



## **SO YOU CAN HEAR BETTER**

# **HOW TO USE THE TOOLS ON THIS WEBSITE TO GET YOUR FAVORITE PUBLIC VENUES LOOPED**

HLAA-NJ's "Looping New Jersey" section of this website is provided as a public service to all those persons with hearing loss, and their friends and relatives, who have found themselves unable to hear or understand program or meeting content while seated in such public places as auditoriums, theaters and other locations of public congregation. Assistive hearing devices such as hearing aids or cochlear implants are generally equipped with telecoils or t-coils, and if your t-coil switch is activated, you should clearly hear such sounds directly through your assistive hearing device. If a public venue has not been "looped," persons with hearing loss generally have found it difficult or impossible to hear or understand the spoken content of meetings, entertainment or other audible materials. In most cases, this problem can usually be remedied by the simple placement of an induction loop either under the flooring or carpeting or on or in the wall that serves as the circumference of the room you are meeting in.

***An induction hearing loop is an assistive listening system consisting of an amplifier/transmitter connected to a PA system and a thin copper wire installed around the circumference of a meeting room. Meeting attendees and audience members can switch on the T-coils inside their hearing aids and/or cochlear implants to receive the sound as if they were standing right beside the source or speaker. If your meeting room or facility is not looped, or does not provide some other assistive listening system for people with hearing loss, the meeting or event sponsors are out of compliance with the Federal (Americans with Disabilities Act – ADA) and as well as State accessibility laws and regulations as well. New Jersey's Director of Civil Rights, the Director of Deaf and Hard of Hearing, and our Attorney General are supporting HLAA-NJ's efforts to achieve compliance throughout our state.***

As a person with hearing loss, if you need to hear it, you've got to understand it. It's the law. If when you ask or insist, it takes longer or doesn't work, you've got to persist. Some managers will object, or just ignore you. Why? They may think that it's not their problem. Or, to them, maybe they see it as a distraction. Or, perhaps it's a cost factor. Whatever you need to understand – if you need it, it's your **legal right** to have it, so you can understand -- just like everybody else. Don't be timid. It's the law.

For these reasons, HLAA-NJ has now posted on this website a powerful collection of tools designed to help New Jersey hearing loss advocates marshal resources to strongly increase looping and other forms of improved communications accessibility throughout the state. Just as others with physical handicaps must have ramps to enable access with wheelchairs, or automatic doors to assist those with crutches, it is now up to our members, readers and others throughout New Jersey to put these tools to active use to demand compliance with existing laws on accessibility for those with hearing loss.

The "Looping NJ" section of our HLAA-NJ website is organized to provide these features that looping and accessibility requestors can use:

- Backgrounder on Looping Explained: What and How?
- Useful websites to further explain looping and how and where it helps.
- NJ looping installers listing or directory
- List of target facilities where complaints have been filed
- Public venues and facility-type eligibility categories, as compiled by Past President Arlene Romoff
- Sample/template complaint letters, for others to follow or emulate
- Names and contact information of committee members/activists who have expressed interest in helping.
- Sample compliance certifications and graphic symbols
- NJ Accessibility directory (in progress)
- Documents to explain and clarify State and Federal accessibility laws
- Looping USA directory

As suggested by Past President Arlene Romoff, the following are examples of public venues in New Jersey that should have looping or other assistive listening systems. If they don't, we encourage you to request them:

- Community rooms and auditoriums at senior centers and 55+ communities
- Library meeting rooms
- College and school auditoriums/theaters
- Public rooms at Ys

- Hospital public meeting rooms
- Council/legislative chambers/meetings at town, county and state levels
- Courtrooms (many currently have assistive listening systems that are ineffective or poorly maintained).
- Theaters and Live Performance Venues may have assistive listening systems that meet the requirements of law, but do not deliver an adequate sound signal, in contrast to properly installed, tested and maintained induction loop systems. Check if they work for **you**, and if not, encourage the installation of induction loops.
- State and Local Town Hall meetings, candidate debates, etc.
- Houses of worship (not covered by law, but clergy are sensitive and responsive when congregants explain that services or sermons cannot be heard and understood. Churches and synagogues throughout the country are installing induction loop systems.)

Achieving accessibility through looping, captioning or other means is a **five-step** process. How long it takes will vary, but these are the steps you **HAVE** to take. But, don't **YOU** be the one to delay the process.

**STEP ONE:** Call the facility and ask to speak to the manager. Explain to the manager that you are a regular visitor or patron of their facility, that you value and enjoy your relationship, but that you have a problem hearing the content of their programs or meetings. Explain to them that there are simple steps they can take to remedy the situation, including the installation of an induction loop system (a one-time expense) that would make it easier for you and many others with hearing loss to hear when T-coils in hearing aids are activated. Tell them that as a person with a hearing disability you have the legal right and obligation to advise them that there are both State and Federal regulations that they should follow to insure that you and other customers, clients or patrons with hearing loss that require them to make reasonable accommodations for you to hear and understand the information or program content of what they have to offer. Ask them when they expect to be in compliance and tell them that you plan to remain in contact with them. It is advisable to speak with the senior people who make the decisions and commit the funds, although the person in charge of the facility until the situation is rectified. Also, ask who is the overall person in charge of facility maintenance if that person is someone other than the initial point of contact. Keep a telephone log of whom you speak to and when, and advise that you plan to be back to them within perhaps 30 days.

**STEP TWO:** At the same time as your initial telephone call, send both the manager you have spoken to as well as the overall person in charge of that facility written letters reiterating all or much of the above by US postal mail. Advise them that

you are sharing your experiences with the Hearing Loss Association of New Jersey (HLAA-NJ), and that you expect to check with them again in 30 days to determine if their facility has made these needed changes and come into compliance with both State and Federal regulations as they relate to providing reasonable communications accessibility to persons with hearing disabilities. (Please note that sample letters of request and complaint will soon be posted on the HLAA-NJ website for readers to either copy or use as models.) Please forward one copy of each of your request/complaint letters, complete with recipient's postal mailing addresses, to [joel.strasser@hearingloss-nj.org](mailto:joel.strasser@hearingloss-nj.org).

**STEP THREE:** On receipt of your copy of your written request/complaint, HLAA-NJ will then forward a Looping/Accessibility Advisory to the same facility, advising them on how to comply and offering them the names of qualified installers whom they can contact to complete their looping installation. The advisory will also request that they advise us within 30 days on how they plan to accommodate the requestor's complaint.

**STEP FOUR:** If the facility either does not respond after 30 days, or provides an ambiguous delay, HLAA-NJ would then forward a Non-Compliance Advisory, indicating that if there is no anticipated plan for movement toward compliance within the next succeeding 30 days, we would then advise the requestor to seek recourse through either or both the State or Federal governmental level, or with non-government legal counsel, depending on specific circumstances.

**STEP FIVE:** If the facility does comply, HLAA would then issue and provide an HLAA-NJ signed Notice of Compliance, a mountable plaque that can be posted at each such facility, which would essentially state that the facility has been equipped with either a looping system that meets the IEC 60118-4 international standard, or such other accessibility tool that places the facility in full compliance with State and Federal regulations.

## **HLAA-NJ Assembling List of Looping Installers for New Jersey**

Looping installers in or near New Jersey who would like to be listed in an active directory to work on projects, facilities or venues inside the State of New Jersey are being asked to make contact with HLAA-NJ so that we can refer you for projects being planned or researched. Also, facility managers or owners who have used looping installers to satisfactorily complete projects within New Jersey are asked to recommend such installers by providing us with company names and contact information so that their services can be listed in a statewide directory now being compiled for use by HLAA-NJ and by state officials who seek to refer projects for subsequent installation. These looping installations must meet the IEC 60118-4 international standard for such looping installations.

To list installers in the New Jersey Looping Installers directory, please send information directly to: [joel.strasser@hearingloss-nj.org](mailto:joel.strasser@hearingloss-nj.org), or telephone 732-415-7556. Be sure to include company name, e-mail address and business telephone numbers, and the name of the company's principal contact or project manager for looping installations. In addition, please let us know if there is any cost involved for providing an estimate, and if you have any comments, good or bad, on the quality of the installer's workmanship and/or installation effectiveness.

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