

FCC Consumer Advisory

Closed Captioning for Digital Television (DTV)

Overview

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) is concerned that consumers may experience difficulty in receiving and/or viewing closed captioning on some digital television (DTV) programming, including high definition television (HDTV), provided by a subscription television provider, such as a cable company or a satellite television provider. These difficulties generally could arise from two causes: 1) the consumer's set-top box and/or DTV are not properly set to allow closed captions to be displayed; or 2) there are technical problems with the subscription television provider's system that prevent closed captions from being received and decoded by the set-top box and/or DTV.

Background

Closed captioning is an assistive technology that allows persons with hearing disabilities to access television programming. Closed captioning displays the audio portion of programming as text superimposed over the video. For a television receiver to display closed captions, it must use a set-top box decoder or



contain integrated decoder circuitry.

As of January 1, 2006, all “new” English language programming, defined as analog programming first published or exhibited on or after January 1, 1998, and digital programming first aired on or after July 1, 2002, must be captioned, with some exceptions.

For more information on closed captioning, closed captioning schedules, and exemptions, visit www.fcc.gov/cgb/dro/caption.html and see the FCC’s consumer fact sheet at www.fcc.gov/cgb/consumerfacts/closedcaption.html.

What You Can Do

If you have difficulties viewing closed captions on DTV programming, including HDTV, received from your subscription television provider, you should:

- consult any consumer information and manuals/guides on closed captions for DTV programming provided by your subscription television provider;
- ensure that the captioning function on your set-top box, if applicable, is turned on;
- ensure that the captioning function on your DTV is turned on.



If you are still unable to view closed captions on DTV programming, you should contact your subscription television provider for assistance.

Filing a Complaint with the FCC

If your provider is unable to help, you can file a complaint with the FCC alleging a violation of the Television Decoder Circuitry Act and the FCC's implementing rules. There is no charge for filing a complaint. If your complaint concerns the inability of your consumer equipment (for example, your television or cable box) to deliver captions, you may complain directly to the FCC. If your complaint concerns the lack of captioning on a specific program or channel (i.e., you receive captions on some channels, but not others), you must first complain to the programming distributor (meaning your subscription television service provider). For more information on filing a complaint with your programming distributor and the information to include in such complaints, see the FCC's closed captioning consumer fact sheet at

www.fcc.gov/cgb/consumerfacts/closedcaption.html. If you are uncertain where to file your complaint, contact the FCC's Consumer Center using the contact information provided for filing a complaint with the FCC below.



You can file your complaint using an FCC on-line complaint form found at esupport.fcc.gov/complaints.htm. You can also file your complaint with the FCC's Consumer Center by e-mailing fccinfo@fcc.gov; calling 1-888-CALL-FCC (1-888-225-5322) voice, 1-888-TELL-FCC (1-888-835-5322) TTY; faxing 1-866-418-0232; or writing to:

Federal Communications Commission
Consumer & Governmental Affairs Bureau
Consumer Inquiries and Complaints Division
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554.

Note: On November 3, 2008, the Commission adopted rules revising the procedures for filing closed captioning complaints. These rules, however, will not take effect until approved by the Office of Management and Budget. Therefore, consumers must continue to follow the instructions for filing complaints that are contained in this advisory until further notice. Under the new rules, consumers will no longer be required to file complaints with the video programming distributor. Consumers will have 60 days from the date the captioned program aired to file a complaint either with the distributor or the Commission. If the complaint is filed with the Commission, the Commission will forward it to the distributor. After receiving a complaint, either directly from the consumer or from the Commission, the distributor will have 30 days to respond to the



complaint. The Commission also adopted new rules requiring that video programming distributors make specific contact information available to consumers to assist consumers in contacting the distributors about closed captioning concerns.

What to Include In Your Complaint to the FCC

The best way to provide all the information the FCC needs to process your complaint is to complete fully the on-line complaint form. When you open the on-line form, you will be asked a series of questions that will take you to the particular section of the form you need to complete. If you do not use the on-line complaint form, your complaint, at a minimum, should indicate:

- your name, address, email address, and phone number where you can be reached;
- whether you are filing a complaint on behalf of another party, and, if so, the party's name, address, e-mail address, day time phone number, and your relationship to the party;
- preferred format or method of response (letter, fax, voice phone call, e-mail, TRS, TTY, ASCII text, audio recording, or Braille);



- that your complaint is about closed captioning for DTV;
- the name, address, and telephone number (if known) of the company or companies involved with your complaint;
- the date and time or other details about timing of the lack of closed captioning for DTV;
- television station call sign (WZUE), TV channel (13), location (city and state), and name of program involved; and
- a brief description of your complaint and the resolution you are seeking, and a full description of the equipment or service you are complaining about, including date of purchase, use, or attempt to use.

For More Information

For more information about the digital television transition and HDTV, visit the FCC's Web site at www.dtv.gov and see the FCC's consumer fact sheet at

www.fcc.gov/cgb/consumerfacts/digitaltv.html.

You can also contact the FCC's Consumer Center using the information provided for filing a complaint.



###

For this or any other consumer publication in an accessible format (electronic ASCII text, Braille, large print, or audio) please write or call us at the address or phone number below, or send an e-mail to FCC504@fcc.gov.

To receive information on this and other FCC consumer topics through the Commission's electronic subscriber service, visit www.fcc.gov/cgb/contacts/.

This document is for consumer education purposes only and is not intended to affect any proceedings or cases involving this subject matter or related issues.

01/12/09*

