

Audio Description Requirements to be Reinstated in October

In October 2011, as mandated by the 21st Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act, the FCC will re-institute its video description requirements. Networks and programmers will be required to describe and pass through description of at least 50 hours of described prime-time or children's programming each quarter. VITAC, the nation's largest provider of accessible media solutions, provides the answers to frequently asked questions about this valuable service.

What is Audio Description/Video Description?

Audio description offers blind and low-vision audiences the opportunity to enjoy television or film programming. It is a narrative description of onscreen actions, visual cues such as characters and costumes, and text appearing in graphics or the video. The track can be found on a secondary audio channel available on most television sets, accessible through the television's menu. See a sample clip in our [services library](#).

How much programming must each network describe?

50-hour of prime-time or children's programming per quarter, or 4 hours each week. A network may only count one repeat of a described program towards the 50-hour total.

What is the audio description process/work flow?

1. You deliver to VITAC a proxy video via FTP.
2. We import the video and identify areas of the video where description is appropriate.
3. Our writers carefully craft scripts for those parts of the video.
4. Our professional talent voice and record the description track.
5. Our sound engineers mix primary audio with the descriptive audio to create an audio mix for the description track.
6. Final video is reviewed and delivered as a digital audio file in your preferred format.

What is Quality Audio Description?

Quality audio description includes customer service, on-time delivery, no-fail engineering and the ability of the writer/voice talent to do the following:

- notice all visual elements
- cull the most essential details into an understanding of the critical elements on screen
- create a verbal picture of the visual elements using the most objective, vivid and imaginatively drawn words
- use speech that makes meaning with the voice, consistent with the described text

How long does it take?

Our standard turnaround is 2-4 days for a 60-minute program (or less). However, it is certainly possible to complete description for a 60-minute program in 1 business day, if you or your network clients have a rush situation.

How much does it cost?

The process is even more labor intensive than captioning and our rates are based on volume and turnaround. Please contact us for a customized quote.

When does the new requirement start?

July 1, 2012.

Who is required to offer audio description?

ABC, NBC, CBS, Fox and the "top five" nonbroadcast networks need to comply with the requirement in the top 25 markets (ranked by Nielsen based on their total number of television households).

The FCC will determine the top 5 nonbroadcast networks based on the Nielsen national prime-time audience share, the number of subscribers reached, and amount of non-exempt programming. These networks must provide 50 hours of description per quarter. The FCC indicates that those networks may be: USA, Disney, ESPN, TNT and Nickelodeon's "Nick at Nite." If these networks do not have enough non-exempt programming to meet the requirement, the following networks may be required: Fox News, TBS, A&E, History, Adult Swim, ABC Family Channel and HGTV.

Why VITAC?

As the nation's largest provider of accessible media solutions, VITAC is uniquely positioned to provide audio description services. We have continually invested in our infrastructure and people, offer world-famous customer service, industry-leading turnarounds, and competitive pricing. Most importantly, we will provide the same high-quality product that is synonymous with our captioning, while having the capacity to handle your description needs when the new requirement kicks in. In addition...

- VITAC's audio description guidelines are based in part on recommendations by the American Foundation of the Blind (AFB) and American Council of the Blind's Audio Description Project. We adhere to national standards set forth by ACB's AD Project, the Audio Description Coalition, and standards for educational description set forth by the American Foundation for the Blind/the Described and Captioned Media Program.
- We pick voice talent by program content, and offer uniform, top-quality narration using the same voice for consistency throughout a series and matching voices to various programming genres.
- All of our voice artists are well-trained describers with years of experience; our describers always use age-appropriate vocabularies.
- VITAC works with only the best, experienced, professional audio engineers.
- VITAC can meet the fastest turnaround schedules in the industry.
- We can receive and deliver in virtually any audio/video format.

What is the difference between Audio Description and Video Description?

Nothing. The FCC says "Video Description." Most users refer to it as "Audio Description." Still others use "Descriptive Video Service (DVS)" and "Descriptive Video Information (DVI)." VITAC is going with what seems most common, and is referenced as such by the American Council of the Blind: Audio Description.

Contact Us:

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Resources:

See the FCC's Notice of proposed rulemaking: http://transition.fcc.gov/Daily_Releases/Daily_Business/2011/db0311/FCC-11-36A1.pdf
See and hear a sample of VITAC's audio description here: http://www.vitac.com/video/audio_description/video_1.asp
See and hear our described "Night of the Living Dead": <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=odwKffJ7mC4>