

I-Codes Comply With Court Ruling On Emergency Evacuation For Persons With Disabilities

By Kim Paarlberg

I-Codes, published by the International Code Council, are consistent with a Circuit Court of Montgomery County, Maryland, ruling that says the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires places of public accommodation to consider the needs of people with disabilities in developing emergency evacuation plans.

The ruling is the result of an incident that left a woman stranded in a wheelchair when a Silver Springs, Maryland, mall store was evacuated. Store policy required that the woman be evacuated into the mall. She was not provided any direction or assistance for evacuation from the basement level of the mall.

For decades the I-Codes-first as legacy codes developed by BOCA, ICBO and SBCCI-and now through requirements in the International Fire Code have required fire safety

evacuation plans for all occupants in facilities that are assembly, educational, high-hazard, institutional, assisted living, high-rise buildings, underground buildings, hotels and large mercantile, according to International Code Council Senior Vice President of Technical Services Tom Frost.

Building owners and code officials who maintain and review evacuation plans are reminded to make sure that special needs and concerns of people with disabilities are taken into consideration as part of the plan. A proactive approach to training and planning for these concerns will greatly assist all persons concerned with a quick, safe and effective evacuation of a building in any emergency, Tom Frost said.

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Look for this International Symbol of Access for Persons With Hearing Loss



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Message from Diana

I frequently hear complaints from people, especially from my friends who have a hearing loss. They complain that the TV captions are so full of mistakes or so far behind the dialog that it interferes with their enjoyment of a favorite program. Or that a program isn't captioned at all. Or they complain that they can't enjoy a first run movie because it isn't captioned at any of their local movie chains. They complain to me, but not to the TV stations, the FCC (Federal Communications Commission) or their local movie chain. For all of you complainers who complain, but don't do anything about it, I refer you to the article in this issue of HearSay about CapTel relay service. CapTel users didn't just complain, they took action when it appeared that they would lose this service for an undetermined amount of time. And they showed that taking action does bring results. I hope this story results in more of us becoming advocates for what we want and should be able to enjoy in life.

Hope you have an enjoyable and safe summer holiday season. □

PA-SHHH Conducts Capitol Screening

By Diana Bender

On Tuesday, May 24 in celebration of Better Speech and Hearing Month, PA-SHHH teamed up with the PA Office for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing to conduct a hearing screening in the capitol building in Harrisburg. Flyers announcing the event were sent out to many state agencies and the screening was open to state legislators, their staff and other state employees. Two Harrisburg area audiologists, Lori Leiman and Eddy Geadah, volunteered their time to do the screening and Harrisburg SHHH chapter members distributed literature to people who had their hearing screened.

SHHH volunteers also stopped by at legislators' offices and handed out a position paper from SHHH on hearing aid insurance coverage to explain our support for House Bill 350, a bill which requires health insurance companies to provide hearing aid insurance coverage. We screened 42 people and found 15 who had a hearing loss. □

Tutorial on Accessible Telecommunication Products Available

A new web-based training course is available on ensuring access to telecommunication products under section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act, which requires access to electronic and information technologies procured by the Federal government. The course, the last in a series developed by the Board covering different aspects of its section 508 standards, is designed for those involved in the purchase or procurement of telecommunication products for Federal agencies. It covers all of the requirements that telecommunication products must meet, including those providing access for persons with hearing impairments.

Since issuing its standards for electronic and information technology, the Board has maintained a program of continuing on-line guidance and training on the requirements of the standards. Other section 508 tutorials in the series cover software applications and operating systems; desktop and portable computers; and self contained, closed products, such as information kiosks, calculators, and fax machines. The courses are part of the on-line "508 Universe" program provided on the <http://www.section508.gov> website. This site also provides other section 508 tutorials and resources. □

*Reprinted from Access Currents Volume 11, No.2
March/ April 2005.*

"Access Currents" is a free newsletter issued by the Access Board every other month by mail and e-mail. Send questions or comments to news@access-board.gov or call (800) 872-2253 ext. 0026 (voice) or (800) 993-2822 (TTY). Mailing address: 1331 F Street, N.W., Suite 1000; Washington, D.C. 20004-1111.

Hearsay is produced by:

Surreal Concepts, Inc.

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What is Pennsylvania's Assistive Technology Lending Library?

Pennsylvania's Assistive Technology Lending Library is a free program available to all Pennsylvanians with disabilities, regardless of age or disability, who would like to try assistive technology devices prior to purchasing them. This program was created by the Institute on Disabilities and originally funded by Pennsylvania's Initiative on Assistive Technology. It is now supported by federal and state dollars and private contributions.

The inventory of Pennsylvania's Assistive Technology Lending Library consists of assistive technology devices which can be easily shipped, do not require installation or permanent modifications and do not involve weight bearing. There are local branches of Pennsylvania's Assistive Technology Lending Library across the Commonwealth, as well as regional Assistive Technology Resource Centers (ATRCs) that can help you learn more about the devices and how to borrow them. If you don't know what you need, if you will need help in learning to use the device, or if you successfully try a device and need help in acquiring it for your own use, the ATRC staff can refer you to the right people. If the device you want to try is not available in the inventory, the ATRC may be able to help you find other ways to borrow or try the device.

There is a wide selection of devices for you to borrow, including devices that can help you communicate with others, control your environment, hear what others are saying, do everyday activities, access computers, and read printed materials. There are many devices for people who are hard of hearing, including assistive listening devices, amplified telephones, and alerting systems.

Requests for equipment loans may be made by you, your family member, friend or advocate, or someone who is presently helping you with your assistive technology needs (e.g. therapist, teacher, rehabilitation counselor). For devices that are complicated, you may be asked to identify someone who is familiar with the device and who will help you use it during the loan period.

Return your completed application to the ATRC serving your region for processing. When your application is received by the ATRC, you will be informed of an actual or approximate shipping date. Your device will be delivered

to you, and is yours to use for the specified loan period. When the loan period is over, the device will be picked up and returned to the Lending Library. There is no cost to you for pick up or delivery of the device. Anyone interested in borrowing a device can get an application by calling toll-free: 800-204-7428 (voice), or 215-204-1356 (TTY). □

For more information about Pennsylvania's Assistive Technology Lending Library, for a listing of available devices, to identify your local branch, or for the Assistive Technology Resource Center nearest you, call toll-free 1-877-PA AT LEND (877-722-8536) voice/TTY. Sandra McNally Assistive Technology Activities Coordinator.

Sandra McNally conducts public awareness events related to assistive technology in the five counties that comprise the Philadelphia metropolitan area.

<http://disabilities.temple.edu/staff.htm#smcnally>

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Building owners and code officials who maintain and review evacuation plans are reminded to make sure that special needs and concerns of people with disabilities are taken into consideration as part of the plan. A proactive approach to training and planning for these concerns will greatly assist all persons concerned with a quick, safe and effective evacuation of a building in any emergency situation, Frost said.

One primary goal of the International Code Council is that accessibility requirements in the I-Codes meet or exceed federal accessibility requirements, including the ADA and the Fair Housing Amendments Act. ICC is referenced for accessible means of egress requirements in the new ADA/ABA Guidelines (Sections 207/F207). ICC also is the secretariat for development of the accessibility technical standard ICC/ANSI A117.1, Accessible and Usable Buildings and Facilities.

The International Code Council, a membership association dedicated to building safety and fire prevention, develops the codes used to construct residential and commercial buildings, including homes and schools. Most U.S. cities, counties and states that adopt codes choose the International Codes developed by the International Code Council.

ADA PUBLIC FORUM - COMMENTS BY SHHH ON COMPLIANCE WITH TITLE III OF THE ADA

Washington, DC, May 3, 2005

Comments we have received from our members and from other consumer groups for hard of hearing and deaf Americans portray Title III as still problematic in several areas. From healthcare to transportation to entertainment, America's businesses are failing to provide consistent, thorough, and operative forms of accommodation to hard of hearing and deaf consumers.

There are four key problems: a lack of training and education of staff, inconsistency of accessibility provided from facility to facility, provision of inappropriate accommodations for hard of hearing people, and the need to have the revised ADA made final.

The staff of public entities do not receive training to understand the needs and rights of hard of hearing and deaf people. Even when a facility such as a hospital or theater has assistive listening devices, most are probably not working, and the staff is either unaware of their existence, or does not maintain them in working order.

The ADA has been effective in requiring larger, more prominent hotel chains to adopt standard accommodations for hard of hearing and deaf patrons. But smaller and less expensive hotels and motels are often not in compliance and may not even be aware of Title III regulations. There may be wireless Internet access in every room but not a single TTY or amplified telephone in the entire hotel.

There is a wide variation in the level of compliance. Consumers are unable to predict what access they will find in public places. There is no consistency from one facility to the next. Sadly, when a facility is accessible it is often

the result of consumer advocacy and not voluntary action on the part of the facility.

Title III was designed to provide guidelines for accessibility in public places. Yet the implementation of Title III is inconsistent at best and consumers are growing weary of advocating for the access they need each time they want to use a facility. SHHH recognizes that we need to continue to educate and empower the millions of Americans with hearing loss.

A continuing problem is the tendency to see all people with hearing loss as having the same accommodation needs. There are still far too many situations where a sign language interpreter is provided for people who are hard of hearing and actually need ALD or CART. Since many people who are hard of hearing lose their hearing after 19 years of age, their first language is English, they like to speak and use whatever residual hearing they have through hearing aids and cochlear implants. Less than five percent use sign language as their primary way of communicating, therefore interpreters are often not an appropriate accommodation. This continues to be a problem in public places that provide interpreters in the belief that they have made the event accessible to all people with hearing loss.

In 2004 the Access Board published recommendations for revised ADA accessibility guidelines to make them clearer, harmonize them with other accessibility laws, and building codes, and revise scoping. The needed revisions have been identified and now they need to be made official. Action on the revised ADAAG is long overdue. □

Contact: Brenda Battat battat@hearingloss.org 301-657-2248

SHHH Joins AUDIENT Alliance

I am pleased to announce that SHHH has joined AUDIENT, an alliance for accessible hearing care for low income populations who are challenged by the cost of hearing care. This alliance, formed by the Northwest Lion's Foundation for Sight and Hearing, includes hearing healthcare providers, hearing instrument manufacturers and leading institutions across the country who want to serve SHHH members who are unable to pay for the hearing care their families need. Members of the alliance have all sacrificed to provide a low cost of care. To qualify for reduced cost of care, your annual income must not exceed \$23,500

for a single adult, \$31,225 for a family of two. To receive care or learn more about the program, AUDIENT can be contacted directly at 1-877-283-4268). You can also visit the AUDIENT website here: <http://www.audientalliance.org/index.htm> □

Terry D. Portis, Ed.D. Executive Director

SHHH, The nation's voice for people with hearing loss. 7910 Woodmont Ave., Suite 1200, Bethesda, MD 20814

301-657-2248, ext. 105

Congratulations to Jim Stoltz of SHHH Pittsburgh Chapter # 1

Two of Jim's grandsons graduated from the US Air Force Academy in Colorado in May. Jim wanted to HEAR at the graduation and requested CART. He was told a sign language interpreter or an oral interpreter could be provided. Persistence pays off. Jim contacted Archive Reporting in Harrisburg and asked for names of CART reporters in Colorado. He then contacted the Air Force Academy with names of people who could provide the service he needed. THEY AGREED TO DO IT!!!

ADVOCACY PAYS OFF! DO IT.

And please, if you successfully advocate for your rights, let us know.

Thank you. ☐

CapTel Phone Service Continues in PA!

By Diana Bender

Bowing to pressure from CapTel users throughout the state, the PA PUC (Public Utility Commission) has reversed its decision to terminate CapTel telephone relay service while they obtain bids from potential permanent providers of the service. The PUC approved permanent CapTel relay service for PA back in November 2004 and notified participants in the CapTel trial that they would continue to enjoy CapTel service until a permanent relay provider could be identified.

But as the process of choosing a permanent provider dragged on, the PUC suddenly changed its mind and decided to terminate the trial and the service until permanent service could be established. CapTel users throughout the state contacted the PUC commissioners, the governor and their state senators and representatives with letters of complaint. They detailed the devastating effect that terminating service would have on them. Some wrote of not being able to continue on their job without a CapTel phone. Others said they could not use traditional relay service since they had neither the equipment nor the patience required to do so. Annette Curry of Collingdale, PA contacted Channel 10 NBC news with the story and was interviewed together with her brother for the 11 o'clock news on May 25. That same day, after the PUC had been contacted by the Channel 10 reporter, meetings were held at the PUC in Harrisburg and the decision to continue CapTel service was made.

This is a fine example of what can be accomplished by advocacy efforts. And those who were active in the fight to retain this form of relay service obtained the satisfaction of knowing that we can influence at least some of the things in our lives. CapTel users salute the PUC commissioners for listening to their constituents and finding a way to continue this much needed service. ☐

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Contact Diana Bender (bender@pa-shhh.org)

Celebrate...

a birthday, anniversary or special occasion by making a donation to PA-SHHH. The perfect gift for the person who has everything while being tax deductible to boot!



Telephone Contacts

For SHHH activities and information, feel free to call:

Wayne Benson Western PA 412-661-4724

Marianne Lock Eastern PA 215-357-3702

Ronnie Adler Eastern PA 610-644-3154

HearSay Subscription

If you would like to receive your own copy of HearSay, the official newsletter of PA-SHHH, please fill in this form and mail it to the address below. A HearSay subscription is free; however, PA-SHHH is a not-for-profit organization and we are grateful for any donations.

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Enclosed is my contribution of \$ _____ to support HearSay. Donations are tax deductible and will be acknowledged in the newsletter and on the website.

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A special thanks to those of you who help make it possible.

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Support SHHH

One way you can make a difference to hard-of-hearing people is to remember SHHH in your will. That way your money will continue to help hard-of-hearing people long after you are gone.

About SHHH

Self Help for Hard of Hearing People, Inc., founded in 1979, is a non-profit consumer self-help organization. SHHH opens the world of communication to people with hearing loss by providing information, education, support and advocacy.

The primary purpose of all SHHH members is to educate ourselves, our families, friends, co-workers, teachers, hearing health care providers, industry, government, and others about hearing loss.

SHHH has members and chapters in all 50 states. To find the chapter closest to you, contact a member of the PA-SHHH state committee if you are in PA, or contact the SHHH National Office.

Selp-Help for Hard of Hearing People
7910 Woodmont Avenue, Suite 1200
Bethesda, MD 20814

Phone: (301) 657-2248 (Voice)
(301) 657-2249 (TTY)
(301) 913-9413 (FAX)

Email: info@hearingloss.org
Website: www.hearingloss.org

PA-SHHH Needs You

SHHH volunteers from all over the Commonwealth assist the PA-SHHH State Director by serving on the PA-SHHH Advisory Council or one of its committees. The PA-SHHH Advisory Council meets periodically in Carlisle. Committees conduct most of their business by email but meet periodically in various parts of the state as needed. We would be delighted to have you join us. If you would like to serve on either the Advisory Council, or one of its committees, please contact one of the state leaders listed below.



State Director:	Diana Bender	bender@pa-shhh.org
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	Gerry Rusher	rusher@pa-shhh.org
Government Affairs:	Diana Bender	bender@pa-shhh.org
Development:	Open - will you volunteer?	

"Come and join us. You will be welcome!"