



NEWS

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This is an unofficial announcement of Commission action. Release of the full text of a Commission order constitutes official action.
See MCI v. FCC, 515 F 2d 385 (D.C. Circ 1974).

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DISABILITY ACCESS REQUIREMENTS EXTENDED TO VOIP SERVICES *VoIP Providers Also Required to Contribute to the Interstate TRS Fund and Offer 711 Access*

Washington, DC -- The Commission has extended the disability access requirements of Sections 225 and 255 of the Communications Act, which currently apply to traditional phone services, to providers of interconnected Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) services and to manufacturers of specially designed equipment used to provide those services.

Section 255 of the Communications Act requires manufacturers of “telecommunications equipment or customer premises equipment” and providers of “telecommunications service” to ensure that such equipment or service is accessible to and usable by individuals with disabilities, if readily achievable. In adopting Section 255, Congress sought to ensure that *all* Americans, including people with disabilities, could benefit from advances in telecommunications services and equipment.

The Commission’s existing Section 255 rules, adopted in 1999, among other things, (1) require manufacturers of telecommunications equipment or Customer Premises Equipment (CPE) to ensure that their equipment is designed, developed and fabricated to be accessible to individuals with disabilities, if readily achievable; (2) require telecommunications service providers to ensure that their service is accessible to individuals with disabilities, if readily achievable; (3) require manufacturers and service providers to evaluate the accessibility, usability, and compatibility of covered services and equipment; and (4) require manufacturers and service providers to ensure that information and documentation provided in connection with equipment or services be accessible to people with disabilities, where readily achievable, and that employee training, where provided at all, account for accessibility requirements.

In addition, the Commission said that interconnected VoIP providers were subject to the requirements of Section 225, including contributing to the Telecommunications Relay Services (TRS) Fund and offering 711 abbreviated dialing for access to relay services. Requiring the TRS Fund contributions will protect the stability and sustainability of the Interstate TRS Fund. (TRS is a service that allows persons with hearing or speech impairments to use the telephone. The TRS Fund is used to pay for the provision of TRS services and is funded by contributions from all carriers that provide interstate service.) Requiring 711 abbreviated dialing will ensure that anyone wishing immediate access to the local TRS provider need only dial 711.

On March 10, 2004, the Commission initiated a rulemaking proceeding that sought comment on whether and, if so, how, it should apply the accessibility requirements of Section 255 to providers of interconnected VoIP or other IP-enabled services. It also asked how any actions it might take could affect the Interstate TRS Fund and whether it should amend the TRS rules in light of the increasing use of IP-enabled services. Today's action is a result of that rulemaking proceeding.

Action by the Commission May 31, 2007, by Report and Order (FCC 07-110). Chairman Martin, Commissioners Copps, Adelstein, Tate, and McDowell. Separate statements issued by Chairman Martin, Commissioners Copps, Adelstein, Tate and McDowell.

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WC Docket No. 04-36
WT Docket No. 96-198
CG Docket No. 03-123
CC Docket No. 92-105

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