

Hearing Matters

Transportation and the Hard of Hearing Traveller

According to the Canadian Association of the Deaf, that despite improvements, transportation services are generally still not fully accessible for hard of hearing people. Many improvements have been made towards making transportation more accessible to people with disabilities but the special needs of hard of hearing people continue to get less attention and respect than the needs of most other people with disabilities. Many transportation providers will tell you that they have set up dedicated TTY (teletype) lines for information and reservations. But, too often, the machines are left in drawers and operators are not trained to use them.

In our local area, we rely on air travel for most of the year. Hard of hearing patrons have found out that not all airports use adequate signage to announce boarding times and flight numbers. Some have the signage but do not keep the displayed information up-to-date or use it properly. All transportation terminals, including airports, should provide and use good visual displays of information and announcements. Hard of hearing travellers also state that many announcements on the Public Address (PA) systems at airports are often read too fast and in such a low voice that they cannot be understood. Those using the PA systems should speak directly into the microphone and they should speak slowly and distinctly. Even those travellers without hearing loss would like to see that happen!

Security measures at airports are very tight and that's a good thing. However, many hard of hearing travellers have been targeted as suspicious. Why? Most of the security measures are verbal. When the security officer tries to communicate with a deaf, or even a hard of hearing person, the officer might get an inappropriate response or no response at all. This could lead to the security officer becoming wary of that person. Also, hard of hearing people often travel with assistive listening devices such as FM systems, neck loops, vibrating clocks, and visual monitors. These items are sometimes thought to be possible bomb components and are seized by security guards. Airport personnel need better training in dealing with hard of hearing travellers. The executive of the Canadian Hard of Hearing Association- Happy Valley-Goose Bay Branch met with some members of the Goose Bay Airport Corporation a few months ago. The executive suggested some ways in which the local airport could be made more accessible for the hard of hearing travellers. After the meeting, the branch felt very positive that the Goose Bay Airport Corporation will do what they can for the hearing impaired travellers once renovations are started.

On another note, a few months ago, the town erected signage in some areas of town cautioning motorists about hearing impaired children in the neighbourhood and to please reduce speed and drive with caution. One parent of such a child informed me

that most motorists in her neighbourhood are not heeding that caution. So motorists, when you see those signs, please drive extra carefully!

Until next time, protect your hearing.

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