

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 guide at www.fcc.gov/guides/closed-captioning.

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 may file a written complaint with either the FCC or your video programming distributor (meaning your subscription television service provider or the television broadcaster). For more information on filing a closed captioning complaint and the information to include in such complaints, see the FCC's closed captioning consumer guide at www.fcc.gov/guides/closed-captioning. 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 online complaint form found at www.fcc.gov/complaints. You can also file your complaint with the FCC's Consumer Center by 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.

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 thoroughly complete the online complaint form. If you do not use the online complaint form, your complaint, at a minimum, should indicate:

- your name, street, city, state and zip code and other contact information such as a videophone or TTY number or email address;
- the television channel number, call sign and network;
- the name of the subscription service, if you pay to receive television;
- the location of the TV station or subscription service;
- the date and time when you experienced the captioning problem;
- the name of the program or show with the captioning problem; and
- a detailed description of the captioning problem.

A recorded submission of the lack of closed captioning, in addition to what is listed above, is welcome but not required.



For More Information

For more information about the digital television transition and DTV, visit the FCC's website at www.dtv.gov. You can also contact the FCC's Consumer Center using the information provided for filing a complaint.

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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 email 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.

