SB1296

Public Health – Safety: Emergency Response Interpreters

The Arizona Commission for the Deaf and the Hard of Hearing supports equal access to emergency communications

Accessible Emergency Communications

Citizens from both the deaf and the hard of hearing communities are equally important and deserve to receive the same information as the general public when it comes to the preservation and protection of life and property during emergencies. Access to this information can be provided through auxiliary aids such as American Sign Language interpreters for persons who are deaf and Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART) for persons who are hard of hearing. Both groups are protected classes under the Americans with Disabilities Act. CART is the instant translation of the spoken word into English text using a stenotype machine, notebook computer and real-time software. People who are Deaf, deaf, late-deafened, oral deaf, and hard of hearing benefit from captioning. CART providers have also been certified under the ERIC program created as a result of the ACDHH and DEMA partnership.

Recommended Considerations for Cities, Towns, Counties and State Government:

Approximately 1.1 million Arizonans would benefit from the transmission of CART services during live broadcast announcements, live online communications, including an official government statement, or press conference relating to emergency situations when captioning is not available. Not all broadcasters provide closed captioning of live events. It is imperative that officials confirm closed captioning services for the broadcasting of live emergency announcements.

When emergency announcements are deemed appropriate it is important to note that equal access to effective communication is always necessary. The Commission recommends that the “when needed” notation be removed to ensure equal access for every emergency announcement.

2017 Arizona Statistics

- As of the 2010 census, 17% of the AZ population has a hearing loss.

- In Arizona, there are over 1.1 million adults (aged 20+) with at least a 25db hearing loss in one or both ears. Of those we estimate 20-30,000 are culturally Deaf (culturally Deaf are people who share a similar set of values, norms, history, folklore and tradition, coupled with American Sign Language (ASL) and utilize ASL as their primary/preferred mode of communication)

- 2.2 out of 1000 babies in Arizona are born with hearing loss and over 90% of these children are born to parents who are hearing

- Conservatively, there are 739,000 older adults who have a hearing loss living in the state of Arizona.

For additional information contact; Carmen Green- c.green@acdhh.az.gov