



## Airports and Hearing Loop Technology

Hearing gate changes and other important announcements in a busy airport can be problematic even for those with good hearing and, for those with a hearing loss, it often becomes mission impossible. Such audio communication is a basic requirement for the effective use of airport terminals by the traveling public and that requirement is often overlooked by administrators and sound engineers who are not familiar with the limitations of hearing aids or the basics of hearing loss. That includes the speech to noise ratio, speech discrimination abilities, and other factors peculiar to those with hearing loss. Sympathetic airport administrations in many foreign airports (and a growing number in the United States) have turned to hearing loop technology to address the communication problem encountered by hard of hearing travelers in waiting areas, departure gates, ticket counters, information desks and other places where oral communication is required. They can be a problem for a significant portion of the hard of hearing public.

Hearing loops, often an integral part of the public address system in many foreign terminals, make air travel much easier for those who have telecoil technology in their hearing aids or cochlear implants. Hearing loops offer solutions going from one on one applications to systems encompassing huge public spaces, creating barrier free communication access to the hard of hearing traveler.

Airports throughout the world have been fitted with an impressive variety of hearing loop applications. Following are some examples where departure gates, airline check-in counters, passport control desks, security checkpoints and other places now run more smoothly thanks to hearing loop technology.

### A Sampling of Overseas Airports Known to be Using Loop Technology



**AUSTRALIA.....Brisbane, Canberra, Melbourne, Sidney** - With the recent installation of hearing loops in the domestic and international areas of the Sidney airport, all major airports in Australia now feature hearing loops in various forms to serve the needs of hard of hearing travelers.

**DENMARK.....Copenhagen** - The waiting area in the transit hall has a magnetic induction loop.

**FRANCE.....Charles De Gaulle Airport, Paris** - Waiting areas within each of the terminals have been equipped with induction loops and the customer assistance terminal is fitted with an induction loop for the hearing impaired.

**HOLLAND.....Schiphol Airport, Amsterdam** - The airport is equipped with a hearing loop and lifts and travellers to help you on your way to the gate.

**IRELAND.....Dublin** - A series of induction loops were installed to facilitate the amplification of announcements for passengers with hearing difficulties.

**NEW ZEALAND.....Christchurch Airport** - Departure gate waiting areas are served with phased array hearing loops.

**OMAN .....Muscat Airport**- A total of 300 counter loops have been installed throughout the airport.

**RUSSIA..... Domodedovo, Sheremetyevo and Vnukovo Airports, Moscow** - All three of these airports have been fitted with hearing loops at information counters and/or in zones and connected to an automatic announcement system.

**SOUTH KOREA..... Incheon Airport in Seoul** - Hearing loops have been installed at information desks.

**SPAIN.....Adolfo Suárez Madrid-Barajas Airport** -The airport has installed induction loops in a variety of locations to improve accessibility for hearing-aid users and all are identified by the international symbol of hearing-aids in position "T"including at the information desks, car park offices and at the SAETA office.

**SWEDEN.....Stockholm** -The Stockholm and all of Swedavia's other nine airports have assistive listening technology (hearing loop systems) available at their information desks.

**UNITED KINGDOM Gatwick and Heathrow Airports, London** - Induction loops are available where there are signs showing the "sympathetic" ear symbol such as waiting areas, check in counters and gates.



**Manchester** – Phased Array area coverage systems have been installed in key areas of the building and counter loops are featured at check-in counters.

**Edinburgh Airport, Scotland** - With their addition at 17 PRM (passenger with reduced mobility) sites in the terminal, loops can be found at departure gate, baggage claim and both international and domestic arrivals areas and at such diverse locations as Starbucks.

In the European Union, airports are tasked with delivering comprehensive services intended to address the needs of "persons with reduced mobility" (PRM). A PRM is someone whose mobility when using public transportation is reduced by age or a temporary or permanent physical sensory loss, by intellectual disability or impairment, or any other cause of disability, whose situation requires appropriate attention and adaptation to his or her particular needs of the service made available to all passengers.

In Europe, historically, airlines transporting travelers were themselves responsible for PRM management until the process changed in 2008. EU regulation 1107/2006 transferred responsibility from airlines to the airports themselves, meaning airports must now deliver PRM services which meet compliance targets and provide the requisite quality of service to users. Also, under EU regulations, member States are obliged to encourage media service providers under their jurisdiction to ensure that their services are gradually made accessible to people with a visual or hearing disability.



## A Sampling of US Airports Known to be Using Loop Technology



**Atlanta, GA** - Hearing loops installed at information booths throughout the terminal and Delta Airlines testing at five gates.

**Austin, TX** - 12 of the terminal's departure gates have been looped.

**Detroit, MI** - Several Delta Airlines gates have been fitted with hearing loops.

**Grand Rapids, MI** - The city's Gerald Ford International Airport was the first in the U.S. to install loop technology throughout the terminal with all gates and the grand concourse looped.

**Kalamazoo/BattleCreek, MI** - The airport has hearing loops installed in a variety of places including individual devices at ticket counters, in-floor systems in the "meet and greet" hall, boarding and gate areas.

**Minneapolis/St. Paul, MN** - The International Arrivals area has been looped and an "Art at the Airport" rest and waiting area looped. Additional loop installations are in the planning stage.

**Muskegan, MI** - Departure gates in the terminal are served by hearing loops.

**Phoenix, AZ** - 15 gates have been looped with an additional 10 scheduled to be done by 2020.

**Rochester, NY** - All gates are looped and counter loops installed at all points where travelers interact with agents, merchants, etc.

**Sarasota/Bradenton, FL** - All departure gates have been looped.

**South Bend, IN** - All gates in a recent addition to the terminal have been looped.

### In addition:

**Memphis, TN** - Induction loop systems in the concourse and gate/hold areas are included in a major modernization program planned for this airport.

**New York City** - Fabled LaGuardia airport is on a list of looping projects still in the design stage.

**The Sunport, Albuquerque, NM; SeaTac, Seattle, WA; Salt Lake City International, UT** have local advocates actively pressing for the looping of their terminals and there are three other major airports actively exploring the technology.

**Virgin Atlantic** now offers passengers on their international flights the choice of ear buds or a neckloop.

**Recommended resource:** HEARING LOOP SYSTEMS in an AIRPORT ENVIRONMENT. Presented at the Sixth Annual National Civil Rights Training Conference for Airports, August 11-12, 2015 - visit:

[http://aci-na.org/sites/default/files/grr\\_hearing\\_loop\\_presentation\\_08-12-2015\\_130pm.pdf](http://aci-na.org/sites/default/files/grr_hearing_loop_presentation_08-12-2015_130pm.pdf)

