Technology and Disability Policy Highlights

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# Overview

In March the Emergency Access Advisory Committee (EAAC) released a report entitled *EAAC Working Group 3 Recommendations on Current 9-1-1 and Next-Generation 9-1-1: Media Communication Line Services Used to Ensure Effective Communication with Callers with Disabilities*. The document discusses EAAC recommendations to the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), U.S Department of Transportation (DOT) and the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) on implementing the necessary tools and procedures that can ensure accessibility of emergency services and communications to individuals with disabilities. The next EAAC meeting will be held at the FCC headquarters on June 21, 2013 from 10:30 AM to 3:30 PM (EST).

Related to 9-1-1 services, the FCC proposed a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) (FCC 13-33) that would improve the reliability of 9-1-1 services and require service providers to notify 9-1-1 call centers of communication outages. The FCC also seeks comments on how service providers can effectively audit 9-1-1 circuits for physical diversity, maintain the backup power of generators, and maintain reliable network monitoring systems, specifically during communication outages.

The accessibility of college websites was addressed when the U.S. Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights entered into an agreement [*OCR Compliance Review No. 11-11-6002*] with the South Carolina Technical College System (SCTCS) that requires the websites of the SCTCS and its 16-member colleges to be accessible to all individuals, in particular those with visual disabilities. Similarly, two bills were introduced to Congress that would expand the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) to provide closed captioning on movies shown in movie theaters and on all passenger flights.

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# Regulatory Activities

## EAAC Recommendations on the Accessibility of NG9-1-1

March 1, 2013 — The Emergency Access Advisory Committee (EAAC) released a report entitled *EAAC Working Group 3 Recommendations on Current 9-1-1 and Next-Generation 9-1-1: Media Communication Line Services Used to Ensure Effective Communication with Callers with Disabilities*. The document discusses EAAC recommendations to the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), U.S Department of Transportation (DOT) and the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) on implementing the necessary tools and procedures that can ensure accessibility of emergency services and communications to individuals with disabilities. The EAAC recommends that Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPS) utilize sign language interpreters and communication assistants who complete standard training to meet specific qualifications in handling 9-1-1 calls. In addition, the implementation of independent, certified Media Communication Line Services (MCLS) centers is encouraged, as an extension of the translation service provided to individuals with disabilities during NG9-1-1 calls. Standard operating protocols and technical standards for MCLS and PSAPs is encouraged along with quality assurance guidelines. To support these services, consumer outreach and education programs are also recommended by the EAAC.

#### Additional Information

[EAAC Report](http://hraunfoss.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/DOC-319394A1.pdf)

[<http://hraunfoss.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/DOC-319394A1.pdf>]

## Ensuring the Accessibility of College Websites

March 8, 2013 — The U.S. Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights entered into an agreement [*OCR Compliance Review No. 11-11-6002*] with the South Carolina Technical College System (SCTCS) that requires the websites of the SCTCS and its 16-member colleges to be accessible to all individuals, in particular those with visual disabilities. This agreement is in response to an evaluation of the accessibility of SCTCS websites and two of its college’s websites that found the sites were not fully accessible to individuals with visual or print-related disabilities and therefore were not in compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Under the agreement, the SCTCS will develop and share a resource guide on web accessibility requirements, oversee accessibility changes to the SCTCS and member college websites, and perform annual reviews of websites to monitor continued compliance with accessibility requirements.

#### Additional Information

[Press Release](http://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/civil-rights-agreement-reached-south-carolina-technical-college-system-accessibi)

[<http://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/civil-rights-agreement-reached-south-carolina-technical-college-system-accessibi>]

[Resolution Letter](http://www2.ed.gov/documents/press-releases/south-carolina-technical-college-system-resolution.doc)

[<http://www2.ed.gov/documents/press-releases/south-carolina-technical-college-system-resolution.doc>]

[Agreement](http://www2.ed.gov/documents/press-releases/south-carolina-technical-college-system-agreement.pdf)

[<http://www2.ed.gov/documents/press-releases/south-carolina-technical-college-system-agreement.pdf>]

## First Technology Transitions Policy Task Force Workshop

March 11, 2013 — The Federal Communications Commission has convened the First Technology Transitions Policy Task Force Workshop. It was the first of a series of workshops that will focus on transitions to new technologies including: the advancement of network protocols; the implementation of fiber networks replacing copper; and the increased use of wireless in place of wireline services. Three sessions focused on technological capabilities of wireless and wireline technologies, the usage and adoption of technologies by various demographic groups, and the timing and initiators of network evolution. Jenifer Simpson, Director for the Accessible Technology Action Center, addressed usage and adoption issues for people with disabilities.

#### Additional Information

[Workshop Agenda](http://hraunfoss.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/DA-13-383A1.pdf)

[<http://hraunfoss.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/DA-13-383A1.pdf>]

## Making 9-1-1 Services More Reliable

March 20, 2013 — The FCC released a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) (FCC 13-33) that would improve the reliability of 9-1-1 services and require service providers to immediately notify 9-1-1 call centers of communication outages. The FCC is seeking input on how service providers can effectively audit 9-1-1 circuits for diverse geographic locations, maintain the backup power of generators, and maintain reliable network monitoring systems, specifically during communication outages. To implement these recommendations, the Commission suggests a combination of reporting, certification, establishment of 9-1-1 communications reliability requirements and inspections that co-ensure 9-1-1 service providers comply with standard practices and requirements. The actions of this NPRM could help promote the deployment of Next Generation 9-1-1 (NG9-1-1) services that allow communication with public safety responders through text, photos, video and data and provide more accessible emergency communication for all individuals, including those with disabilities.

#### Additional Information

[Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (FCC 13-33)](http://transition.fcc.gov/Daily_Releases/Daily_Business/2013/db0320/FCC-13-33A1.pdf)

[<http://transition.fcc.gov/Daily_Releases/Daily_Business/2013/db0320/FCC-13-33A1.pdf>]

[Press Release](http://transition.fcc.gov/Daily_Releases/Daily_Business/2013/db0320/DOC-319689A1.pdf)

[<http://transition.fcc.gov/Daily_Releases/Daily_Business/2013/db0320/DOC-319689A1.pdf>]

## ADA Settlements with Colorado Law Enforcement for People with Hearing Loss

March 21, 2013 — The U.S. Department of Justice reached cooperative settlement agreements with the Arapahoe County Sheriff Office and with the city of Englewood, both in Colorado, under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Complaints were filed with the Justice Department that police officers in both locations were not providing qualified sign language interpreters and additional assistive resources and services to victims, arrestees, and witnesses that were deaf or hard of hearing. Under the settlements, the city of Englewood and Arapahoe County will each pay $35,000 to the private plaintiffs. In addition, they contract with qualified sign language interpreters to ensure ready availability, train their staff on the ADA, appoint ADA coordinators, post signs indicating the availability of sign language interpreters and other auxiliary aids and services for people who are deaf or hard of hearing, provide text telephones and volume control telephones, modify their handcuffing policies for people who use sign language or hand writing to communicate, stock and provide hearing aid and cochlear implant processor batteries in the detention facility, and adopt policies consistent with the ADA.

#### Additional Information

[Press Release](http://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/2013/March/13-crt-332.html)

[<http://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/2013/March/13-crt-332.html>]

## Next Emergency Access Advisory Committee Meeting On June 21, 2013

March 22, 2013 — The next Emergency Access Advisory Committee (EAAC) meeting will be held at FCC headquarters on June 21, 2013 from 10:30 AM to 3:30 PM (EST). The EAAC is an advisory committee established on December 7, 2010 under the Twenty-First Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act of 2010 (CVAA) that focuses on evaluating and determining the most effective technologies that enable individuals with disabilities access to Next Generation 911 (NG 9-1-1). The agenda for the upcoming EAAC meeting includes discussion from EAAC subcommittees on reports and related activities.

#### Additional Information

[FCC Public Notice](http://transition.fcc.gov/Daily_Releases/Daily_Business/2013/db0322/DA-13-524A1.pdf)

[<http://transition.fcc.gov/Daily_Releases/Daily_Business/2013/db0322/DA-13-524A1.pdf>]

# Legislative

## Closed Captioned Movies for Theaters and In-Flight Entertainment

March 14, 2013 — U.S. Senator Tom Harkins (D-Iowa) introduced two bills to Congress that would expand the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) to provide closed captioning on movies shown in movie theaters and on all airplanes. The purpose of the bills is to improve the accessibility of movies to individuals with disabilities. The Cinema Act [S.555.IS] would require that all movie theaters with two or more theaters or screening rooms showing copyrighted motion pictures provide captioning and video description. The second bill, the Air Carrier Access Amendments Act [S.556.IS] provides captioning and video description on entertainment programming offered by air carriers on all passenger flights, including any foreign air carriers.

#### Additional Information

[Bill Text (S.555.IS)](http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/D?c113:1:./temp/~c113xxqHtT::)

[<http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/D?c113:1:./temp/~c113xxqHtT::>]

[Bill Text (S.556.IS)](http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/D?c113:2:./temp/~c113xxqHtT::)

[<http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/D?c113:2:./temp/~c113xxqHtT::>]

# Wireless RERC News

## Sprint Receives U.S. Disability Matters Awards

In April, Sprint will be honored as the Marketplace winner at the Seventh Annual U.S. Disability Matters Awards Banquet and Conference for innovative accessibility solutions. Sprint will receive the award for the Sprint Relay ID pack and four accessibility-themed Sprint ID packs. The packs were funded and developed through Apps4Android and the Apps Factory project of the Wireless RERC. Sprint customers that have an Everything Data plan can download the ID packs for free, which will enable non-visual access to smartphone, apply text-to-speech for reading RSS news feeds and YouTube content, utilize GPS-based navigational directions when driving or walking, and allow for the use of a phone to locate and identify objects in the home and workplace. The Sprint accessibility ID packs in particular allow individuals with disabilities “to more easily and fully use their devices, often in ways that weren’t previously possible.”

#### Additional Information

[Award Announcement](http://www.fortmilltimes.com/2013/03/18/2563605/sprint-named-disability-matters.html)

[<http://www.fortmilltimes.com/2013/03/18/2563605/sprint-named-disability-matters.html>]

## Lost in Translation: Sign Language Interpretation and Weather Service Messages

The Wireless RERC (wRERC) provided comments and recommendations to the National Weather Service (NWS) regarding its efforts to simplify and clarify the language used to convey emergency weather information. Through research with people experiencing hearing loss whose primary language is American Sign Language (ASL), the wRERC has learned that the wording commonly used in emergency weather messages can be confusing when translated into ASL. According to participants in field trials conducted by the wRERC, it is preferable to accommodate deaf individuals who utilize ASL as their primary language with ASL interpretation of written or spoken English. Since national, state and local alerting systems rely on the NWS for weather related emergency information and pass through identical verbiage, which may be translated by sign language interpreters, it is critical that the NWS language be clear and remove any jargon, truncated text or idiomatic expressions. To that end, the wRERC recommended that the NWS contact organizations representing the interests of people who are Deaf and requested that the proposed language be vetted amongst people whose primary language is ASL. In addition, the wRERC is developing an ASL Video Clip library of emergency terms that have been vetted by the ASL community, which will be shared with the NWS once complete.

#### Additional Information

[wRERC Comments to NWS](http://www.wirelessrerc.org/sites/default/files/content/newroom/2013%20NWS%20Demonstration_Wireless%20RERC%20Input.docx)

[<http://www.wirelessrerc.org/sites/default/files/content/newroom/2013%20NWS%20Demonstration_Wireless%20RERC%20Input.docx>]

## Wireless RERC Launches Spanish Version of the Survey of User Needs

The Wireless RERC has launched the Spanish language version of its Survey of User Needs for Wireless Technologies. The goal of the survey is to know how people of all abilities and ages use wireless technology. It focuses principally on cellphones, but also includes questions on other types of devices like tablets (Apple iPad and Amazon Kindle Fire), and other similar devices.

Since 2001 more than 5000 people with disabilities have completed the questionnaire. The Spanish language version has been launched to assure broad participation and realize the Wireless RERC’s commitment to inclusive investigative practices. The data collected will help designers and engineers develop new wireless devices and services that will satisfy the needs of users with disabilities.

Please share the survey with your Spanish-speaking constituents. A Spanish translation of the announcement and survey link is included below.

## Wireless RERC lanza su “Encuesta sobre las Necesidades del Usuario respecto a las Tecnologías Inalámbricas” en español

El Centro de Investigación e Ingeniería en Rehabilitación con Tecnologías Inalámbricas (*Rehabilitation Engineering Research Center for Wireless Technologies*, Wireless RERC) ha lanzado la version en español del cuestionario correspondiente a su Encuesta sobre las Necesidades del Usuario respecto a Tecnologías Inalámbricas (Survey of User Needs for Wireless Technologies). La finalidad de la presente encuesta es conocer cómo las personas de distintas habilidades y edades emplean la tecnología inalámbrica. Se enfoca principalmente en los teléfonos celulares, sin embargo, también incluye preguntas sobre otros tipos de dispositivos como las tabletas, por ejemplo el iPad de Apple y el Kindle Fire de Amazon, y otros dispositivos similares.

Desde el año 2001 más de 5000 personas con discapacidades han completado el cuestionario. Se ha lanzado la versión en español para asegurar la participación más amplia, y realizar el compromiso del Wireless RERC a prácticos investigativos inclusivos. Los datos que se recopilen ayudarán a los diseñadores e ingenieros a elaborar nuevos dispositivos y servicios inalámbricos que satisfagan las necesidades de las usuarios con discapacidades.

Si tiene una discapacidad por favor complete el cuestionario. Si conoce a alguien que tenga una discapacidad, por favor avisele sobre el cuestionario. Gracias!

Para completar el cuestionario en español dirija su navegador a: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/encuesta-tecnologia>

Si prefiere participar por teléfono o para pedir copia impresa, comuníquese con John Morris, 404-367-1348, [john\_morris@shepherd.org](mailto:john_morris@shepherd.org)

# Upcoming Events

## 2013 Disability Policy Seminar in April

The 2013 Disability Policy Seminar will be held in **Washington, D.C. on April 15-17**. This is an opportunity for individuals to hear from disability experts, including administration officials, key Hill staff and other advocates to discuss the “hottest topics in disability public policy.” This includes topics such as Medicaid, Social Security, the current budget situation and how these relate to and directly impact programs that help individuals with disabilities. The third day of the conference culminates with a breakfast on Capital Hill and meetings with elected representatives and staff.

Additional Information

[2013 Disability Policy Seminar Information](http://www.thearc.org/page.aspx?pid=2173)

[<http://www.thearc.org/page.aspx?pid=2173>]

[Registration Information](http://www.thearc.org/page.aspx?pid=2829)

[<http://www.thearc.org/page.aspx?pid=2829>]

## 2013 NARRTC Conference: Highlighting NIDRR-Funded Research

The National Association of Rehabilitation Research and Training Centers’ (NARRTC) annual meeting and conference will be held **April 18th and 19th, 2013 in Alexandria, VA**. The conference provides an opportunity to highlight the progress and latest results from research and development projects funded by the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR). Registration for the 2013 conference is still open.

Additional Information

[2013 NARRTC Conference Information](http://narrtc.org/conferences.php)

[<http://narrtc.org/conferences.php>]

## Healthy Environments and Active Lifestyles (HEAL) Open House

You are invited to join the Wireless RERC, the Aware Home Research Initiative, Center for Assistive Technology and Environmental Access (CATEA), and others for the 4th annual Healthy Environment and Active Lifestyles (HEAL) Open House **at Georgia Tech on April 23rd from 5-8:30pm**. The event will feature design projects from Wireless RERC courses as well as research projects and App Factory demonstrations from the Wireless RERC and other related Georgia Tech organizations. HEAL is a multi-site event taking place in Atlanta, Georgia.

For questions related to the HEAL event or the Aware Home at Georgia Tech please contact [Brian Jones](mailto:brian@imtc.gatech.edu?subject=HEAL%20Event) (brian@imtc.gatech.edu).

Additional Information

[HEAL Event Details and RSVP](http://www.healatgt.gatech.edu)

[<http://www.healatgt.gatech.edu>]

**Technology and Disability Policy Highlights**

March 2013

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 that 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>].

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