

# HEARING LOSS – HOME MODIFICATION CHECKLIST

The goal of the *Home Modification Checklist* is to provide those with a hearing loss, their caregivers, family members or other interested persons an easy way to assess the home environment for problem areas. Once the problem areas are identified, solutions are suggested to help the person with a hearing loss feel safer and more independent in their home.

***For more information or further assistance, contact your local Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services (DHHS) office. See page 7 for contact information.***

Does the person with hearing loss have	Circle one		If yes,
Difficulty hearing the doorbell or knocking at the door?	Yes	No	Go to page 2
Difficulty hearing the smoke detector?	Yes	No	Go to page 2
Difficulty hearing the carbon monoxide detector?	Yes	No	Go to page 3
Difficulty hearing weather warning sirens?	Yes	No	Go to page 3
Difficulty hearing the existing home security system alarm?	Yes	No	Go to page 3
Difficulty hearing appliance buzzer/timer?	Yes	No	Go to page 3
Difficulty hearing the alarm clock?	Yes	No	Go to page 3
Difficulty hearing people trying to get his/her attention?	Yes	No	Go to page 3
Difficulty hearing running water?	Yes	No	Go to page 3
Difficulty hearing the telephone ring?	Yes	No	Go to page 4
Difficulty hearing well on the telephone?	Yes	No	Go to page 4
Difficulty hearing the television or radio? Or is the television, radio too loud for other members of the household?	Yes	No	Go to page 4
Difficulty hearing well in certain rooms?	Yes	No	Go to page 5

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# Solutions

\*(See vendor list on page 6)\*

## ALERTING DEVICES

Alerting devices use a loud tone, flashing lights and/or vibrations to alert people with a hearing loss to various environmental sounds.

Some alerting devices are designed to respond to one specific signal, such as a doorbell.

Other alerting devices, called all-in-one notification systems, receive signals from a variety of transmitters – the doorbell, telephone, baby cry, alarm clock, smoke detectors, severe weather alerts, and more. The main receiver is often placed in the bedroom on the nightstand. With an all-in-one notification system, additional receivers can be purchased and placed throughout the home or office.

### The Door



Specially designed doorbell chimes can be purchased from vendors who carry devices for people with a hearing loss. These doorbells notify the person with a flashing light, a flashing light & loud tone or a vibrating pager. There are also devices designed to work with the intercom system found in apartment buildings. Note: Some of the larger hardware stores carry doorbell chimes that have a strobe light and volume control.

Sometimes people prefer to keep their existing doorbell system. In that case, they would need to purchase an all-in-one notification system along with a doorbell transmitter (available from vendors who specialize in devices for people who are deaf or hard of hearing). Another option is a door chime extender that is used with the home's existing doorbell system. The extender is placed next to the existing door chime and the plug-in chime can be placed in another room. This plug-in chime has a volume control so the user can increase the volume of the chime as needed. Door chime extenders can be purchased from a hardware store (larger hardware stores or regional/national chains tend to have more options) or online.

Another option is to purchase a wireless doorbell chime from a hardware store or online. It is important to make sure that the doorbell chime includes a volume control knob. Another important feature to consider is a doorbell chime that plays songs or melodies. This is important because it gives the person who is hard of hearing “sounds” that last a longer time, which gives them more time to realize that the doorbell is ringing.



For those who don't have a doorbell, there are devices that activate a flashing strobe light when someone knocks at the door (these devices are sensitive to the vibration). These devices can be purchased from vendors who specialize in devices for people who have a hearing loss. The limitation of this device is that the person must be able to see the door from where they are sitting.

### Smoke Detector



There are smoke detectors that use a flashing strobe light, an extra loud audible alarm, or a pillow vibrator to alert the person who has a hearing loss that the detector has been activated.

To use existing smoke detectors already in the home, an all-in-one notification system is an option. Transmitters are placed next to the existing smoke detectors and if the smoke detector is activated, a signal will be sent to the all-in-one notification's receiver. There are also stand-alone

devices designed to listen for the T3 signal emitted from the smoke detectors in your home. These stand-alone devices use a combination of strobe light, vibration, voice, and low-frequency tone to awaken a sleeping person.

### Carbon Monoxide Detector



There are specially modified carbon monoxide detectors that activate a strobe light or bed shaker when carbon monoxide is detected in your home.

### Weather Warnings



Some weather radios are designed to allow the user to connect attention-getting devices like strobe lights and bed-shakers. These specialized weather radios are available from vendors specializing in devices for those with a hearing loss, electronics stores, and online. When purchasing a weather radio at an electronics store or online, look on the back of the weather radio for “EXT alert” jack. This jack allows a strobe light or a pillow shaker to be plugged into the weather radio.

### Security System Alarm



The first place to start is to contact the company that installed your security system and ask them if they can augment the existing system with strobe lights. Silent Call manufactures a voltage input fire alarm transmitter that can be used with an existing home security system – check with a vendor who specializes in devices for people with a hearing loss for more information.

Another option is to purchase door and window contacts available with some of the all-in-one notification systems. NOTE: If you use an all-in-one system, the alarm is for inside the house only – a signal isn’t sent to the police or fire station.

### Appliance Buzzer/Timer



There are vibrating timers available – check with a vendor who specializes in devices for people with a hearing loss for more information. Most cell phones already have a timer on it. If not, there are timer/stopwatch apps available.

### Alarm Clock



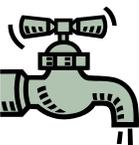
Alarm clocks designed for people with a hearing loss come in a wide variety of styles, sizes, and various features. These clocks are available only through vendors who specialize in devices for people who have a hearing loss or online.

### Getting Attention



There are personal or private pagers available from vendors who specialize in products for people who have a hearing loss. These pagers are not activated through a paging service or company; there are no monthly fees associated with these pagers.

### Running Water



One solution to this problem is to visually check and double-check to make sure the water has been turned off. Making little reminder signs to check the faucets before leaving the room or house may also be helpful. Another solution is to contact a local plumbing supply company for information about spring-loaded handles or electronic eye activated faucets or foot/knee controlled faucets (developed for those with physical disabilities).

## TELEPHONES



### Landline

The Telephone Equipment Distribution Program provides telephone equipment to people who are deaf, hard of hearing, deafblind, speech impaired or have a physical disability and need adaptive equipment in order to use the phone. The Telephone Equipment Distribution Program loans the equipment at no cost for as long as you need the equipment.

To be eligible for the Telephone Equipment Distribution Program you need to live in Minnesota and have a: 1) hearing loss, speech or physical disability that limits your use of a standard telephone; 2) telephone in your home or have applied for telephone service; 3) family income equal to or below the given guidelines.

For more information about the Telephone Equipment Distribution Program, call 1-800-657-3663 (Voice) or by using your preferred Telecommunications Relay Service. The website is: [mn.gov/dhs/ted-program/](http://mn.gov/dhs/ted-program/).

For those who do not meet the income guidelines for the Telephone Equipment Distribution Program, there are several phones, amplifiers, phone signalers, and phone ringers available through vendors who specialize in devices for people with a hearing loss. Note: Many phones available at local stores have a volume control which may be loud enough for people with a slight hearing loss but are rarely loud enough for those with a significant hearing loss.



### Cell

For people who have hearing aids and wish to purchase a cell phone, they should look for a cell phone that has an M-3 or M-4 rating (for using the hearing aid microphone while using the phone) or a T-3 or T-4 rating (for using the hearing aid telecoil while using the phone.)

And for those with smartphones – welcome to the world of Apps! There are apps for people with a hearing loss to alert them to audible warning alerts; transcribe spoken words to text; caption telephone conversations; and more! Check the Internet for apps developed for people who are deaf and hard of hearing to see what is available.

## ASSISTIVE LISTENING DEVICES



Think of assistive listening devices as “binoculars for the ears.” Assistive listening devices can be used with or without hearing aids. For more information about how to use assistive listening devices with hearing aids or cochlear implants, contact your local DHHS office (see page 7).

An **audio Induction loop** consists of a microphone, an amplifier, and a length of properly sized wire or cable which encircles the seating area. To pick up the signals, listeners who are deaf and/or hard of hearing must have their hearing aids and or cochlear implant turned to the “T” (telecoil) position and sit within or near the loop or encircled seating area. Audio induction loops are very popular in Europe and Canada – they are gaining popularity in the United States.

An **FM system** is a wireless system that transmits sound via radio waves. The speaker wears a compact transmitter and microphone while the listener wears a portable receiver. This receiver may have a headphone, neckloop or other accessories attached to it. This system is commonly used indoors or outdoors for group meetings, church settings and classes.

An **infrared system** is a wireless system that transmits sound via invisible light beams. The receiver must be in direct line of sight of the light beam from the transmitter. These systems are generally located

in courtrooms, places of worship, theaters and auditoriums. There are infrared devices made for home television listening. The transmitter is placed on the TV and plugs into an electrical outlet. The user wears a headset (receiver) operated by batteries. The volume is controlled from the headset rather than from the TV; the volume of the TV can then be set at a comfortable volume for other listeners.

A **personal amplifier** is portable and can be used indoors or outdoors. It is used for small group settings, one-on-one conversations, and TV listening.

**Personal sound amplification products (PSAPs)** are discreet listening devices worn in or on the ear. Even though they may look like hearing aids, it is important to note that they are not FDA approved medical devices. The user of a PSAP has the ability to adjust the volume and tone to hear better in different environments.

And finally, there are **products developed specifically by hearing aid manufacturers** so hearing aid users have a “seamless” way to hear better when watching television, talking on their cell phone or listening to someone talking. Contact your audiologist or hearing instrument dispenser for more information about these products.

## **CLOSED CAPTIONING**

These symbols indicate the TV programs and DVDs are closed captioned (  or  or  ). Captions can only appear with the use of a closed-caption decoder or decoder chip built into the TV. Many DVDs are now using SDH (“Subtitles for the Deaf & Hard of Hearing”).

Captions can be accessed on most TVs by pushing the “CC” button on the television’s remote control and selecting the “on” option. On some televisions, you may need to read the owner’s manual to see how you can activate the closed captioning. For those who have cable and a separate remote control for the cable box, you may only be able to activate the closed captioning through the menu. Please consult the manual provided by the cable provider. If there are no instructions about closed captioning in the manual – contact the cable provider to see if you have the correct cable box that allows closed captioning to be displayed. Most DVDs are captioned, but just like television programs, not everything is closed-captioned.

## **ROOM ACOUSTICS**



Most people with a hearing loss discover that they are able to hear and understand speech much better in particular rooms of their home. This is because of room acoustics. The less distance sound has to travel and the less hitting and bouncing off hard surfaces the better the acoustics. Often acoustical treatment to the walls or furniture fixtures works best in absorbing sound.

Acoustical tiles (12”x12”x1”) can be installed on the wall with double-sided tape or hook-and-loop fasteners. With creative use of paint, these acoustical tiles could be an artistic addition to the room! Tapestries and other wall hangings also help absorb sound.

Windows and doors should be examined, especially if the home is located on a busy street. Weather gaskets on the windows may need replacing. Foam gasketing around the frame and/or a drop seal at the bottom of the door may be needed.

Large, plush sofas and chairs will absorb some sound in the room. While carpeting does not provide a lot of acoustical absorption, every little bit helps.

## Vendors

This is a partial list of commonly used mail order companies. You can call them to request a catalog be sent to your home or access their website for an on-line catalog.

**HARC Mercantile, Ltd.** (Portage, MI)  
1-800-445-9968 (Voice & TTY)  
Website: [www.harc.com](http://www.harc.com)

**Harris Communications, Inc.**  
(Eden Prairie, MN)  
1-800-825-6758 (Voice)  
1-800-825-9187 (TTY)  
Website: [www.harriscomm.com](http://www.harriscomm.com)

**Hear-More** (Farmingdale, NY)  
1-800-881-4327 (Voice)  
1-800-281-3555 (TTY)  
Website: [www.hearmore.com](http://www.hearmore.com)

**HITEC Group International, Inc.**  
(Burr Ridge, IL)  
1-800-288-8303 (Voice)  
1-800-536-8890 (TTY)  
Website: [www.hitec.com](http://www.hitec.com)

**LS & S** (Buffalo, NY)  
1-800-468-4789 (Voice)  
1-866-317-8533 (TTY)  
Website: [www.lssproducts.com](http://www.lssproducts.com)

**TELTEX** (Kearney, MO)  
1-888-515-8120 (Voice & TTY)  
Website: [www.teltex.com](http://www.teltex.com)

**WEITBRECHT** (Santa Monica, CA)  
1-800-233-9130 (Voice & TTY)  
Website: [www.weitbrecht.com](http://www.weitbrecht.com)

### Note:

Prices may vary from company to company – you may want to compare prices of more than one company.

*This not an endorsement by DHHS for any specific vendor, product, company or manufacturer.*

## Regional Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services (DHHS) offices:

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### **DHHS – Duluth**

11 E. Superior St., Suite 220  
Voice: 218-302-3170  
Voice toll-free: 888-234-1322  
Video phone: 218-206-8452  
TTY: 866-488-3833  
Email: [dhhs.duluth@state.mn.us](mailto:dhhs.duluth@state.mn.us)

### **DHHS – Virginia**

820 N. Ninth St., Suite 250  
Voice: 888-234-1322  
Video phone: 218-550-5153  
TTY: 866-488-3997  
Fax: 651-431-7775  
Email: [dhhs.virginia@state.mn.us](mailto:dhhs.virginia@state.mn.us)

### **DHHS – Moorhead**

Family Service Center of Clay County  
715 11th St. N., Suite 200  
Voice: 218-304-3470  
Voice toll-free: 800-456-7589  
Video phone: 218-227-5495  
TTY: 866-488-3829  
Fax: 651-431-7534  
Email: [dhhs.moorhead@state.mn.us](mailto:dhhs.moorhead@state.mn.us)

### **DHHS – St. Cloud**

3400 First St. N., Suite 302  
Voice: 320-223-7130  
Voice toll-free: 800-456-3690  
Video phone: 866-588-2282  
TTY: 866-488-3909  
Fax: 651-431-7777  
Email: [dhhs.stcloud@state.mn.us](mailto:dhhs.stcloud@state.mn.us)

### **DHHS – St. Paul**

DHHS Metro (site address)  
Golden Rule Building  
85 E. Seventh Place, Suite 105  
Voice: 651-431-5940  
Video phone: 651-964-1514  
TTY: 888-206-6513  
Fax: 651-431-7587  
Email: [dhhs.metro@state.mn.us](mailto:dhhs.metro@state.mn.us)

### **DHHS – Mankato**

12 Civic Center Plaza, Suite 1670  
Mankato, MN 56001  
Voice: 507-344-2840  
Video phone: 507-322-3518  
Toll-free: 800-311-1148  
TTY: 866-266-2461  
Fax: 651-431-7776  
Email: [dhhs.mankato@state.mn.us](mailto:dhhs.mankato@state.mn.us)

***This information is available in other forms to people with disabilities by calling 651/431-5940 (Voice). Consumers with hearing or speech disabilities may contact us via their preferred Telecommunications Relay Service.***



Minnesota Department of **Human Services**

Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services Division

651-431-5940 (V) • 888-206-6513 (TTY) • 651-431-7587 FAX • [mn.gov/dhs/deaf-hard-of-hearing/](http://mn.gov/dhs/deaf-hard-of-hearing/)