FAQ: SMPTE 2052 FOR CLOSED-CAPTIONING OF ONLINE VIDEO CONTENT

1. What is SMPTE?

The Society of Motion Picture and Television Engineers (SMPTE) is the worldwide leader in motion-imaging standards and education for the communications, media, and entertainment industries. A global not-for-profit organization based in the United States, it is comprised of individual and corporate members in 65 countries from the broadcast, broadband, and cinema industries, among others.

2. What is SMPTE announcing?

As the FCC prepares to adopt rules to ensure individuals with disabilities can fully utilize and enjoy Internet-delivered video content, SMPTE has announced that is making its standard for closed-captioning of online video content (known as SMPTE Timed Text) available for free.

3. Is it SMPTE's practice to make standards available free of charge?

SMPTE's general practice is to sell its standards as part of its revenue-generating efforts, with funds helping to sustain the ongoing work of the Society, including education activities and establishing worldwide industry standards.

4. So why is SMPTE making the standard free in this case?

SMPTE believes that it is critical to accelerate the availability of online video content to people with disabilities and believes the fastest way to do so is by using a baseline standard that is device agnostic, yet is still open enough to support specific innovations and applications.

5. Why is it important to have this single, standardized approach to captioning?

Using one method for authoring and displaying captions – rather than custom approaches for different Web browsers or media players – enables TV content providers to make more content available and accessible as efficiently and cost-effectively as possible.

6. What is the SMPTE closed-captioning standard and how does it work?

Known officially as SMPTE ST 2052-1:2010, or SMPTE 2052, the standard provides a common set of instructions for both authoring and distributing captions for broadband video content -- enabling broadcasters to reuse existing TV captions which, in turn, allows them to migrate programming with captions to the Web more easily and duplicate online the experience consumers enjoy on TV today.

Labeled the Time Text Format (SMPTE-TT), SMPTE 2052 defines the SMPTE profile of the W3C Timed Text Markup Language (TTML) (http://www.w3.org/TR/ttaf1-dfxp/).

SMPTE 2052 identifies the features from TTML required for interoperability between display systems for the format. In order to preserve certain semantic features of the input formats, SMPTE-TT also defines some standard metadata terms to be used and some extension features not found in TTML.

7. What is the W3C?

The World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) is an international community where member organizations, a full-time staff, and the public work together to develop Web standards. You can learn more about it at http://www.w3.org/Consortium/.

For more information about the efforts of the W3C Timed Text Working Group, please visit: http://www.w3.org/AudioVideo/TT/.

8. Does the SMPTE standard allow for the reuse of captions in existing programs?

Yes. SMPTE has defined a method for converting between the existing U.S. standard for caption authoring and distribution in television, CEA-608, and SMPTE-TT to allow television content to migrate to the Web quickly and without the need for the re-authoring of captions, and to allow content owners/providers to migrate existing libraries of archived television content to the Web.

9. Where can people find the standard?

SMPTE standard materials are available for free-of-charge and can be downloaded here:

http://www.smpte.org/standards

10. Does this mean that the SMPTE standard is the law in the United States?

No. The U.S. Federal Communications Commission is responsible for setting rules for captioning of broadcast content distributed online under a law called the 21st Century Communications & Video Accessibility Act (CVAA). Among its provisions, the CVAA requires the captioning of previously shown TV programs when they are made available on the Internet. The FCC is expected to issue its final captioning rules in early 2012.

The SMPTE 2052 standard supports the CVAA requirement regarding online captioning. It is hoped that the public sharing of the SMPTE standard will help lead to widespread adoption of a single standard to ensure more captioning of video material on the Internet.

11. How does the SMPTE standard support innovation?

The SMPTE 2052 standard is media-device and media player agnostic. That means manufacturers can develop a wide range of products without worrying about whether or not they will work together.

12. Is this similar to the approach that software companies use with Web browsers?

Yes, in much the same way that firms develop plug-in modules for Web browsers, the SMPTE standard enables additions to its core closed-captioning capabilities.

13. What if an organization wants to be involved this or another standards effort?

SMPTE welcomes all those interested in accessibility and other standards to become members and join in its efforts. **To learn more about SMPTE standards programs and how to participate, visit** **http://www.smpte.org/standards/.**