

I just learned that the FCC has decided that the broadcasters in the Top 25 Markets, which have been required since January 1, 2006 to have closed captions for all their new programs, do NOT have to close caption emergency information. Instead a much watered down method of visual presentation is considered acceptable. This decision is deplorable and unacceptable in that it compromises the safety of deaf and hard of hearing (D/HH) citizens that depend on complete visual information. There's historical precedence and documentation that business and industry have little, if any, consideration for the needs of the disabled and it distresses me greatly that our own government, which is supposed to be a government "of the people, for the people, and by the people", has decided to support the broadcasters over the complete information needs of the consumers. And the FCC was established to represent the consumers and the Disability Rights Office was established to ensure communication access for those with communication disabilities because of the awareness of the failings of business and industry to consider the needs of people with communication disabilities

Consider these points:

1. The D/HH citizens need all the details that are being presented during an emergency.
2. The broadcasters in these markets already have contracts for the captioning of their news programs and are most likely to be able to obtain captions in emergencies and pay for it.
3. These broadcasters have had years to prepare for this requirement and to backtrack now, when they're already supposed to have been doing it, is a huge reversal against years of civil rights progress for D/HH citizens.
4. The FCC says it intends to defer to the good faith determinations of video programmers in providing vital emergency information. The definition of "good faith" is too broad and gives the broadcasters too much leeway.
5. Past history as indicated by the past actions taken against broadcasters proves that they do not understand their obligations and the needs of the D/HH citizens and all too frequently, they have a different opinion about what constitutes vital information.
6. The D/HH citizens' need for verbatim captioning is minimized; this sends the message that complete information is a lower priority for us. We are supposed to receive equal treatment as 1st class citizens and I don't appreciate being thought of as less deserving of full information than those who can hear!

I am much distressed that the FCC would take such action and request that they reconsider their regulations in the near future to require full emergency captions in not only the top 25 markets, but also in the entire United States of America and Puerto Rico.