

Devices lets hearing impaired use telephone

By Carol Azizian
staff writer

What if a family member who hears poorly suddenly finds himself in an emergency situation?

Perhaps a fire breaks out in his home or he falls down the stairs. He can't get to a door to reach a neighbor to have them call the fire or police department.

Or what if your deaf grandmother or grandfather lives where they can't always ask someone else to make a doctor or dentist appointment.

Families who have had such concerns may now look to the aid of a new telecommunication device for the deaf.

With the help of this device, hearing-impaired persons are able to make emergency and business calls themselves.

The device is installed in their home. Through a regular telephone line, they are able to communicate with hospitals, police and fire departments, libraries or doctors' offices that have similar devices.

Several health and service agencies have bought the telephone adapters to better serve hearing-impaired persons.

IN OAKLAND COUNTY, the Berkeley and West Bloomfield Police and fire departments have such a device. Bloomfield Township Police also have one.

Suburban Ambulance recently installed the telephone service. Troy's Beaumont Hospital has the device available in its emergency center, and the Royal Oak branch also is expecting to buy the "tele-writer."

The library at Oakland Community College's Southfield campus answers reference calls with the special telephone. And the Farmington Hills Library is considering buying one.

A Southfield funeral director whose wife's family has hearing impairments and a Farmington Hills optometrist who decided to help his deaf patients have bought the machine.

The Oakland Livingston Human Service Agency is also looking into buying one to aid residents of the two counties.

In addition, a 24-hour hot line service for the deaf will be available beginning Aug. 1 through the Detroit Hearing and Speech Center.

Volunteers who assist with the hot line will make doctor and dental appointments, provide referral services on legal aid and make other business calls. (The hot line number is 341-4090).

Most of the 537,000 hearing-impaired persons in Michigan live near Detroit, said the coordinator of the Detroit Hearing and Speech Center.

"We receive requests all the time



Jeanette Morrison, a library technical assistant at the Southfield branch of Oakland Community College, looks up and transmits reference information to a hearing impaired person.

from hearing-impaired persons who want to know where to purchase the telecommunication device," said Gloria Hynes of the speech center.

THE TELEPHONE device works along the lines of a teletype. The caller dials the special TDD (Telecommunication Device for the Deaf) number for a particular agency or service, then places the receiver on a machine that resembles a typewriter.

He or she then types out a message on the keyboard. That message is transmitted through the machine, which prints the conversation on adding machine tape.

The caller and respondent must take turns — no interrupting. A signal like "GA" (Go Ahead) usually is typed after

each person is finished writing his or her message.

There are many different types of telecommunication devices, and many commercial firms produce them.

Michigan Bell has received 800 orders for the device since it was first offered in March, according to a spokesman.

The device is available from Bell for \$400 to persons who are deaf or have severe hearing impairments. It may also be leased for \$6.68 per month for five years, at which time the person will own the machine.

The company also will teach a person to use the device with the help of an interpreter.

The device may be ordered at Michigan Bell Phone Center stores throughout the Detroit area.



MINDY SAUNDERS/staff photographer

Richard Sullivan sends a message on his TDD from his funeral home. With the same device, he can receive messages from hearing impaired persons.

Typical talk on the TDD

This is part of a message recorded on the TDD machine at R.J. Sullivan Funeral Home:

GA HELLO THIS IS RICHARD SULLIVAN
SUL
LIVAN GA
HELLO THIS IS CINDY AND WHO IS THIS GA
THIS IS RICHARD SULLIVAN I TALKED WITH DON YESTERDAY IS HE HOME NOW GA
YES AND DO YOU WANT TO TALK TO HIM GA
YES PLEASE GA
HELLO DON THIS IS DICK SULLI

VAN I AM HERE WITH SOMEONE FROM THE ECENTRIC NEWSPAPER AND I APPRECIATE YOU LET

TING ME EXPERIMENT WITH YOU GA
THANK YOU VERY MUCH GA
DO YOU SPEAK GA
OH YES I CAN READ LIPS GA
THE REASON I ASKED WAS THAT SOMEONE FROM THE NEWSPAPER MIGHT WANT TO CONTACT YOU REGARDING THE TDD GA
THAT IS FINE WITH ME GA

DO YOU THINK THAT IT'S A SIGNIF-
NIP
ICANT THING THAT MY FUNERAL HOME FACILITIES HAS THIS EQUIPMENT GA
IT IS ABOUT TIME THE DEAF HAVE SOMEONE THEY CAN CALL THEMSELVES IT IS A BLESSING TO US WHO ARE DEAF GA
I SHARE THESE FEELINGS AND I HOPE TO MEET YOU SOMETIME GA
THANK YOU GA
YOU ARE WELCOME

Emergency services now just a phone call away

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staff writer

One of the many uses of the telecommunication device is to make emergency phone calls to fire and police departments.

The West Bloomfield Police Department decided to obtain one about 1 1/2 years ago.

"A resident came into our station one day and wrote me a note that his friend had suffered a heart attack and his wife had to contact the neighbors to get help," said Sgt. Robert Scott.

"After the friend recovered, he began rebuilding an old teletype machine to be used for making emergency calls. He gave the machine to our department.

"We felt obliged to continue offering this service to the hearing-impaired and bought a new device soon after," Scott said.

The department has only had two emergency runs using the new device, Scott said, but he finds it a valuable tool.

"It's a small investment to save a life."

HEARING-IMPAIRED persons will have easier access to ambulance service throughout Oakland County, said a spokesman from Suburban Ambulance Co., which recently installed the device.

"We want to offer our services to the widest group possible," said Floyd Miles, director of planning. "The hearing-impaired community has a real problem in communicating with outside agencies. We thought this would be the answer."

The ambulance service has not installed a separate number for hearing-impaired persons.

"They just call our regular number, 548-6066, and hit the space bar on the TDD keyboard," said Miles. "That gives out a tone at our office, and we know it's a call from a hearing-impaired person."

BY CALLING a special TDD number, 828-5133, hearing-impaired persons can contact the emergency center at Troy's Beaumont Hospital.

"The TDD was installed about a month ago to provide hearing-impaired persons access to the same level of patient-care services available to the non-handicapped persons," said Maria Sklar, assistant manager of patient relations.

Information is available on services available at other hospitals, she said.

Installation of the device complies with the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. That act prohibits discrimination against persons with physical or mental handicaps in any federally assisted program or activity.

Although the TDD is working, no real calls have been received by the hospital.

Royal Oak's Beaumont Hospital installed a TDD a week ago in its admitting department for hearing-impaired persons in inquire about patient services. The TDD number is 288-2657.

A TDD installed at Oakland Community College's Southfield campus gives hearing-impaired persons easy access to library services.

Tom Lewandowski, a librarian at the campus, said he became interested in the device because some of his relatives have hearing impairments.

"We're hoping to bridge a gap with the TDD," he said. "As members of the deaf community become more comfortable with this arrangement, they may come in the library to inquire about classes for the hearing impaired."

With the device, hearing-impaired persons can request a book or research materials for writing papers.

Richard Sullivan bought a TDD to make his funeral home services available to the deaf.

The owner of the R.J. Sullivan Funeral Home in Southfield, he understood the needs of hearing-impaired persons because his wife's parents are deaf mutes.

"Hearing-impaired persons don't like to depend on their neighbors to conduct their personal business," he said. "I wanted to provide them with the opportunity to make funeral arrangements."

"I think more businesses should be attuned to the needs of the hearing- and speech-impaired," Sullivan said.

Farmington Hills optometrist Michael J. Lipson also bought the special telephone to help hearing-impaired patients.

"I had a small number of hearing-impaired patients and wanted them to be able to make their own appointments," said Lipson.

"When Michigan Bell offered the machines, I thought it would be a worthwhile investment." Lipson said he learned sign language to communicate with his deaf patients.

WHEN THE OAKLAND Livingston Human Service Agency installs its TDD sometime in August, residents of the two counties will have access to an even wider range of services.

Those services include hot meals and social activities for senior citizens at several multipurpose centers, energy assistance programs to help poor families pay utility bills and job placement services.

Buying the TDD is part of an agency program to help hearing-impaired persons become economically self-sufficient, said Ted Zyzewski, division manager for community development.

"We want deaf persons to be able to approach the services they need without any barriers," he said.

"We also want to make them aware of resources available outside the agency. It's all part of an effort to create opportunities for the deaf and help them with problems they experience on a day-to-day basis."

Special TDD telephone numbers are available by calling the various agencies and police departments.

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