

TECHNOLOGY AND DISABILITY POLICY HIGHLIGHTS 9.07

August 2009

Overview

There was less legislative and regulatory activity in the area of technology and disability policy for the month of August. Congress took its summer recess during this past month and will not return for its fall session until after Labor Day. Hence, there were no relevant bills or hearings during the month. On the regulatory side of things, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) continued work on its National Broadband Plan and the Broadband Technologies Program (BTOP) by hosting a town-hall meeting on broadband opportunities and needs for people with disabilities. Particularly interesting about this meeting was the fact that the FCC asked questions of the audience, who then provided the Commission with important feedback to aid in its information gathering and policymaking efforts.

The most active agency this past month was the National Council on Disability (NCD), which released a report on emergency management preparation for people with disabilities. The report calls for a number of organizational changes within the federal government in order to enhance its capacity to respond quickly and effectively to emergencies. In addition, the NCD is seeking target comments to inform its upcoming report to the President and Congress on the future of disability policy. Finally, the National Center for Dissemination of Disability Research (NCDDR) will host a teleconference in September to consider how federal policy is impacting the quality of disability research, with a particular emphasis on the activities of the new Presidential administration and the current economic climate.

Finally, the Rehabilitation Engineering Research Center on Wireless Technologies (Wireless RERC) calls attention to its upcoming State of the Technology (SOT) conference on emergency communications for persons with disabilities, to be held in Atlanta, from September 21-23, 2009.

Regulatory Activities

Broadband Opportunities for Individuals with Disabilities Focus of FCC Meeting

08.20.2009 – As part of its efforts related to the **Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP)**, the FCC hosted a town-hall meeting and workshop on broadband and its accessibility for people with disabilities. The purpose of the meeting was to create a dialogue between the FCC and disability leaders, as well as relevant stakeholders in the future of broadband and its access by individuals with disabilities. The town hall was led by Blair Levin, executive director of the FCC's National Broadband Plan initiative, who facilitated that the FCC posed for audience's consideration.

In response to the FCC's question about the challenges faced in making products accessible to people with disabilities, audience members responded that issues included the accessibility of web pages, price considerations, and the definition of "accessibility." Of particular interest was the observation that next generation web technologies will require the most advanced assistive technologies to make them accessible, and that such cutting-edge technologies may not be available for everyone. When the FCC asked whether accessibility problems were primarily hardware, software, or network issues, audience members responded that while the Internet tends to have the capacity for accessibility, the devices that access it do not.

[Sources: FCC and Benton Foundation]

Additional Information:

Benton Foundation: [FCC BTOP Meeting for People with Disabilities \(Includes Questions and Responses\)](http://www.benton.org/node/27266)
[<http://www.benton.org/node/27266>]

Disability.gov Launched as New Federal Website for People with Disabilities

08.26.2009 – The federal government recently replaced its old DisabilityInfo.gov website with a new one, <http://www.disability.gov>. The new site is meant to serve as a central clearinghouse for government-related information relevant to people with disabilities throughout the nation. The new website gathers together information from 22 federal agencies, and it includes mechanisms for encouraging interaction and feedback, and new ways to organize, share, and receive information. The website is organized into 10 subject areas: benefits, civil rights, community life, education, emergency preparedness, employment, health, housing, technology and transportation.

[Source: Department of Labor]

Emergency Management Changes Recommended by National Council on Disability

08.12.2009 – The National Council on Disability (NCD) released its report, "Effective Emergency Management: Making Improvements for Communities and People with Disabilities." The report builds on previous efforts by NCD to address the needs of people with disabilities for emergency situations,

particularly an April 2005 report, four months before Hurricane Katrina, that called on the federal government to consider the disability needs in the areas of emergency preparedness, disaster management, and homeland security.

Building on that work, NCD began a study last year to discern best practices for emergency management across the life cycle of disasters (preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation) for both rural and urban areas. In this report, NCD presents the findings of that study and calls on federal, state, and local authorities to make sweeping changes in emergency management practices for people with disabilities.

[Source: NCD]

Additional Information:

NCD Report: "[Effective Emergency Management: Making Improvements for Communities and People with Disabilities](#)"

[http://www.ncd.gov/newsroom/publications/2009/NCD_EmergencyManagement_HTML/EffectiveEmergencyManagement.html]

NCD Seeks Input For Upcoming Report

07.27.2009 – The NCD is currently looking for public comment on for its latest study of emerging issues and trends affecting people with disabilities. The information gathered will be utilized as part of NCD's next annual report to Congress and the President, "National Disability Policy: A Progress Report."

In particular, NCD is seeking comment on a number of targeted areas that will allow it assess national progress in the development of policies to guarantee equal rights for people with disabilities, as well as empower these individuals to achieve economic self-sufficiency, independent living, inclusion, and integration in all aspects of society. The topics in which NCD is most interested include: employment, education, health status and healthcare, financial status and security, leisure and recreation, personal relationships, crime and safety, homeland security, housing, and the issue of technology, assistive technology, and telecommunications.

The NCD's press release contains more information on how to submit comments, including guidelines to make responses more effective and a specific set of questions for respondents to answer.

Comments may be sent by e-mail to ncd@ncd.gov, with "Emerging Trends" in the subject line, or they may be mailed to the Emerging Trends Committee of the NCD (address provided in press release).

Public comments are due no later than **September 15, 2009**.

[Source: NCD]

Additional Information:

Other Items of Interest

Report on Telecommunication Needs of Californians with Disabilities

08.01.2009 – The California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) and researchers from the Disability Statistics Center at the University of California, San Francisco have released a report entitled “Telecommunication Needs of Californians with Disabilities.” The study involved 120 interviews with participants who represented six broad disability categories: Deaf, hard of hearing, blind, low vision, difficulty using hands/mobility impairment, and speech impairment. They were asked about Internet usage, cell phone or wireless technology usage, use of landline phones, favorite ways to communicate, areas for improvement, communication in emergency situations, and their knowledge of the Deaf and Disabled Telecommunications Program (DDTP) and the California Telephone Access Program (CTAP).

The report found that nearly everyone used the Internet to communicate, and most participants had access to high-speed Internet service. The vast majority also used wireless devices to communicate, with many citing the benefits of portability and availability in emergency situations. Landline usage was somewhat lower than average, but Deaf participants tended to keep landlines equipped with TTY devices for emergencies. The majority of the participants responded that using some sort of phone (cell phone, video phone, or landline) was their favorite way to communicate, followed by e-mail. Just over half of the participants believed their phones had sufficient battery life in case of an emergency situation, citing wireless devices as the main form of communication for emergencies. When asked about improvements, answers tended to be disability specific. For example, Deaf participants pointed to the need for more videophones in public places, while hard of hearing users stated that hearing aid compatibility was a primary concern.

[Sources: Center for Personal Assistance Services, CPUC, and UCSF]

Additional Information:

[Center for Personal Assistance Services website](http://www.pascenter.org/home/index.php)

[<http://www.pascenter.org/home/index.php>]

Wireless RERC Updates

2009 State of the Technology Conference

09.21-23.2009 - The Wireless RERC reminds readers that registration is still open for the **Wireless Emergency Communications State of Technology Conference**. This event will take place at the

Georgia Tech Research Institute Conference Center in **Atlanta, Georgia**, USA on **September 21-23, 2009**. Don't miss this exciting opportunity to participate in interactive sessions, weigh in on federal policy initiatives, and view promising technology demonstrations.

Speakers will include representatives from:

CTIA-- Wireless Association
Coalition of Organizations for Accessible Technology
Federal Communications Commission
Gallaudet University
National Emergency Number Association
National Telecommunications Information Administration
Research in Motion
WGBH National Center for Accessible Media

Topics will cover:

Technological solutions for accessible emergency alerting.
Barriers and opportunities for emergency alerting.
User needs to achieve accessible emergency communications.
Policy and regulatory actions needed to achieve accessible wireless alerts.
Social networks and collaborations to promote accessible mobile wireless systems.
Inclusion of people with disabilities in emergency scenarios.
Emergency management technologies for connectivity to the disability community.
Deployment strategies by emergency management or public safety entities to provide emergency alerts over wireless networks.

Special networking events will provide attendees the opportunity to meet speakers, sponsors and connect with colleagues. There are limited slots for attendees, so register now! Web address:
[<http://sot.wirelessrerc.org>]

If you have questions, please contact:

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Booz Allen Hamilton to Conduct Tabletop Exercise

09.23.2009 – In conjunction with the Wireless RERC's State of the Technology Conference, technology consulting firm Booz Allen Hamilton is designing and facilitating a special conference session called a Tabletop Exercise (TTX). A TTX is designed to be a scenario-driven drill of a natural disaster impacting several states. Participants will get to reenact in a "safe space" what their roles and responsibilities would be in an actual critical incident. Carefully designed scenarios run by a master facilitator will allow real-time to be collapsed, restored, or accelerated. The TTX will be used to capture any outcomes, interesting solutions, or information on accessible wireless emergency communications for incorporation into the final SOT proceedings report to stakeholders.

The TTX will be held on Wednesday, September 23, 2009 from 4:00pm – 5:30pm. Space is limited to 40 participants. If you want to participate, don't hesitate to [register now](#).

Registering for the TTX is not a conference registration. Please be sure to register for the [conference](#) first.

Step 1: Conference Registration

<http://sot.wirelessrerc.org/registration-accommodations/register-1>

Step 2: TTX Registration

<http://sot.wirelessrerc.org/registration-accommodations/Special-Session-Registration>

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

03.01.2009 – The Rehabilitation Engineering Research Center on Wireless Technologies (Wireless RERC) and CTIA - The Wireless Association® announced the release of a new consumer education video series, "Hearing Aid Compatibility: Choosing a Cell Phone That Works For You." Available for viewing at [<http://www.AccessWireless.org>], these videos will help wireless consumers who use hearing aids to identify and choose a hearing aid-compatible (HAC) wireless device that meets their needs.

Each video outlines the key information consumers need to choose a HAC wireless device. The first segment presents general HAC and wireless device information as told by a certified audiologist. The second segment demonstrates a suggested "try and buy" process between a customer representative and a consumer at an actual wireless carrier's retail store.

CTIA's AccessWireless.org hosts the video series, which is accessible to visitors through captioning, audio description and both high- and low-resolution versions. This video series may also be used by

wireless carriers as a training tool for sales and customer support staff. The video series was produced by the Wireless RERC with the support of the Alliance for Telecommunications Industry Solutions (ATIS), AT&T, Audiological Consultants of Atlanta, CTIA - The Wireless Association®, Gallaudet University's Technology Access Program, the Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA), Nokia, Research In Motion (BlackBerry ®), Samsung and T-Mobile USA, Inc.

Additional Information:

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

Wireless RERC Consumer Forum: My Wireless Review
[<http://www.mywirelessreview.com>]

Upcoming Events

NCDDR Teleconference on Federal Policy and Impacts on Research

09.17.2009 – The National Center for the Dissemination of Disability Research (NCDDR) will host a teleconference for National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation (NIDRR) grantees and other stakeholders interested in disability policy and its relationship to research quality. The teleconference, entitled “Policy Implications for Disability and Rehabilitation Research Quality,” will focus on policy issues impacting disability and rehabilitation research, particularly in light of the current economic climate and the new administration. Panelists will also explore their perceptions about how policy affects the quality of research and will discuss their visions and goals for the future of the disability and rehabilitation field.

Panelists leading the conference will include Dr. Richard Horne, director of the Division of Policy Planning and Research for the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP), Michael Collins, executive director of the NCD, and Robert “Bobby” Silverstein, director of the Center for the Study and Advancement of Disability Policy and principal in the law firm of Powers Pyles Sutter & Verville, PC. The teleconference will take place on **September 17, 2009**. To register, please visit [<http://survey.sedl.org/efm/wsb.dll/s/1g63>]. There will be no fee to participate, but space is limited to 35 participants. For those who cannot attend the live teleconference, a recording and transcript will be archived on the NCDDR homepage. For more information, contact Brenda Lightfoot by email: brenda.lightfoot@sedl.org or call 800-266-1832.

[Source: NCDDR]

NCTI 2009 Technology Innovators Conference

11.16-17.2009 – The National Center for Technology Innovation (NCTI) will be hosting its 2009 Technology Innovator’s Conference, to be held at the Madison Hotel in **Washington, D.C.**, on **November 16-17, 2009**. The theme of this year’s conference will be “Educational Futures—Powered by Technology,” with a focus on “how learning and assistive technologies can supercharge education for *all* students.” The conference will feature leaders from academia, corporations, government and the media who will examine methods to strengthen teaching and learning through the effective use of technology. Presentations will focus on best and emerging practices to ensure that all students, particularly struggling learners, fulfill their academic and social potential.

In addition, NCTI will host its 2009 Tech Expo at the conference. It will provide an opportunity to showcase innovative learning and assistive technology products and network with others from industry, academia, policy, and the media. Proposals to showcase innovative learning and assistive technology products will be accepted until **September 23, 2009**. For more information about the conference, how to submit a proposal for the expo, and submission guidelines, please visit the NCTI website at [<http://www.nationaltechcenter.org/index.php/2009/06/05/conf09-2009-technology-innovators-conference/>].

[Source: NCTI]

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>].

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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