

HEARING MATTERS

By
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The Induction Loop

More and more, public places are providing a suitable level of accessibility for people with disabilities. For example, it is commonplace to see designated parking for the handicapped and wheelchair ramps to buildings creating barrier-free access.

Considering that ten per cent of the world's population has some degree of hearing loss and considering that this number is growing, public places must make sure that they are providing a suitable level of accessibility for the hearing impaired. Everyone needs to be able to understand and interact with the world around them, the hearing impaired included.

One way in which public places can make their venues more accessible or barrier-free is to have an induction loop installed in areas where people gather. Examples of such places are meeting halls, churches, schools, auditoriums, theatres, airport waiting areas, and conference rooms.

An induction loop allows users with a telecoil equipped hearing device (a hearing aid with a T switch) or a receiver to listen to sound transmitted through a magnetic field without the interference of background noise. Telephone companies use this method to make it easier for a hearing aid user to use a telephone. Most hearing aids today have such a capability.

How do induction loops work? An Induction Loop System consists of an amplifier and a loop. The amplifier is connected to a sound source such as a public address system or a dedicated microphone. It then amplifies this sound signal and sends it out through the loop. The loop is actually insulated wire which is placed around the perimeter of the room in a simple loop system. A magnetic field is created within the room. The magnetic field "induces" the hearing aid telecoil thus enabling the listener to hear at a comfortable listening level and without interference from background noise. Other people in the room are not affected by this system.

We all find it difficult to hear and understand what is said in a noisy environment. For a person with impaired hearing, it can be almost impossible to hear and understand in such situations. In areas where an induction loop is installed, a person with the appropriate hearing aid can hear and understand without bringing attention to his or her disability.

Research has shown that Induction Loop Systems are the only workable option in transient situations such as ticket counters, drive-thru windows, airport gates, and information kiosks. It eliminates the use of receivers and headsets required for using FM or IR systems. They are the most cost efficient assistive listening technology.

Locally, the Arcturus Theatre has an induction loop system installed making it possible for hearing aid wearers to hear, understand, and enjoy a movie better. I have been told that the new Mealy Mountain Auditorium has included it as part of their design plans. The former United Church had the loop installed and hopefully will include it in its new building. Other local public places are looking into having this system installed as well.

The Canadian Hard of Hearing Association-Happy Valley-Goose Bay Branch hopes that all public places in the area will become barrier-free for the hearing impaired. We would like to thank all those who have done and will do their part to make this a reality.

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