

CS Docket 97-80

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COMMENT TO THE FCC IN THE PLUG & PLAY DOCKET

CS Docket 97-80

PP Docket 00-67

JUN 27 2003

Federal Communications Commission  
Office of the Secretary

From: Ralph DeMarco, Pittsburgh, PA

I have comments for this docket, particularly in regard to the needs of persons who are blind. While the transition to digital is likely to be good for consumers, my concern is that with all the new equipment and services, my needs, as a consumer, to understand and how to operate and manage all the new television equipment should be addressed.

Therefore, I am recommending to the FCC that in any new rules about television that the manufacturers of television equipment be required to make available, in the alternate format of the consumer's choice, the product manual, operating instructions and service plan and other information that is customarily made available to sighted consumers.

As a person with severe vision disability, like millions of other persons in America, I have several tv sets, one made by JVC, another by Mitsubishi and equipment for the tv sets that is made by RCA (a satellite receiving system).

All of this equipment, either bought over the counter or through subscriber plans with cable or satellite tv services, comes with printed manuals, product literature and other matter. However none of this I can read, although I am literate and read Braille and can hear books on audiotape.

So far, I have to rely on writing the manufacturers or contacting the cable or satellite companies to get the manuals in Braille or on audiotape and this is difficult to do. Often, they just point the finger at the other company and say contact the other company as they are not the one responsible to do this for me. My telephone company, the utilities and other companies provide this type of customer service so I would think that big tv companies would also want to do this for their customers who are blind.

I would like the FCC to require manufacturers of any television devices or services to make available this material so I can access it. This is possible since most printed matter starts off at some point in a word processed form and that can be converted easily to ASCII or text. To make this usable to me might require some re-writing if they are indicating pictures, but this might make it more usable for everyone anyway. To make this workable, I also recommend that there be a point of contact at the company for disability concerns, such as with Section 255, who consumers can reach to make this request to put an end to being passed around by the retailer to the company to the tv service company and back again.

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Cel (412) 725-5363

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(Comment taken over phone by J. Simpson, CICD/CGB)