

secondary audio stream, including video description, foreign language translation, or duplication of the main audio stream, with each entity responsible only for its own actions or omissions in this regard.

(c) *Complaint procedures.* A complaint alleging a violation of this section may be transmitted to the Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau by any reasonable means, such as the Commission's online informal complaint filing system, letter, facsimile transmission, telephone (voice/TRS/TTY), Internet email, audio-cassette recording, and Braille, or some other method that would best accommodate the complainant's disability. The complaint should include the name of the video programming distributor or the video programming provider against whom the complaint is alleged, the date and time of the omission of emergency information, and the type of emergency. The Commission will notify the video programming distributor or the video programming provider of the complaint, and the distributor or the provider will reply to the complaint within 30 days.

[65 FR 26762, May 9, 2000, as amended at 65 FR 54811, Sept. 11, 2000; 78 FR 31797, May 24, 2013]

§ 79.3 Video description of video programming.

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

(1) *Designated Market Areas (DMAs).* Unique, county-based geographic areas designated by The Nielsen Company, a television audience measurement service, based on television viewership in the counties that make up each DMA.

(2) *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 networks and the owners of such programming.

(3) *Video description/Audio Description.* The insertion of audio narrated descriptions of a television program's key visual elements into natural pauses between the program's dialogue.

(4) *Video programming.* Programming provided by, or generally considered

comparable to programming provided by, a television broadcast station, but not including consumer-generated media.

(5) *Video programming distributor.* Any television broadcast station licensed by the Commission and any multi-channel video programming distributor (MVPD), 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.

(6) *Prime time.* The period from 8 to 11 p.m. Monday through Saturday, and 7 to 11 p.m. on Sunday local time, except that in the central time zone the relevant period shall be between the hours of 7 and 10 p.m. Monday through Saturday, and 6 and 10 p.m. on Sunday, and in the mountain time zone each station shall elect whether the period shall be 8 to 11 p.m. Monday through Saturday, and 7 to 11 p.m. on Sunday, or 7 to 10 p.m. Monday through Saturday, and 6 to 10 p.m. on Sunday.

(7) *Live or near-live programming.* Programming performed either simultaneously with, or recorded no more than 24 hours prior to, its first transmission by a video programming distributor.

(8) *Children's Programming.* Television programming directed at children 16 years of age and under.

(b) The following video programming distributors must provide programming with video description as follows:

(1) Commercial television broadcast stations that are affiliated with one of the top four commercial television broadcast networks (ABC, CBS, Fox, and NBC), and that are licensed to a community located in the top 25 DMAs, as determined by The Nielsen Company as of January 1, 2011, must provide 50 hours of video description per calendar quarter, either during prime time or on children's programming, on each programming stream on which they carry one of the top four commercial television broadcast networks. If a station in one of these markets becomes affiliated with one of these networks after the effective date of these rules, it must begin compliance with these requirements no later than three months after the affiliation agreement is finalized;

(2) Beginning July 1, 2015, commercial television broadcast stations that are affiliated with one of the top four commercial television broadcast networks (ABC, CBS, Fox, and NBC), and that are licensed to a community located in the top 60 DMAs, as determined by The Nielsen Company as of January 1, 2015, must provide 50 hours of video description per calendar quarter, either during prime time or on children's programming, on each programming stream on which they carry one of the top four commercial television broadcast networks. If a station in one of these markets becomes affiliated with one of these networks after July 1, 2015, it must begin compliance with these requirements no later than three months after the affiliation agreement is finalized;

(3) Television broadcast stations that are affiliated or otherwise associated with any television network must pass through video description when the network provides video description and the broadcast station has the technical capability necessary to pass through the video description, unless it is using the technology used to provide video description for another purpose related to the programming that would conflict with providing the video description;

(4) Multichannel video programming distributor (MVPD) systems that serve 50,000 or more subscribers must provide 50 hours of video description per calendar quarter during prime time or children's programming, on each channel on which they carry one of the top five national nonbroadcast networks, as defined by an average of the national audience share during prime time of nonbroadcast networks that reach 50 percent or more of MVPD households and have at least 50 hours per quarter of prime time programming that is not live or near-live or otherwise exempt under these rules. Initially, the top five networks are those determined by The Nielsen Company, for the time period October 2009–September 2010, and will update at three year intervals. The first update will be July 1, 2015, based on the ratings for the time period October 2013–September 2014; the second will be July 1, 2018, based on the ratings for the

time period October 2016–September 2017; and so on; and

(5) Multichannel video programming distributor (MVPD) systems of any size:

(i) Must pass through video description on each broadcast station they carry, when the broadcast station provides video description, and the channel on which the MVPD distributes the programming of the broadcast station has the technical capability necessary to pass through the video description, unless it is using the technology used to provide video description for another purpose related to the programming that would conflict with providing the video description; and

(ii) Must pass through video description on each nonbroadcast network they carry, when the network provides video description, and the channel on which the MVPD distributes the programming of the network has the technical capability necessary to pass through the video description, unless it is using the technology used to provide video description for another purpose related to the programming that would conflict with providing the video description.

(c) *Responsibility for and determination of compliance.* (1) The Commission will calculate compliance on a per channel, and, for broadcasters, a per stream, calendar quarter basis, beginning with the calendar quarter July 1 through September 30, 2012.

(2) In order to meet its fifty-hour quarterly requirement, a broadcaster or MVPD may count each program it airs with video description no more than a total of two times on each channel on which it airs the program. A broadcaster or MVPD may count the second airing in the same or any one subsequent quarter. A broadcaster may only count programs aired on its primary broadcasting stream towards its fifty-hour quarterly requirement. A broadcaster carrying one of the top four commercial television broadcast networks on a secondary stream may count programs aired on that stream toward its fifty-hour quarterly requirement for that network only.

(3) Once a commercial television broadcast station as defined under paragraph (b)(1) of this section has

aired a particular program with video description, it is required to include video description with all subsequent airings of that program on that same broadcast station, unless it is using the technology used to provide video description for another purpose related to the programming that would conflict with providing the video description.

(4) Once an MVPD as defined under paragraph (b)(3) of this section:

(i) Has aired a particular program with video description on a broadcast station it carries, it is required to include video description with all subsequent airings of that program on that same broadcast station, unless it is using the technology used to provide video description for another purpose related to the programming that would conflict with providing the video description; or

(ii) Has aired a particular program with video description on a nonbroadcast network it carries, it is required to include video description with all subsequent airings of that program on that same nonbroadcast network, unless it is using the technology used to provide video description for another purpose related to the programming that would conflict with providing the video description.

(5) In evaluating whether a video programming distributor has complied with the requirement to provide video programming with video description, the Commission will consider showings that any lack of video description was de minimis and reasonable under the circumstances.

(d) *Procedures for exemptions based on economic burden.* (1) A video programming provider may petition the Commission for a full or partial exemption from the video description requirements of this section, which the Commission may grant upon a finding that the requirements would be economically burdensome.

(2) The petitioner must support a petition for exemption with sufficient evidence to demonstrate that compliance with the requirements to provide programming with video description would be economically burdensome. The term "economically burdensome" means imposing significant difficulty or expense. The Commission will con-

sider the following factors when determining whether the requirements for video description would be economically burdensome:

(i) The nature and cost of providing video description of the programming;

(ii) The impact on the operation of the video programming provider;

(iii) The financial resources of the video programming provider; and

(iv) The type of operations of the video programming provider.

(3) In addition to these factors, the petitioner must describe any other factors it deems relevant to the Commission's final determination and any available alternative that might constitute a reasonable substitute for the video description requirements. The Commission will evaluate economic burden with regard to the individual outlet.

(4) The petitioner must file an original and two (2) copies of a petition requesting an exemption based on the economically burdensome standard in this paragraph, and all subsequent pleadings, 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) Persons that file comments or oppositions to the petition must serve the petitioner with copies of those comments or oppositions and must include a certification that the petitioner was served with a copy. Parties filing replies to comments or oppositions must serve the commenting or opposing party with copies of such replies and shall include a certification that the party was served with a copy.

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

(9) Persons filing petitions and responsive pleadings must include 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 economic burden exemption from the video description requirements.

(11) During the pendency of an economic burden determination, the Commission will consider the video programming subject to the request for exemption as exempt from the video description requirements.

(e) *Complaint procedures.* (1) A complainant may file a complaint concerning an alleged violation of the video description requirements of this section by transmitting it to the Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau at the Commission by any reasonable means, such as letter, facsimile transmission, telephone (voice/TRS/TTY), e-mail, audio-cassette recording, and Braille, or some other method that would best accommodate the complainant's disability. Complaints should be addressed to: Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau, 445 12th Street, SW., Washington, DC 20554. A complaint must include:

(i) The name and address of the complainant;

(ii) The name and address of the broadcast station against whom the complaint is alleged and its call letters and network affiliation, or the name and address of the MVPD against whom the complaint is alleged and the name of the network that provides the programming that is the subject of the complaint;

(iii) A statement of facts sufficient to show that the video programming distributor has violated or is violating the Commission's rules, and, if applicable, the date and time of the alleged violation;

(iv) The specific relief or satisfaction sought by the complainant;

(v) The complainant's preferred format or method of response to the complaint (such as letter, facsimile transmission, telephone (voice/TRS/TTY), Internet email, or some other method that would best accommodate the complainant's disability); and

(vi) A certification that the complainant attempted in good faith to resolve the dispute with the broadcast station or MVPD against whom the complaint is alleged.

(2) The Commission will promptly forward complaints satisfying the above requirements to the video programming distributor involved. The video programming distributor must respond to the complaint within a specified time, generally within 30 days. The Commission may authorize Commission staff either to shorten or lengthen the time required for responding to complaints in particular cases. The answer to a complaint must include a certification that the video programming distributor attempted in good faith to resolve the dispute with the complainant.

(3) The Commission will review all relevant information provided by the complainant and the video programming distributor and will request additional information from either or both parties when needed for a full resolution of the complaint.

(i) The Commission may rely on certifications from programming suppliers, including programming producers, programming owners, networks, syndicators and other distributors, to demonstrate compliance. The Commission will not hold the video programming distributor responsible for situations where a program source falsely certifies that programming that it delivered to the video programming distributor meets our video description requirements if the video programming distributor is unaware that the certification is false. Appropriate action may be taken with respect to deliberate falsifications.

(ii) If the Commission finds that a video programming distributor has violated the video description requirements of this section, it may impose penalties, including a requirement that the video programming distributor deliver video programming containing video description in excess of its requirements.

(f) *Private rights of action are 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.

[76 FR 55604, Sept. 8, 2011, as amended at 76 FR 68118, Nov. 3, 2011]