

TECHNOLOGY AND DISABILITY POLICY HIGHLIGHTS 9.02

February 2009

Overview

The ongoing digital television (DTV) transition was the most important *TDPH* story in the month of February. After a failed first attempt, the **DTV Delay Act** was finally passed by Congress and signed into law by the President earlier this past month. The new law will postpone the DTV transition by four months, from February 17, 2009, to June 12, 2009. It will also provide a means for consumers who have not yet redeemed converter box coupons to obtain new vouchers to help defray their costs. In addition, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has updated its DTV website and issued several new publications about the transition that may be of interest to *TDPH* readers.

Also of importance this past month are ongoing efforts to improve emergency preparedness for people with disabilities. The FCC held a summit on the deployment and operation of Next Generation IP-enabled 911 and Enhanced 911 (E-911) services. In addition, the American National Standards Institute's (ANSI) Homeland Security Standards Panel (HSSP) held a workshop at Gallaudet University that focused on the needs of people with disabilities and the aging in emergency preparation, notification, response, and evacuation activities. Such attention to emergency communications is also underscored by the Wireless RERC's upcoming State of the Technology Conference, which will focus on wireless emergency communications. For those interested in submitting a proposal, the deadline has been extended to **March 15, 2009**.

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Legislative Activities

DTV Delay Act Signed into Law

02.11.2009 – The President signed into law the **2009 DTV Delay Act [S. 352, now Public Law No. 111-004]** after it was passed by both chambers of Congress earlier this past month. The new law amends the **Digital Television Transition and Public Safety Act of 2005 [47 U.S.C. 309]** by extending the DTV transition from February 17, 2009, to June 12, 2009. The new law does not necessarily prevent stations from making the transition early, and as of February 17, 2009, about one-third of the nation's full-power television stations had already gone all-digital. But it does provide an additional four months for those stations which may have not been ready for the transition, as well as providing many consumers with more time to prepare themselves for the end of over-the-air analog broadcasts. To that end, the **DTV Delay Act** also extends, until July 31, 2009, the deadline for redeeming converter box coupons which may have expired without being used. At the same time, however, the delay in the DTV transition may also mean a slight delay in the reallocation of analog spectrum in the 700 MHz bandwidth for emergency communications.

The DTV delay has been strongly supported by the Coalition for Accessible Technology (COAT) on the grounds of ongoing accessibility concerns. Some unresolved accessibility issues cited by COAT include problems with receiving and displaying closed captions, difficulties with the pass-through of available video description (narration added to visual program elements during natural programming pauses), and troubles with the hook-up of digital equipment.

[Sources: Library of Congress, *New York Times*, *Capitol Insider*]

Additional Information:

[Text of S. 352 \(DTV Delay Act\)](#)

[<http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/z?c111:S.352:>]

[Statement of President Obama on Signing the DTV Bill](#)

[http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/StatementofPresidentBarackObamaonSigningtheDTVBill/]

Regulatory Activities

DTV Website Revised, New DTV Publications Issued by FCC

02.19.2009 – In tandem with the recent passage of the **DTV Delay Act**, which extends the deadline for the DTV transition to June 12, 2009, the FCC has revised its DTV website [<http://www.dtv.gov>]. The updated website provides new information about the extended DTV transition, allows consumers to check the status of their converter box coupon applications, and provides access to helpful publications. Among these publications is a troubleshooting guide with a converter box hookup

checklist and a guide with tips on improving the reception of digital signals. The new DTV website also features DTV reception maps for neighborhoods throughout the United States.

In addition, the FCC has released a number of new DTV publications. The first reminds consumers to use care when dialing FCC telephone numbers regarding the converter box coupon program and general DTV questions. The telephone numbers are 888 numbers, not 800 numbers. The second publication reminds consumers to rescan their television boxes periodically, as digital stations are becoming available regularly and existing digital stations may change channels or add sub-channels over time. The final publication provides some tips on using antennas to receive the best possible reception of digital television signals over the air.

[Source: FCC]

Additional Information:

[The Digital TV Transition: What You Need to Know About DTV \(Revised\)](http://www.dtv.gov/)

[<http://www.dtv.gov/>]

[FCC Advisory: "Use Care When Calling about the DTV Transition" \(PDF file\)](http://www.fcc.gov/cgb/consumerfacts/usecarewhencalling.pdf)

[<http://www.fcc.gov/cgb/consumerfacts/usecarewhencalling.pdf>]

[FCC Advisory: "Remember to Rescan" \(PDF file\)](http://www.fcc.gov/cgb/consumerfacts/rescan.pdf)

[<http://www.fcc.gov/cgb/consumerfacts/rescan.pdf>]

[FCC Consumer Facts: "Antennas and Digital Television" \(PDF file\)](http://www.fcc.gov/cgb/consumerfacts/dtvantennas.pdf)

[<http://www.fcc.gov/cgb/consumerfacts/dtvantennas.pdf>]

Guidelines for IP-Enabled 911 and E-911 Services Focus of FCC Summit

02.25.2009 – The FCC’s Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau hosted a Summit on Deployment and Operational Guidelines for Next Generation IP-Enabled 911 and Enhanced 911 (E-911) Services.

The meeting was organized partially in response to the **New and Emerging Technologies 911 Improvement Act of 2008 (NET 911 Act)**, which requires that the FCC work with public safety organizations, industry participants, and others to promote consistency in the deployment and operation of IP-enabled 911 and E-911 services. The legislation and subsequent actions by regulators are designed to ensure that Americans, including individuals with disabilities, receive the benefits that new technologies can bring to emergency communications.

The meeting contained two panels, each dedicated to a particular issue of importance related to the deployment and operation of next generation emergency communications. The first panel focused on IP-enabled 911 and E-911 network issues, including diversity requirements, call handling in the event of call overflow from network outages, and public safety answering point (PSAP) certification and

testing requirements. The second panel focused on IP-enabled 911 and E-911 data issues, including the determination of geographic coverage for PSAPs, validation procedures for inputting and updating location information, and formats for delivering address information to PSAPs.

[Source: FCC]

Additional Information:

Public Notice and Agenda: Summit on IP-Enabled and E-911 Services (MS Word and PDF available)

[http://hraunfoss.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/DOC-288446A1.txt]

Other Items of Interest

Amazon's Kindle 2 Reader Includes Text-to-Speech Feature, Raises Concerns

03.01.2009 – Last month, online retailer Amazon introduced the Kindle 2, its latest electronic-book reader. A new text-to-speech feature on the latest version of the Kindle allows text to be read aloud in a computer generated voice, possibly making books and other text-based media such as newspapers accessible to readers with disabilities. However, the feature has been subject to objections from the Authors Guild, which has suggested that the text-to-speech feature may infringe upon valuable audiobook rights. In response, Amazon has said that it will allow authors and publishers to decide on a book-by-book basis whether the automated reading feature will be made available to Kindle 2 users. Amazon has not revealed how many of its 230,000 Kindle titles would be affected, but it believes that many authors and publishers would decide it is in their commercial interests to leave the text-to-speech function enabled. It also insists that the feature is legal.

The text-to-speech feature has been embraced by blind readers and those with visual impairments, who note that it improves the accessibility of books and other media. National Federation of the Blind (NFB) president Marc Maurer has claimed that the Authors Guild's position is "harmful to blind people." In response, the Guild's executive director, Paul Aiken, has stated that he believes the needs of readers with visual impairments will be accommodated.

[Sources: *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*]

Emergency Preparedness for People with Disabilities Focus of ANSI Workshop

02.03.2009 – The American National Standards Institute's (ANSI) Homeland Security Standards Panel (HSSP) held a two-day workshop at Gallaudet University, in Washington, D.C., to address the needs of people with disabilities and aging populations in emergency preparation, notification, response, and evacuation activities. The conference provided individuals with disabilities and disability advocacy groups with an opportunity to provide input to over 100 key stakeholders in attendance, which included representatives from standards development organizations and government agencies.

Conference attendees were especially interested in exploring standards-based solutions for meeting the emergency preparedness needs of people with disabilities and the aging.

Much of the conference was given over to cultivating a better understanding of strengths and weaknesses of existing standards and establishing new priorities in the creation of new standards for emergency preparedness. Of particular importance was the emphasis placed on the need for outreach and education among standards development organizations, architects, engineers, building owners, and government leaders in understanding the particular emergency preparedness needs of these two groups. The conference resulted in the creation of a report that will be available from ANSI's HSSP website in the coming weeks.

[Sources: Access Board, ANSI]

Additional Information:

[ANSI-HSSP Workshop on Emergency Preparedness Needs for Persons with Disabilities](http://www.ansi.org/news_publications/news_story.aspx?menuid=7&articleid=2105)

[http://www.ansi.org/news_publications/news_story.aspx?menuid=7&articleid=2105]

United Nations Program in Atlanta Promotes Digital Access for People with Disabilities

02.10.2009 – This past month, *Global Atlanta* featured an interview with Axel Leblois, the founder and director of the Global Initiative for Inclusive Information and Technologies. Based in Atlanta, Leblois's organization is sanctioned by the United Nations, and it seeks to realize the accessible technology goals of the U.N.'s **Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**. Although the United States is not yet among the 47 nations that have ratified the convention, President Obama has publicly supported the measure.

[Source: *Global Atlanta*]

Additional Information:

[Article on the Global Initiative for Inclusive Information and Technologies](http://globalatlanta.com/article/17146/)

[<http://globalatlanta.com/article/17146/>]

[YouTube Video: Global Atlanta Interview with Axel Leblois](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EMOdR4XPgVQ)

[<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EMOdR4XPgVQ>]

Wireless RERC Updates

Call for Papers: Wireless RERC State of the Technology Conference - Due March 15, 2009

01.30.2009 - The Wireless RERC State of Technology Conference on Wireless Emergency Communications has extended its Call for Papers deadline until **March 15, 2009**. The State of the Technology conference will be held on September 21-23, 2009, in Atlanta, Georgia. It will bring together domestic and international stakeholders to examine the potential of wireless communications

technology for improving assistance for persons with disabilities before, during, and after a natural or manmade disaster. The target audience is the wireless industry, emergency management and public safety officials, broadcast and cable industry, individuals with disabilities, disability organizations, and researchers working on issues of emergency communications.

We are seeking papers on important topics and input on potential speakers for plenary sessions and workshops. In this light, we welcome industry studies, empirical research and policy analysis on topics related to wireless emergency communications, such as (but not restricted to):

Technological Issues

- Emergency Alert System (EAS) and/or the Commercial Mobile Alert Systems (CMAS) rulemakings or proposed hybrid solutions.
- Technological solutions for accessible emergency alerting.
- Barriers and opportunities to achieve accessible wireless emergency alerting.
- Public and private sector strategies for creating accessible wireless systems.

Disability Issues

- User needs to achieve accessible wireless emergency communications.
- Policy and regulatory actions needed to achieve accessible wireless alerts.
- Building social networks and collaborations to promote accessible mobile wireless systems.

Public Safety and Emergency Management Issues

- Assuring inclusion of people with disabilities in emergency scenarios.
- Emergency management technologies for interoperability and connectivity to the disability community.
- Deployment strategies by emergency management or public safety entities to provide emergency alerts over wireless networks.

In addition to the above topics, intersecting perspectives on the above issues as well as strategies for outreach, training or best practices of various concerned communities (e.g. disability, emergency management, wireless industry) are welcome for consideration.

Papers will be peer reviewed and those selected will appear in the published *Proceedings of the Wireless RERC State of Technology Conference: Wireless Emergency Communications*. Selected papers will be compiled in a proposed special edition of a selected peer reviewed journal.

For further information and/or to submit an abstract/paper proposal, contact the proceedings manager:

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Hearing Aid Compatibility Videos: Choosing a Cell Phone that Works For You

03.01.2009 – The Wireless RERC and CTIA – The Wireless Association© present “Hearing Aid Compatibility: Choosing a Cell Phone that Works for You,” a five-part video series to help consumers choose a hearing aid compatible device that meets their needs. Each video breaks down the information consumers need into easy-to-understand segments. The first segment presents information regarding hearing aid compatibility (HAC) and wireless devices as told by a certified audiologist. The second segment demonstrates a suggested “try and buy” process between a customer representative and a customer at an actual wireless carrier’s retail store.

CTIA’s Access Wireless website [<http://www.wirelessaccess.org>] hosts the video series, which is accessible to customers through both captioning and audio description. This video series is also being used internally by major service providers as a training tool for sales staff. Please post your questions or comments about this video or HAC in general on the Wireless RERC’s consumer forum at [<http://www.mywirelessreview.com>].

Additional Information:

[Hearing Aid Compatibility Videos: Choosing a Cell Phone that Works for You](http://www.accesswireless.org/hearingaid/hac_video.cfm)

[http://www.accesswireless.org/hearingaid/hac_video.cfm]

[Wireless RERC Consumer Forum: My Wireless Review](http://www.mywirelessreview.com)

[<http://www.mywirelessreview.com>]

Upcoming Events

CSUN Conference on Technology & Persons with Disabilities

The 24th Annual California State University, Northridge (CSUN) Conference on Technology & Persons with Disabilities will be held March 16-21, 2009 at the Los Angeles Airport Marriott and Renaissance Montura Hotels. The first two days (March 16 & 17) will feature pre-conference workshops, while the remainder of the conference will include general sessions and exhibitions.

The deadline for regular registration was **February 20**, but on-site registration will also be possible for attendees. For more information about the conference, including details on how to register, please visit the conference website provided below.

Additional Information:

2009 CSUN Conference

[<http://csunconference.org/index.cfm?EID=80000144>]

NARRTC 2009 Annual Conference

The National Association of Rehabilitation Research and Training Centers (NARRTC) will hold its 2009 Annual Conference on **May 4-5, 2009**, at the Holiday Inn National Airport Hotel, in **Arlington, Virginia**. The theme of the upcoming conference will be "Better Research, Better Evidence, Better Practice," to be presented through plenary and concurrent sessions. For more information on the conference, please visit the below website.

Presentations at the conference will focus on new evidence and insights gained through such NIDRR grant work. In particular, conference organizers plan to engage the following topic areas:

- Establishing Best Practices in Disability and Rehabilitation
- Knowledge Translation Research Findings and Needs
- Qualitative Disability Research Data Analysis
- Rigor and Relevance of Disability Research Evidence
- Strategies for Using Research Evidence in Policies and Practices
- Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis of Disability and Rehabilitation Research
- Value and Relevance of High Quality Single Case Study Design

Additional Information:

NARRTC 2009 Annual Conference

[<http://www.ncddr.org/NARRTC/>]

DTV Transition

On **June 12, 2009**, all full-power broadcast television stations in the United States will stop broadcasting on analog airwaves and begin broadcasting only in digital.

Additional Information:

What is DTV?

[<http://www.dtv.gov/whatisdtv.html>]

Converter Box Coupon Program

[<https://www.dtv2009.gov/>]

i-CRETe 2009

The Third International Convention on Rehabilitation Engineering & Assistive Technology (iCRETe) 2009 will be held in Singapore, **April 22-26, 2009**. The convention promotes aging and disability

technologies. This year's theme is "Accessible Tourism" centered on universal design and assistive technologies introduced in the environment. The convention includes a three day exhibition and a student design challenge.

Additional Information:

[Conference Website](#)

[\[http://icreate.start-centre.com/icreate2009/index.php\]](http://icreate.start-centre.com/icreate2009/index.php)

Technology and Disability Policy Highlights reports on national and local public policy events and recent wireless technological advances and political activities; and tracks emerging issues of interest to individuals with disabilities. *Technology and Disability Policy Highlights* is published monthly by the Wireless RERC. The Wireless RERC is a research center promotes universal access to wireless technologies and explores their innovative applications in addressing the needs of people with disabilities. For more information on the Wireless RERC, please visit our web site at [\[http://www.wirelessrerc.org\]](http://www.wirelessrerc.org).

For further information on items summarized in this report, or if you have items of interest that you would like included in future editions, please contact this edition's editor, Nathan W. Moon [nathan.moon@cacp.gatech.edu] or Paul M.A. Baker, Ph.D., AICP, CACP Director of Research [paul.baker@cacp.gatech.edu].

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