



## Accessibility - Designing for All

### Frequently Asked Questions - U.S. Section 508

Here are answers to some of the most common questions you may have on Section 508 and Cisco Systems IP communications solutions.

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#### **What is U.S. Section 508?**

Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1998 (29 U.S.C. ' 794d) was adopted to ensure that the Government's electronic and information technology allows Federal employees with disabilities access to, and use of, information and data that is comparable to that which is available to, and for use by, Federal employees without disabilities. Section 508 contains exceptions (eg. national security, individual purchase would result in undue burden on the agency, back office systems, etc.) -- a list of such exceptions are available at the U.S. Government's Section 508 web site [<http://www.section508.gov/index.cfm?FuseAction=Content&ID=92>].

Section 508 requires that Federal procurement officials assess electronic and information technologies in relation to the Access Board's published Electronic and Information Technology Standards [hereafter Section 508 Standards] - - procuring, developing, using, and maintaining only those end-user products most closely conforming to Section 508 Standards.

While Section 508 does not regulate private sector or state and local government agencies, it appears to encourage such parties to adopt Section 508 principles when making their purchasing decisions.

#### **When is an EIT item considered accessible?**

According to Section 508 Standards, an information technology system is accessible to people with disabilities if it can be used in a variety of ways that do not depend on a single sense or ability. For example, a system that provides output only in audio format would not be accessible to people with hearing impairments, and a system that requires mouse actions to navigate would not be accessible to people who cannot use a mouse because of a dexterity or visual impairment.

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Even with an accessible system, individuals with disabilities may still need specific accessibility-related software or peripheral devices as an accommodation to be able to use it. For example, in order to use a telephone, a person who is hard of hearing may need add-on equipment such as TDD adapters. This is a perfectly acceptable and permissible way to conform to Section 508 Standards.

### **Do Cisco end-user products including VoIP solutions conform to Section 508 Standards?**

Cisco end-user products, including VoIP solutions, conform or are capable of conforming to applicable Section 508 Standards. Please consult Voluntary Accessibility Matrices for specific conformance features and notes. Third-party assistive technologies or products may be required to ensure optimal performance.

Voluntary Accessibility Matrices for Cisco IP Phones are available at Cisco's Regulatory Affairs web site [[http://www.cisco.com/wwl/regaffairs/accessibility\\_standards/](http://www.cisco.com/wwl/regaffairs/accessibility_standards/)]. Accessibility matrices for other products are available upon request. The Matrices contain useful comments on existing and anticipated features. Cisco uses the Section 508 Standards matrix, developed by the Information Technology Industry Council (ITI), as a visual measure of a product's/solution's degree of conformance. We welcome your comments and observations.

As noted above, Section 508 contains exceptions (eg. national security, individual purchase would result in undue burden on the agency, back office systems, etc.) -- a list of such exceptions are available at the U.S. Government's Section 508 web site [<http://www.section508.gov/index.cfm?FuseAction=Content&ID=92>].

Cisco is committed to providing end-users access to converging IP communications solutions.

### **Does "Packet Loss" pose a Section 508 problem in a Cisco VoIP Network?**

While significant packet loss can degrade TTY/TDD performance when not proactively addressed, a Cisco VoIP Network deployed inline with published best-practices, addresses packet-loss and provides reliable and robust support for TTY/TDD services. An example of these best practices is the Network Quality of Service design guide [[http://www.cisco.com/univercd/cc/td/doc/product/voice/ip\\_tele/avvidqos/avvid.pdf](http://www.cisco.com/univercd/cc/td/doc/product/voice/ip_tele/avvidqos/avvid.pdf)].

### **What is the association between Section 508 Standards and Cisco Switches?**

Internet switches are "located in spaces frequented only by service personnel for maintenance, repair, or occasional monitoring of equipment" and therefore not governed by Section 508 Standards. (FAR 39.204(d) and 36 CFR 1194.3(f). "Comparable" in the context of Section 508 does not mean "identical." "Comparable" refers to the data and information being delivered not the method of delivery. Thus, how the data is transferred is not relevant to determining any degree of conformance with the standards.

Electronic information technology provides varying levels of accessibility. The Section 508 measure is whether the equipment delivers "comparable" data and information to Federal employees – whether on its own or in conjunction with other products.

Cisco IP telephony solutions deliver "comparable" data through the use of third party products and appropriate network design.

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## Is Cisco Listed as a Vendor under Section 255 of the Communications Act?

Cisco is a recognized telecommunications equipment manufacturer that is dedicated to meeting the government requisites of Section 255. Contact details are on file with the Federal Communication Commission [[http://ftp.fcc.gov/cgb/dro/section255\\_manu.html](http://ftp.fcc.gov/cgb/dro/section255_manu.html)].

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