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Will You Be Able to Hear for the Holidays!

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Whether it's Carrie Underwood singing "Do you hear what I hear" or Bing Crosby crooning "White Christmas", you're probably sick of such music by December 25. Being hard of hearing I have an advantage, I often can't hear that music - especially when I turn off my hearing aids.

There are times, though, when one wants to hear during this special season. Whether it's Handel's "Messiah", a holiday movie, a religious service, a child's squeal of delight at a gift or some other special sounds, you'll want and need to hear well to really experience the holiday magic. Albuquerque's a leader in the national movement to make it easier to *hear for the holidays* thanks to the Loop New Mexico initiative of the local chapter of the Hearing Loss Association of America. Hearing loop technology helps those with hearing loss be part of the festivities whether in the Albuquerque Little Theater or using a neckloop you can borrow at the multiplex or at a place of worship. An impressive list of over 120 known looped facilities in Albuquerque and around the state is posted at <http://www.loopnm.com/Venues.html>.

What's a hearing loop? That's what far too many hard of hearing people ask because they weren't told about this time tested technology that works in places where Bluetooth® and others cannot. A recent survey found two-thirds of first time hearing aid buyers hadn't been told by their hearing care provider about hearing loops or about the telecoils found (or available) in over 70% of current hearing aid models and all new cochlear implants. Hearing loops are simply discretely installed wires surrounding seating areas that transmit a silent electromagnetic signal. Hearing aids receive the signal as sound via their telecoils. In effect this places the priest's, the actor's, the council woman's mouth right at the listener's ear. It moves the TV loudspeaker from across the room to right in the ear so the listener hears the program without turning the TV so high others leave the room.

In addition to the many known looped venues in the state, many other places of worship, movie theaters and other venues let patrons borrow a neckloop instead of a headset to connect to their FM or InfraRed assistive listening system. Many landline and cellular phones have headset jacks that can also accommodate a neckloop so the typical hearing aid wearer has many places where telecoils can be used.

Federal regulations now require that assistive listening systems (ALS) be hearing aid compatible. They must either be a hearing loop or 25% of the receivers for other system

must have neckloops, not headsets. New York City requires any new ALS funded with city dollars be hearing loops. There's a similar state law in Minnesota. Six states require providers to counsel clients in telecoils before selling them hearing aids.

New Mexico is blessed with many competent, conscientious hearing care providers. They tell clients about telecoils, have a looped TV in their waiting and dispensing rooms and have brochures explaining telecoils. They include telecoils when demonstrating hearing aids prior to purchase so the client can decide if they would be helpful in challenging hearing situations. Why don't all hearing care providers do this? They're are making a decision that rightfully belongs to the client. Telecoils need to be included so the client can make an informed decision on all options: Bluetooth®, streamers, rechargability, and telecoils.

Telecoils normally add nothing to the cost of hearing aids. If you don't know if your hearing aids have telecoils, ask your provider (they may be there but never activated). If the answer is yes, ask, "Why wasn't I told?" and request that they be activated. If told "no", ask, "Why not?" If the answer's not acceptable, give some thought to changing providers. Find one who will tell you about all options, not just the ones he or she wants to sell you.

To learn more about loops/telecoils, go to: www.LoopNM.com.

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