



TV TechCheck



The Weekly NAB Newsletter for Television Broadcast Engineers

Disabilities Act Imposes New Obligations on Broadcasters

On October 8, 2010, the President signed into law (“enactment”) the “Twenty-First Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act of 2010” (“Act”). This legislation requires a number of communications industry sectors—including television broadcasting—as well as consumer electronics to make their systems and services accessible to persons with disabilities.

Among other things, the Act requires broadcasters, video programmers, video distributors, consumer electronics manufacturers and others to ensure that persons with disabilities can access communications, entertainment and media services. The legislation imposes new responsibilities on TV broadcasters with respect to video descriptions and closed captioning of Internet video content as well as initiates an FCC process that will likely result in additional obligations regarding the accessibility of emergency information delivered to viewers.

As an initial matter, the Act requires that, within 180 days of enactment (around April 2011), the FCC creates and holds the first meeting of a new Advisory Committee called the Video Programming and Emergency Access Advisory Committee. This Advisory Committee will have primary responsibility for studying, preparing reports and making recommendations on technical and operational matters associated with the new video description, closed captioning and emergency information regulations. The Advisory Committee will consist of representatives from the video programming and broadcast television industries as well as other stakeholders. The Act requires the Committee to rely, to the greatest extent possible, on standards or protocols adopted by industry standards-setting organizations in formulating its recommendations regarding video descriptions, closed captions or emergency information.

Video Description

The Act gives the FCC the authority to reinstate its 2000 video description rules (which were struck down in a 2002 court challenge). The reinstated rules will be limited to the scope of the original *2000 FCC Video Description Report and Order*, that is, stations affiliated with the Big Four networks in the top 25 DMAs, (and the top five cable networks nationwide) must provide 50 hours per quarter (approximately four hours per week) of video described programming. The rules must be reinstated no later than one year after the legislation’s enactment (approximately October 2011). The rules can only apply to television programming in digital format but video description will not be required for live or near-live programming. Also at that time, the FCC must establish an appropriate phase-in period for the video description rules (in the original rules it was 18 months). The Act also gives the FCC the authority to provide waivers or exemptions in situations where providing video description would be economically burdensome or technically infeasible.

Once the phase-in period for the reinstated rules is complete, the FCC has the authority to expand, over time, the number of hours of video descriptions required and the number of markets in which video descriptions must be provided. However, before any expansion can occur the FCC must file a report with Congress that addresses a number of issues regarding the implementation of video description. Specifically the FCC must conduct a proceeding one year after the initial phase-in is complete and then file the report one year after the start of the proceeding. Once that report is filed, the FCC can expand the video description rules based on a schedule contained in the Act that extends out to approximately 10 years.

Thus, depending on the phase-in schedule adopted by the FCC, sometime after a year from now, stations in the top 25 DMAs that are ABC, CBS, FOX and NBC affiliates will need to have the technical capability to pass through the video description audio track sent in the network feed.

In a related matter, the Act also requires the Advisory Committee to study and within 18 months of enactment (around April 2012), issue a report on the technical, operational and economic issues associated with the

delivery of video descriptions for programming distributed using Internet protocol (distributed over the Internet).

Emergency Information

The Act requires that, 18 months after enactment, the Advisory Committee must submit to the FCC a report which studied the issue of making emergency information accessible to persons with disabilities (this is to be part of the report on video description). Not later than one year after that report is submitted (around April 2013), the FCC is required to complete a proceeding to:

- Identify methods to convey emergency information (as that term is defined in section 79.2 of title 47, Code of Federal Regulations) in a manner accessible to individuals who are blind or visually impaired; and
- Promulgate regulations that require video programming providers and video programming distributors (as those terms are defined in section 79.1 of title 47, Code of Federal Regulations) and program owners to convey such emergency information in a manner accessible to individuals who are blind or visually impaired.

While, not explicitly stated in the Act, it is generally understood that this provision will require all TV stations to make their emergency crawls audible for visually impaired viewers. That is, when a station runs a crawl with emergency or warning information, they must also send an audio track which states the same information contained in that crawl.

Closed Captions

The Act requires that video programming “distributed using Internet protocol” (i.e. delivered via the Internet) will have to be captioned once that same programming appears on television, with captions. The Advisory Committee will examine technical issues concerning Internet closed captioning and must recommend standards, protocols and other procedures that video programmers must follow. The Committee must submit a report to the FCC within six months of its first meeting (approximately October 2011). Once the FCC has received this report, it must commence a rulemaking, to be completed within six months (approximately April 2012), that must address a number of specific issues outlined in the Act that will define how the new Internet captioning rules will be implemented.

A copy of the bill can be found on THOMAS, [The Library of Congress's](http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/bdquery/z?d111:S3304/) legislative information webpage at: <http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/bdquery/z?d111:S3304/>. Click on “text of legislation” then click on “S.3304.ENR” (Item four at the top of the page). The video programming portion of the Bill is in Title II.

NAB Holds Satellite Uplink Operators Training Seminar

Last week, NAB hosted the NAB Satellite Uplink Operators Seminar at NAB headquarters in Washington, D.C. In addition to classroom course work, the seminar includes hands-on training with a satellite uplink truck provided this year by Fox-owned WTTG in Washington, D.C. (shown in the photo to the right) and also a visit to the in SES Americom Facility in Woodbine, Md. Sidney Skjei of [Skjei Telecom](#) is the course instructor.

NAB has trained more than 650 engineers and technicians from radio and television stations, universities and satellite services from across the U.S. and abroad, including engineers from China, Europe and Mexico. Look for the upcoming announcement on the 2011 class schedule.

ATSC Symposium on Next Generation Broadcast Television

Tuesday October 19, 2010–9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

The Westin Alexandria Hotel–Alexandria, Va.

More information, including [registration](#) and a newly updated [preliminary agenda](#), are available online.

Plan to Attend

**The IEEE Broadcast Technology Society
60th Annual IEEE Broadcast Symposium**

October 20–22, 2010

ADVERTISEMENTS

The Westin Alexandria • Alexandria, Va.

Keynote speakers for this year's symposium include James Martin, director, ISR programs for the U.S. Department of Defense and James O'Neal, technology editor, *TV Technology, USA*. Additional details on the technical program and how to register are available on the IEEE Broadcast Technology Symposium website. The advance registration deadline is October 1!

ATSC Digital Television Transmission System Seminar The Future of Terrestrial & Mobile Television

KNME-DT, Albuquerque, N.M.
Wednesday, October 27, 2010
8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

An updated one-day seminar will be presented on the ATSC's digital television vestigial sideband (VSB) transmission system. The seminar will cover the fundamentals of the new mobile DTV transmission standard and its relationship to the legacy 8-VSB system. It will also cover practical broadcaster recommendations for improved DTV service and viewer education as learned from last year's post June 12 field tests. The seminar is conducted by Gary Sgrignoli, DTV transmission engineer with [Meintel, Sgrignoli & Wallace](#). This seminar is for broadcasters, broadcast consultants, equipment manufacturers, translator/LPTV operators and cable operators. For more information at KNME-DT contact [Jim Gale](#) at 505 277 2049 or [Dan Zillich](#) at 505 277 1251. You may also contact the instructor [Gary Sgrignoli](#) at 847 259-3352.

Submit Your Proposal Now for 2011 NAB Broadcast Engineering Conference

Las Vegas Convention Center, Las Vegas, Nevada
Conferences April 9–14, 2011/Exhibits April 11–14, 2011
[Deadline for submissions is October 22, 2010.](#)

The 2011 NAB Show will host the 65th NAB Broadcast Engineering Conference. This world-class conference addresses the most recent developments in broadcast technology and focuses on the opportunities and challenges that face broadcast engineering professionals. Each year hundreds of broadcast professionals from around the world attend the conference. They include practicing broadcast engineers and technicians, engineering consultants, contract engineers, broadcast equipment manufacturers, distributors, R&D engineers plus anyone specifically interested in the latest broadcast technologies.

In order to be considered, proposals must explain what attendees can expect to learn from the paper, must not be a sales pitch and should be no more than 200 words in length.

Papers accepted for presentation at the 2011 NAB Broadcast Engineering Conference will be eligible for the [NAB Best Paper Award](#). Established in 2010, the Best Paper Award honors the author(s) of a paper of exceptional merit published in the *NAB Broadcast Engineering Conference Proceedings*. The yearly proceedings, published as both a book and a CD-ROM is a compendium of these technical papers, and an important archive of the leading edge of broadcast engineering issues.

Technical paper proposals submitted for the 65th annual [Broadcast Engineering Conference](#) will be accepted until the October 22 deadline. If you have any questions, contact [John Marino](#), VP NAB Science and Technology at (202) 429-5346.

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