

For Inductive Coupling to a Hearing Aid's Telecoil

The FCC rules require each digital wireless phone manufacturer to provide carriers with 2 commercially available handsets, and each nationwide carrier to offer its customers a minimum of 2 handsets that provide telecoil-coupling capability for each transmission technology by September 2006. Digital wireless handsets that are being tested for magnetic field strength will be assessed a rating as defined in ANSI C63.19.

Cell phone manufacturers are required to produce cell phones that test to a rating of T3 or T4 per ANSI C63.19. The higher the "T" rating, the less likely the hearing aid user will experience interference when the hearing aid is set in the telecoil mode while using a cell phone.

Hearing Aid Requirements

The FCC does not have regulatory authority over hearing aids. This authority, although somewhat limited, lies with the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). Even so, the FCC ruling encouraged the hearing aid industry to test and label their products according to the level of immunity they have to digital cell phone emissions. Hearing aid manufacturers should be consulted for the most up-to-date rating and information on their products.

Where Can I Find More Information?

ATIS (Alliance for Telecommunications Industry Solutions)

www.atis.org/atis/hac/hachome.htm

CTIA—The Wireless Association™

www.accesswireless.org

FCC (Federal Communications Commission)

<http://ftp.fcc.gov/cgb/dro/hearing.html>

RERC on Telecommunications Access

tap.gallaudet.edu/wirelesstelecom.htm

Self Help for Hard of Hearing People (SHHH)

www.hearingloss.org/hat/TipsWirelessPhones.htm

Developed by:

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Hearing Aid Compatibility With Digital Wireless Cell Phones:



*An Update for
Audiologists and Hearing
Health Professionals*

The FCC Ruling

In 2003, the FCC partially lifted the exemption to hearing aid compatibility (HAC) requirements for digital wireless cell phones and developed a phase-in period for compliance by the wireless industry. The ruling requires products to be labeled for cell phones receiving certain HAC ratings based on the ANSI C63.19 Test and Measurement Standard. Labels will appear on the outside packaging of cell phones. This ruling does not include a volume control requirement.

For Acoustic Coupling to a Hearing Aid's Microphone

The FCC rules require each digital wireless phone manufacturer to provide carriers with 2 commercially available handsets, and each nationwide carrier to offer its customers a minimum of 2 handsets with reduced RF emissions for each transmission technology by September 2005. Digital wireless handsets that are being tested for reduced RF emissions will be assessed a rating as defined in ANSI C63.19.

Cell phone manufacturers are required to produce cell phones that test to a rating of M3 or M4 per ANSI C63.19. The higher the "M" rating, the less likely the hearing aid user will experience interference when the hearing aid is set in the microphone mode while using a cell phone.

PHOTO: Oticon



Important Points my Clients Need to Know

- **Look for cell phones rated M3 or M4** (as of Sept. 2005) if a hearing aid wearer uses acoustic coupling to a telephone.
- **Look for cell phones rated T3 or T4** (as of Sept. 2006) if a hearing aid wearer uses inductive coupling to a telephone.
- **These ratings (i.e., M or T)** should be used as a guide to narrow the search for a digital wireless handset to try out before making a purchase.
- **Even though volume control** is not part of the FCC ruling, most cell phones do have a volume control.

- **The ability to control the backlighting** (i.e., whether the display is illuminated or not, and the amount of time the display stays lit) may be an important consideration for telecoil users. Interference from backlighting, which can be particularly bothersome for telecoil users, is not tested when determining a cell phone's rating.
- **The key to finding** the right cell phone for an individual hearing aid and hearing loss is to try cell phones before purchasing them.
- **As of September 2005**, most stores owned and operated by cell phone service providers (i.e., carriers) will allow customers who use hearing aids to try out cell phones in stores before purchasing them.
- **Customers should ask** how long they have to cancel the service and return a phone without penalty, if the cell phone doesn't work with their particular hearing aid.
- **It is the customer's responsibility** to make sure any cell phone that doesn't work with their particular hearing aid is returned before any early termination fees go into effect.
- **CTIA, the wireless association**, provides additional information about cell phone ratings and links to many other disability and age related services available from its member companies. This information can be found at: www.accesswireless.org