



GOVERNOR GREG ABBOTT
COMMITTEE ON PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

March 31, 2020

To whom it may concern:

The [Americans with Disabilities Act](#) (ADA) and the [21st Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act](#) (CVAA) requires emergency management information to be made accessible in order to integrate the needs of people with disabilities. Accessible information helps support the needs of the whole community, and makes sure no one is left without potentially lifesaving information. Additionally, [Federal Communications Commission \(FCC\) rules](#) require televised emergency information to be made accessible. Their most recent guidance indicates broadcaster should ensure their captioning of emergency broadcasts is carried through to streams on their websites.

The Governor's Committee on People with Disabilities (GCPD) encourages broadcasters to take steps to ensure captioning of live broadcasts is being carried over to the web. We understand that most broadcasters are captioning their live broadcasts through cable, but we have been informed by members of the deaf community and have observed these captions are not always being carried over to web-based livestreams. In an era where many people receive their information exclusively through the web, it is vital to ensure captioning is carried over to each news station's web platforms.

Accessible Press Conferences and Live Broadcasts

The easiest way to ensure effective communication of press conferences or live broadcasts is by implementing the following modifications:

Provide Real-Time Captioning during Live Press Conferences

Provide [real-time captioning](#) for people who are hard of hearing, elderly, visual learners, and people who do not know American Sign Language. The Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) maintains a [list of communication services contractors](#) throughout the state. This list is not exhaustive, but provides an excellent place to start.

Include Sign Language Interpreters in Camera Shots

State and municipal government should schedule a qualified sign language interpreter at press conferences. Because many people who are deaf watch press conferences on television or via an Internet live stream, the interpreter provides the citizen who is deaf the same communication as a hearing citizen.

Provide Audible Description of Graphics

When presenting information through visual means, such as maps or charts, describe the information for listeners who are blind or have low vision. Instead of saying "All the counties in red are under a boil water notice," say "All the counties in red are under a boil water notice; those counties are Travis, Williamson, Bell, and McLennan." Any list of information displayed, such as testing locations, should also be verbally communicated. Include descriptions for all graphics, charts, or maps displaying emergency information.

GCPD is grateful to all broadcasters for continuing to provide important emergency information during this challenging time. We encourage outlets to make use of the [State of Texas Effective Communications Toolkit](#) published by the [Texas Division of Emergency Management](#) to ensure their communications are as accessible as possible. By making sure our emergency communications are accessible to all people, we help keep the entire community safe, healthy, and informed.

Sincerely,

Ron Lucey
GCPD Executive Director