

HEARING LOOPS International Conference 2009

ZHAW, Winterthur / Switzerland, September 25 - 27, 2009

Resolution:

Hearing Loops, the first international conference on audio frequency induction loops (AFILS) for people with hearing loss - with participants from Austria, Australia, Croatia, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Kuwait, Netherlands, Russia, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, and USA - passed the following resolution at Zurich University of Applied Sciences at Winterthur / Switzerland on September 27, 2009.

An audio frequency induction loop system (AFILS) is an inexpensive, efficient and universal system to enable people wearing hearing aids or cochlear implants to hear in public situations.

We recommend that

- 1) hearing aid manufacturers, manufacturers of cochlear implants, physicians, audiologists and hearing instrument specialists shall communicate the benefits of hearing aid / cochlear implant telecoil receivers for phone listening and assistive listening and educate people who are hard of hearing accordingly.
- 2) venues and service points where sound is broadcast shall offer assistive listening, such as induction loop systems designed to the IEC 60118-4:2006 standard, that broadcast sound directly to hearing aids and cochlear implants, enabling them to serve as customized, wireless loudspeakers (without the need for extra equipment).

This resolution was voted on and passed with only 2 opposing votes.

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Discussion Paper

The following discussion paper that was prepared in a conference workshop served as the basis of the **resolution**.

An audio frequency induction loop system (AFILS) is an inexpensive, efficient and universal system to help people wearing hearing aids or cochlear implants especially in public venues to fully participate.

Therefore we recommend the following:

Manufacturers of hearing aids and cochlear implants

● Manufacturers of hearing aids and cochlear implants shall integrate telecoils in their hearing systems to enable people with hearing loss to better understand in difficult hearing situations where reverberation is a problem (such as, but not limited to houses of worship) or where the distance to the sound source is big (such as, but

not limited to lecture halls, theatres) or where the background noise is extremely disturbing (train stations).

- -Manufacturers of hearing aids and cochlear implants should write clear instructions about how to use the technology (to be downloadable from the internet)

Ear Nose and Throat (ENT) doctors

- ENT doctors shall be encouraged to inform their clients about the benefits of telecoils in difficult acoustic situations.

Audiologists and hearing instrument specialists

- Audiologists and hearing instrument specialists should be mandated to inform their clients about the benefits of telecoils (e.g. law in Arizona and Florida) and leave them the choice to decide whether they want a hearing aid / cochlear implant with or without a telecoil.
- Audiologists and hearing instrument specialists should train their clients how to use induction loop technology and clearly tell them about the T-switch (T-program) on their hearing instrument
- They should be mandated to have at their shop / laboratory an AFILS connected to an audio system or television to enable their clients to personally test inductive coupling before they finally decide what type of hearing instrument they want to choose from
- The T-switch program should be calibrated on the same level as the hearing instrument microphone

Builders of Public venues

- Every public venue (including houses of worship) where a public address system is installed should be equipped with an AFILS (e.g SIA 500 standard in Switzerland)
- If an AFILS is planned correctly before commencement of construction of the venue the costs are negligible compared to other building costs

Provider of service desks (such as, but not limited to train stations, banks):

- Window desks should be equipped with an AFILS to enable people with hearing loss to understand correctly

Conformity to IEC standard 60118:4-2006

- All newly installed loop systems and possibly existing systems shall conform to the international standard (IEC 60118:4-2006) set up by the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) in 1971 and revised in 1998 and 2006.
- After installation every loop system should be tested if it meets the standard. A written report has to be provided containing the name of the testing person, the date, and the use of a calibrated test instrument. The report has to be made public.



IEC Symbol for Audio Frequency Induction Loop Systems (AFILS)

Signage:

- Venues with AFILS should be clearly marked with the sign of IEC to enable people with hearing loss to know where to use this technology

International Federation (IFHOH), European Federation of Hard of Hearing People (EFHOH) and International Federation of Hard of Hearing Young People (IFHOHYP)

- IFHOH, EFHOH and IFHOHYP representing people with hearing loss worldwide should agree on a certificate symbol for AFILS which meet the IEC standard.
- After testing of an AFILS this certificate sticker should be attached to the loop sign to enable people with hearing loss to clearly see whether an AFILS meets the standard or not. The AFILS should be tested from time to time (e.g. every 5 years).

National and local organizations for people with hearing loss

- National and local organizations for people with hearing loss should publish (e.g. on their website) a list of venues with certified AFILS in their region (e.g. on Google Maps).

Hearing aid compatible (HAC) cell phones / mobile phones:

- The conference strongly supports the decision of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) of the United States of America to mandate from the manufacturers of cell phones / mobile phones to provide phones which are hearing aid compatible (can be inductively coupled to the hearing aid or cochlea implant)
- The conference asks the Communications Commissions of other countries to do the same.

New technologies:

- The participants of Hearing Loops International Conference 2009 are open for new technologies to be used in conjunction with AFILS or finally replacing them.
- At present no technology is in sight which is so universal, so inexpensive and so effective for people with hearing loss
 - The conference had its focus on AFILS in public places and not on personal mobile assistive listening systems where other technologies (e.g. Frequency Modulation FM) can be of real benefit.

Winterthur / Switzerland, September 27, 2009

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