. and 6 a.m. local time. Video programming distributors providing a channel that consists of a service that is distributed and exhibited for viewing in more than a single time zone shall be exempt from closed captioning that service for any continuous 4 hour time period they may select, commencing not earlier than 12 a.m. local time and ending not later than 7 a.m. local time in any location where that service is intended for viewing. This exemption is to be determined based on the primary reception locations and remains applicable even if the transmission is accessible and distributed or exhibited in other time zones on a secondary basis. Video programming distributors providing service outside of the 48 contiguous states may treat as exempt programming that is exempt under this paragraph when distributed in the contiguous states.

(6) *Interstitials, promotional announcements and public service announcements.* Interstitial material, promotional announcements, and public service announcements that are 10 minutes or less in duration.

(7) *EBS programming.* Video programming transmitted by an Educational Broadband Service licensee pursuant to part 27 of this chapter.

(8) *Locally produced and distributed non-news programming with no repeat value.* Programming that is locally produced by the video programming distributor, has no repeat value, is of local public interest, is not news programming, and for which the "electronic news room" technique of captioning is unavailable.

(9) *Programming on new networks.* Programming on a video programming network for the first four years after it

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begins operation, except that programming on a video programming network that was in operation less than four (4) years on January 1, 1998 is exempt until January 1, 2002.

(10) *Primarily non-vocal musical programming.* Programming that consists primarily of non-vocal music.

(11) *Captioning expense in excess of 2 percent of gross revenues.* No video programming provider shall be required to expend any money to caption any video programming if such expenditure would exceed 2 percent of the gross revenues received from that channel during the previous calendar year.

(12) *Channels producing revenues of under \$3,000,000.* No video programming provider shall be required to expend any money to caption any channel of video programming producing annual gross revenues of less than \$3,000,000 during the previous calendar year other than the obligation to pass through video programming already captioned when received pursuant to paragraph (c) of this section.

(13) *Locally produced educational programming.* Instructional programming that is locally produced by public television stations for use in grades K–12 and post secondary schools.

(e) *Responsibility for and determination of compliance.* (1) Compliance shall be calculated on a per channel, calendar quarter basis;

(2) Open captioning or subtitles in the language of the target audience may be used in lieu of closed captioning;

(3) Live programming or repeats of programming originally transmitted live that are captioned using the so-called “electronic newsroom technique” will be considered captioned, except that effective January 1, 2000, and thereafter, the major national broadcast television networks (*i.e.*, ABC, CBS, Fox and NBC), affiliates of these networks in the top 25 television markets as defined by Nielsen’s Designated Market Areas (DMAs) and national nonbroadcast networks serving at least 50% of all homes subscribing to multichannel video programming services shall not count electronic newsroom captioned programming towards compliance with these rules. The live portions of noncommercial broad-

casters’ fundraising activities that use automated software to create a continuous captioned message will be considered captioned;

(4) Compliance will be required with respect to the type of video programming generally distributed to residential households. Programming produced solely for closed circuit or private distribution is not covered by these rules;

(5) Video programming that is exempt pursuant to paragraph (d) of this section that contains captions, except video programming exempt pursuant to paragraph (d)(5) of this section (late night hours exemption), can count towards the compliance with the requirements for new programming prior to January 1, 2006. Video programming that is exempt pursuant to paragraph (d) of this section that contains captions, except that video programming exempt pursuant to paragraph (d)(5) of this section (late night hours exemption), can count towards compliance with the requirements for pre-rule programming.

(6) For purposes of paragraph (d)(11) of this section, captioning expenses include direct expenditures for captioning as well as allowable costs specifically allocated by a programming supplier through the price of the video programming to that video programming provider. To be an allowable allocated cost, a programming supplier may not allocate more than 100 percent of the costs of captioning to individual video programming providers. A programming supplier may allocate the captioning costs only once and may use any commercially reasonable allocation method;

(7) For purposes of paragraphs (d)(11) and (d)(12) of this section, annual gross revenues shall be calculated for each channel individually based on revenues received in the preceding calendar year from all sources related to the programming on that channel. Revenue for channels shared between network and local programming shall be separately calculated for network and for non-network programming, with neither the network nor the local video programming provider being required

to spend more than 2 percent of its revenues for captioning. Thus, for example, compliance with respect to a network service distributed by a multichannel video service distributor, such as a cable operator, would be calculated based on the revenues received by the network itself (as would the related captioning expenditure). For local service providers such as broadcasters, advertising revenues from station-controlled inventory would be included. For cable operators providing local origination programming, the annual gross revenues received for each channel will be used to determine compliance. Evidence of compliance could include certification from the network supplier that the requirements of the test had been met. Multichannel video programming distributors, in calculating non-network revenues for a channel offered to subscribers as part of a multichannel package or tier, will not include a pro rata share of subscriber revenues, but will include all other revenues from the channel, including advertising and ancillary revenues. Revenues for channels supported by direct sales of products will include only the revenues from the product sales activity (e.g., sales commissions) and not the revenues from the actual products offered to subscribers. Evidence of compliance could include certification from the network supplier that the requirements of this test have been met.

(8) If two or more networks (or sources of programming) share a single channel, that channel shall be considered to be in compliance if each of the sources of video programming are in compliance where they are carried on a full time basis;

(9) Video programming distributors shall not be required to provide closed captioning for video programming that is by law not subject to their editorial control, including but not limited to the signals of television broadcast stations distributed pursuant to sections 614 and 615 of the Communications Act or pursuant to the compulsory copyright licensing provisions of sections 111 and 119 of the Copyright Act (Title 17 U.S.C. 111 and 119); programming involving candidates for public office covered by sections 315 and 312 of the

Communications Act and associated policies; commercial leased access, public access, governmental and educational access programming carried pursuant to sections 611 and 612 of the Communications Act; video programming distributed by direct broadcast satellite (DBS) services in compliance with the noncommercial programming requirement pursuant to section 335(b)(3) of the Communications Act to the extent such video programming is exempt from the editorial control of the video programming provider; and video programming distributed by a common carrier or that is distributed on an open video system pursuant to section 653 of the Communications Act by an entity other than the open video system operator. To the extent such video programming is not otherwise exempt from captioning, the entity that contracts for its distribution shall be required to comply with the closed captioning requirements of this section.

(10) In evaluating whether a video programming provider has complied with the requirement that all new non-exempt video programming must include closed captioning, the Commission will consider showings that any lack of captioning was de minimis and reasonable under the circumstances.

(f) *Procedures for exemptions based on undue burden.* (1) A video programming provider, video programming producer or video programming owner may petition the Commission for a full or partial exemption from the closed captioning requirements. Exemptions may be granted, in whole or in part, for a channel of video programming, a category or type of video programming, an individual video service, a specific video program or a video programming provider upon a finding that the closed captioning requirements will result in an undue burden.

(2) A petition for an exemption must be supported by sufficient evidence to demonstrate that compliance with the requirements to closed caption video programming would cause an undue burden. The term "undue burden" means significant difficulty or expense. Factors to be considered when determining whether the requirements for closed captioning impose an undue burden include:

(i) The nature and cost of the closed captions for the programming;

(ii) The impact on the operation of the provider or program owner;

(iii) The financial resources of the provider or program owner; and

(iv) The type of operations of the provider or program owner.

(3) In addition to these factors, the petition shall describe any other factors the petitioner deems relevant to the Commission's final determination and any available alternatives that might constitute a reasonable substitute for the closed captioning requirements including, but not limited to, text or graphic display of the content of the audio portion of the programming. Undue burden shall be evaluated with regard to the individual outlet.

(4) An original and two (2) copies of a petition requesting an exemption based on the undue burden standard, and all subsequent pleadings, shall be filed in accordance with § 0.401(a) of this chapter.

(5) The Commission will place the petition on public notice.

(6) Any interested person may file comments or oppositions to the petition within 30 days of the public notice of the petition. Within 20 days of the close of the comment period, the petitioner may reply to any comments or oppositions filed.

(7) Comments or oppositions to the petition shall be served on the petitioner and shall include a certification that the petitioner was served with a copy. Replies to comments or oppositions shall be served on the commenting or opposing party and shall include a certification that the commenter was served with a copy.

(8) Upon a showing of good cause, the Commission may lengthen or shorten any comment period and waive or establish other procedural requirements.

(9) All petitions and responsive pleadings shall contain a detailed, full showing, supported by affidavit, of any facts or considerations relied on.

(10) The Commission may deny or approve, in whole or in part, a petition for an undue burden exemption from the closed captioning requirements.

(11) During the pendency of an undue burden determination, the video pro-

gramming subject to the request for exemption shall be considered exempt from the closed captioning requirements.

(g) *Complaint procedures.* (1) Complaints concerning an alleged violation of the closed captioning requirements of this section shall be filed with the Commission or with the video programming distributor responsible for delivery and exhibition of the video programming within sixty (60) days of the problem with captioning. A complaint must be in writing, must state with specificity the alleged Commission rule violated and must include some evidence of the alleged rule violation.

(2) Complaints filed first with the Commission will be forwarded to the appropriate video programming distributor. The video programming distributor must respond in writing to the Commission and the complainant within 30 days of the receipt of the complaint from the Commission.

(3) Complaints sent to a video programming distributor regarding programming by a television broadcast station or other programming for which the video programming distributor is exempt from closed captioning responsibility pursuant to paragraph (e)(9) of this section, shall be forwarded by the video programming distributor within seven (7) days of receipt to the entity responsible for closed captioning of the programming at issue. The video programming distributor must also notify the complainant and the Commission that it has forwarded the complaint. Entities receiving forwarded complaints must respond in writing to the complainant within 30 days of the forwarding date of the complaint.

(4) If a complaint is first filed with the video programming distributor, the video programming distributor must respond in writing to the complainant within thirty (30) days after receipt of a closed captioning complaint. If a video programming distributor fails to respond to the complainant within thirty (30) days, or the response does not satisfy the consumer, the complainant may file the complaint with the Commission within thirty (30) days after the time allotted for the video programming distributor to respond. If

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a consumer re-files the complaint with the Commission (after filing with the distributor), the Commission will forward the complaint to the distributor, and the distributor shall respond to the Commission and the complainant within thirty (30) days of receipt of the complaint from the Commission.

(5) In response to a complaint, a video programming distributor is obligated to provide the Commission with sufficient records and documentation to demonstrate that it is in compliance with the Commission's rules.

(6) Certifications from programming suppliers, including programming producers, programming owners, networks, syndicators and other distributors, may be relied on to demonstrate compliance. Distributors will not be held responsible for situations where a program source falsely certifies that programming delivered to the distributor meets our captioning requirements if the distributor is unaware that the certification is false. Video programming providers may rely on the accuracy of certifications. Appropriate action may be taken with respect to deliberate falsifications.

(7) The Commission will review the complaint, including all supporting evidence, and determine whether a violation has occurred. The Commission shall, as needed, request additional information from the video programming provider.

(8) If the Commission finds that a violation has occurred, penalties may be imposed, including a requirement that the video programming distributor deliver video programming containing closed captioning in an amount exceeding that specified in paragraph (b) of this section in a future time period.

(h) *Private rights of action prohibited.* Nothing in this section shall be construed to authorize any private right of action to enforce any requirement of this section. The Commission shall have exclusive jurisdiction with respect to any complaint under this section.

(i) *Contact information.* (1) Video programming distributors shall make available contact information for the receipt and handling of immediate closed captioning concerns raised by

consumers while they are watching a program. Programming distributors must designate a telephone number, fax number, and e-mail address for purposes of receiving and responding immediately to any closed captioning concerns. Distributors shall include this information on their Web sites (if they have a Web site), in telephone directories, and in billing statements (to the extent the distributor issues billing statements). Distributors shall keep this information current and update it to reflect any changes within 10 business days for Web sites, by the next billing cycle for billing statements, and by the next publication of directories. Video programming distributors should ensure that any staff reachable through this contact information has the capability to immediately respond to and address consumers' concerns. To the extent that a distributor has personnel available, either on site or remotely, to address any technical problems that may arise, consumers using this dedicated contact information must be able to reach someone, either directly or indirectly, who can address the consumer's captioning concerns. This provision does not require that distributors alter their hours of operation or the hours during which they have staffing available; at the same time, however, where staff is available to address technical issues that may arise during the course of transmitting programming, they also must be knowledgeable about and be able to address closed captioning concerns. In situations where a distributor is not immediately available, any calls or inquiries received, using this dedicated contact information, should be returned or otherwise addressed within 24 hours. In those situations where the captioning problem does not reside with the distributor, the staff person receiving the inquiry should refer the matter appropriately for resolution.

(2) Video programming distributors shall make contact information available for the receipt and handling of written closed captioning complaints that do not raise the type of immediate issues that are addressed in paragraph (i)(1) of this section. The contact information required for written complaints shall include the name of a person with

primary responsibility for captioning issues and who can ensure compliance with our rules. In addition, this contact information shall include the person's title or office, telephone number, fax number, postal mailing address, and e-mail address. Distributors shall include this information on their Web sites (if they have a Web site), in telephone directories, and in billing statements (to the extent the distributor issues billing statements). Distributors shall keep this information current and update it within 10 business days for Web sites, by the next billing cycle for billing statements, and by the next publication of directories.

(3) *Providing contact information to the Commission.* Video programming distributors shall file the contact information described in this section with the Commission in one of the following ways: through a webform located on the FCC website; with the Chief of the Disability Rights Office, Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau; or by sending an e-mail to *CLOSED CAPTIONING_POC@fcc.gov*. Contact information shall be available to consumers on the FCC Web site or by telephone inquiry to the Commission's Consumer Center. Distributors shall notify the Commission each time there is a change in any of this required information within 10 business days.

[62 FR 48493, Sept. 16, 1997, as amended at 63 FR 55962, Oct. 20, 1998; 64 FR 33424, June 23, 1999; 65 FR 58477, Sept. 29, 2000; 69 FR 72047, Dec. 10, 2004; 74 FR 1604, Jan. 13, 2009; 74 FR 46703, Sept. 11, 2009; 75 FR 7369, Feb. 19, 2010]

EFFECTIVE DATE NOTE: At 75 FR 7369, Feb. 19, 2010, paragraph (g)(3) was stayed.

§ 79.2 Accessibility of programming providing emergency information.

(a) *Definitions.* (1) For purposes of this section, the definitions in §§ 79.1 and 79.3 apply.

(2) *Emergency information.* Information, about a current emergency, that is intended to further the protection of life, health, safety, and property, *i.e.*, critical details regarding the emergency and how to respond to the emergency. Examples of the types of emergencies covered include tornadoes, hurricanes, floods, tidal waves, earthquakes, icing conditions, heavy snows, widespread fires, discharge of toxic

gases, widespread power failures, industrial explosions, civil disorders, school closings and changes in school bus schedules resulting from such conditions, and warnings and watches of impending changes in weather.

NOTE TO PARAGRAPH (a)(2): Critical details include, but are not limited to, specific details regarding the areas that will be affected by the emergency, evacuation orders, detailed descriptions of areas to be evacuated, specific evacuation routes, approved shelters or the way to take shelter in one's home, instructions on how to secure personal property, road closures, and how to obtain relief assistance.

(b) Requirements for accessibility of programming providing emergency information.

(1) Video programming distributors must make emergency information, as defined in paragraph (a) of this section, accessible as follows:

(i) Emergency information that is provided in the audio portion of the programming must be made accessible to persons with hearing disabilities by using a method of closed captioning or by using a method of visual presentation, as described in § 79.1 of this part;

(ii) Emergency information that is provided in the video portion of a regularly scheduled newscast, or newscast that interrupts regular programming, must be made accessible to persons with visual disabilities; and

(iii) Emergency information that is provided in the video portion of programming that is not a regularly scheduled newscast, or a newscast that interrupts regular programming, must be accompanied with an aural tone.

(2) This rule applies to emergency information primarily intended for distribution to an audience in the geographic area in which the emergency is occurring.

(3) Video programming distributors must ensure that:

(i) Emergency information should not block any closed captioning and any closed captioning should not block any emergency information provided by means other than closed captioning; and

(ii) Emergency information should not block any video description and any video description provided should