

Recommendation of the Federal Communications Commission  
Disability Advisory Committee  
Described Audio TV Listings Working Group  
Adopted: September 24, 2019

Objective: Develop recommendations to foster the provision of reliable information about televised programs with audio description on networks subject to the Commission's description requirements for "Covered Networks", such as the air time of such programs and the method to identify such programs and timeliness, promptness, and accuracy of such listings.

1. WHEREAS, audio description is audio-narrated description of a television program's key visual elements. These descriptions are inserted into natural pauses in the program's dialogue or other critical sound elements. Audio description makes television programming more accessible to individuals who are blind or visually impaired.
2. WHEREAS, audio description on television is typically presented on the secondary audio channel. The secondary audio channel also provides audio tracks in languages other than the native language included on the primary audio channel. Pursuant to the Commission's rules, the Covered Networks are required to provide a certain amount of programming with audio description.
3. WHEREAS, the Described Audio TV Listings Working Group was established, in part, to provide the Commission with recommendations on how Covered Networks and other ecosystem parties may effectively provide information about audio described programming in a manner that is readily available to all TV viewers and accessible to and usable by individuals who are blind or visually impaired.
4. WHEREAS, consumers and video providers would benefit from a uniform nomenclature for program listings that include audio description, however, various terms are commonly used including: "audio description," "Descriptive Video Service, or DVS" or "Video Description," creating confusion when searching for programs with audio description online and on program guides.
5. WHEREAS, we believe consumers of audio description are most familiar with the term "audio description" because it is used most often in other contexts such as film/movies, DVDs, performing arts, museums. The term "audio description" has been the primary term of art for aurally described content since its inception. Furthermore, audio description is used by most Federal agencies such as the Department of Justice in their regulations of the Americans with Disabilities Act, the United States Access Board Revised Section 508 Standards of the Rehabilitation Act (2017), the National Parks Service, the Department of Health and Human Services, and others. Consistent nomenclature is critical to the ongoing effort to build awareness of audio description and to help ensure consumers can find described content.

6. WHEREAS, the use of inconsistent logos to visually indicate the presence of audio description creates confusion. The logo consisting of [two letters in bold, black type: “A” with its left side tilted toward the right, and “D”, with three curved lines to its right matching the curve in the letter D], indicating “audio description,” is used worldwide. It was developed in the 1980s by the National Endowment for the Arts and the Graphic Artists Guild and is in the public domain.
7. WHEREAS, in 2012, the Video Programming Access Advisory Committee (VPAAC), report noted, “the industry members of the VPAAC understand that it is possible for the principal television programming information distributors, Tribune Media Services and Rovi, to include description information in their program data distribution”. Therefore, they recommended that, “to the extent they provide information to one or both principal television programming information distributors about their television listings, broadcast and non-broadcast networks that are required to provide described programming identify in a timely manner which of their listed programs include description” (see 4-9-12 Second Report of the Video Programming Accessibility Advisory Committee on the Twenty-First Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act of 2010. Video Description: <https://docs.fcc.gov/public/attachments/DOC-329400A1.pdf>)
8. WHEREAS, The Commission in its 2014 Report to Congress (DA 14-945, paras. 25-28) described the concerns of commenters about the lack of publicly available information about described television programs and “commended the efforts of covered entities and consumer groups to inform consumers about which programs contain video description through their websites,” encouraged industry to coordinate with program guide developers to include information about which programs are described as part of mainstream program information resources to provide consumers with current and accurate information on described programming. See <https://docs.fcc.gov/public/attachments/DA-14-945A1.doc>, and further in the 2016 Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (FCC 16-37, paras. 31-32) noting concerns raised by commenters about fragmented described television program information and difficulty in finding information in programming guides). <https://docs.fcc.gov/public/attachments/FCC-16-37A1.docx>.
9. WHEREAS, both consumers and video program providers would benefit from reliable and easier to find information about programs that include audio description including scheduled air times. Unfortunately, consumers of audio description report difficulty in finding such information noting that electronic program guides do not consistently display which shows are described, while industry members report that they are able to find audio described programming through their standard program listings platforms. Further, consumers assert that individuals must search multiple network websites, browse a third-party website, or call into a phone system to find a schedule of audio described programs.
10. WHEREAS, a reliable source of information about programs with audio description would allow video program providers to efficiently demonstrate the hours and nature of such accessible content they provide.

NOW, THEREFORE, IT IS --

1. RECOMMENDED that the Commission, as soon as practicable, use the term “audio description” to refer to described video programs when discussing or listing audio described programming and that the Commission encourage other entities to do the same as a best practice.
2. RECOMMENDED that the Commission, as soon as practicable, use the publicly available logo created by the National Endowment for the Arts and the Graphic Artists Guild and that the Commission encourage other entities to consider adding the logo as a best practice when feasible.
3. RECOMMENDED that the Commission encourage greater uniformity and consistency in the provision of information in accessible form regarding the availability of audio described programming, including:
  - a. the Commission maintain up to date links on its audio description webpage to websites where audio description programming information can be found; and
  - b. the Commission encourage broadcast and non-broadcast networks to include information and links on their websites to provide information about audio description and when audio described programs are airing, including, but not limited to, links to the FCC audio description webpage and other third-party audio description listing sites; and
  - c. the Commission encourage Cable, Satellite, Fiber, and Streaming video programming services to develop methods to filter, search, or discover programs that are audio described in their electronic program guides. If not achievable, that the Cable, Satellite, Fiber, and streaming video programming services provide prominent links to sites where this information can be found.
4. RECOMMENDED that the Commission encourage all networks, channels, cable, satellite, fiber, streaming, and other services that provide video programming with audio description to provide timely, accurate program listings in accessible form, including, to the extent feasible and/or within their control, on aggregator services, on their own websites, and in program guides.