

## Could Assistive Listening Devices Be Your Solution For Hearing Well Again?

Do you have a hard time hearing the voices or things happening around you?

Your best solution may be to use Assistive Listening Devices (ALDs). What exactly are these devices? They are basically used to help people hear better in different types of situations, or to help them identify situations in which their ears alone may not be enough, such as special Fire Alarms, in addition to hearing aids.

With some of these devices you will be able to hear one conversation in a crowd again or to listen to the television without having to turn up the volume. If your hearing loss is severe enough, they might make the difference between getting out or not getting out of a burning building in time.

Some of these devices use various types of electromagnetic energy to relay a particular voice to a receiver at your ear. Some of the types of electromagnetic energy used include Infrared light, FM radio, Bluetooth, and magnetic fields. These all help isolate a particular voice (the “signal”) out of any noise (this may be either other voices or mechanical noise) that is in the surrounding area and then relay the signal to a small receiver.

The receiver can transmit the signal to your ears or to your hearing aids through a looped cord, a direct audio input, an FM receiver, or an intermediate device, such as a Streamer. Assistive Listening Devices are not hearing aids, but it may be used in conjunction with one to make hearing so much easier.

The goal of these devices is to help reduce the strain that you may experience when trying to listen to someone in an environment with other competing sounds or someone from a distance, where what you want to hear a “signal”, but the environment makes this difficult. ALDs were mandated for certain types of Public places, such as theaters, by the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1991.

There are several different types of devices found in many public places, which include:

1. FM or frequency modulation – These are similar to small radios and are operated using a specific designated frequency range. Some types of machinery may produce interfering radio waves, but in general, this type of device is stable. This type of ALD is used often in classrooms, but has also been used in personal devices for home settings.
2. Infrared enabled device – This type is often used in live performance or movie theaters that are enclosed. Infrared devices, because they use a form of light, may have difficulty when used in brightly-lit venues. Theaters which have fixed seating (bolted to the floor and non-moveable) are required by law to have one device for every 10 seats. This type of device is also available for home use.
3. Electromagnetic Loop Systems--These are used in many types of places, from Airports, to classrooms, to places of worship and private homes. They require hearing aids which have a

telecoil, or telephone coil, in them in order to work. They have little interference, and are common in some parts of the US and Europe.

4. Signs which use strobe lights—used for severely hearing impaired to alert people about danger. Most regulation fire alarms fit this description.

Now that you know this important information about Assistive Listening Devices, you need to decide if these could be your best solution to help you hear well again.

Take time to talk to an audiologist about them before making your final decision so you understand all you can about them.