



User Guide: Counter Hearing Loop Systems

Hearing loss is the third most common physical condition in the United States after arthritis and heart disease. Gradual hearing loss can affect people of all ages, varying from mild to profound. One of the main impacts of hearing loss is on an individual’s ability to communicate with others. Fortunately, assistive listening devices (ALDs) like hearing loop systems promote effective communication, help provide an environment where people with hearing loss can communicate, and contribute to the City’s Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance efforts.

The City is committed to providing ALDs in areas with high public contact. One type of ALD being installed is a fixed counter loop system. The Office of Accessibility installed an

Above the Counter Loop system in your office that helps provide clear communication with hearing aid wearers and others with hearing loss. The following information will help your staff learn more about the counter loop installed in your office.



Figure 1 - Hearing Loss Prevalence in the US

What are Hearing Loops?

A hearing loop, or an audio frequency induction loop system, makes it easier for individuals with hearing loss and hearing aids, cochlear implants, or other receiver technology to hear. A loop system uses electromagnetic waves for the transmission of sound. The sound from an amplifier is fed into a wire loop near the service counter which broadcasts to a telecoil in a hearing aid or other device that serves as a receiver.

How do Hearing Loops work?



Figure 2 - Components of a Counter Hearing Loop

A loop system has a few components. A microphone captures the spoken word. The hearing loop driver (most likely mounted beneath the counter) processes the audio signal. The hearing loop sign on the service counter/desk includes a built-in aerial loop that creates the magnetic signal required by the hearing aid or alternate receiver. The Office of Accessibility also provided a portable neck loop with headphones and disposable headphone covers that can be used by individuals without a hearing aid or other receiver technology.

How do people know if there is a Hearing Loop Installed?

The Office of Accessibility has installed a loop decal at the entrance to the offices where a hearing loop is installed. The hearing loop sign (that also contains the aerial loop) on the service counter also notifies the public that a loop is available. **Please be sure to keep that sign on your service counter at all times.**

How do I use a Hearing Loop?

Counter loops are relatively easy to use. By posting signage, people with hearing aids, cochlear implants, or other receiver technology know to switch their technology to “T” mode. For those individuals who do not have telecoil technology and are having difficulties communicating because of hearing loss, you can offer them the use of the neck loop receiver. Once the person is connected to the loop system, speak near the microphone and conduct business with the individual as you would with any other person. **The individual will need to locate themselves within range of the countertop sign (approximately 3 feet) to maintain their connection to the aerial loop.**

Is a Fixed Counter Loop always on?

Yes. The Above the Counter Loop System is always active and ready to use.

What maintenance is required?

Hearing loops require minimum maintenance. We recommend checking the hearing loop driver mounted beneath the counter **at least once per month** to verify it is plugged in and turned on. The driver includes an LED power indicator that should glow red at all times. Office of Accessibility staff, in conjunction with our hearing loop vendor, will also inspect the loop system annually.

Basic Etiquette Tips for Communicating with Someone with Hearing Loss

Keep in mind a few things when communicating with someone with hearing loss:

- Be sure you have the person’s attention. Depending on the situation, you can extend your arm, wave your hand, or tap the person’s arm or shoulder.
- Rephrase, rather than repeat, sentences that the person doesn’t hear or understand.
- When talking, be sure to face the person.
- Speak clearly. Avoid chewing gum or obscuring your mouth with your hand or other item while speaking.
- Minimize background noise, if possible.
- There is no need to shout or raise your voice. If the person is using a hearing aid, cochlear implant, or the portable neck loop, shouting will only distort your words.

If you have any questions about accommodating a person’s hearing loss, ask the individual how best to communicate with him/her. The Above the Counter Loop System will assist with your communication with people with hearing loss.

If you have additional questions about using the hearing loop or other disability access issues, please contact the Office of Accessibility – ADACompliance@coloradosprings.gov or 719/385-5175.