

Re: Reopening the petition for rule making Section 68.4 (a)
Room 8658

From:
Sharon Campbell
509 Barbara Circle
Fairless Hills, PA 19030

Issue: digital wireless telephones should continue to be exempt from being hearing-aid compatible. I disagree.

Should the digital phones not be usable by people with hearing loss, we will again be left out in the communications cold. It is inevitable that the analog phones will be phased out, probably sooner rather than later. At that point, without full access to digital phones, people with hearing loss will end up with little or no access to far more than just telephone service. Digital technology is handling E-mail, beeper, and a host of other services. Without full access to this technology, the people with hearing loss will find it difficult to get the well-paying jobs that the technology enables.

Issue: Industry is "voluntarily" trying to achieve compatibility

The depth of "voluntary" activity is measured by the standard. There is no evidence that they are voluntarily attempting to go beyond "readily-achievable." And a standard of "readily achievable" is virtually meaningless. As long as the technology does not involve violating the laws of physics, it is achievable and the industry should be forced to make digital communications achievable for hearing aid and cochlear implant users, with no extra expense for us.

Furthermore, why should the rapidly-growing community of people with hearing loss have to rely on the continuing good-will of the industry for years and decades down the road? It is quite difficult to imagine that every successor of the people "voluntarily" trying to achieve a "readily-achievable" standard will continue even that poor level of service down the years.

Issue: interference by digital phones with hearing aid functioning

It is bad enough that the hearing-impaired community has to put up with digital phones that we can't use without expensive accessory equipment, when possible at all. Another serious issue is the fact that someone else nearby using his/her digital phone can interfere with the hearing aids of bystanders. I find it difficult to see hearing people tolerating a situation where hearing aids nearby impede their ability to communicate; indeed, it is clearly an intolerable situation. It is equally intolerable for people with hearing loss to have digital phones interfering with their hearing aids.

Sharon Campbell