

# Around the Country and Beyond ...

## Editor's Note:

*TDI is interested to hear from readers about their experiences trying out the new developments reported in Around the Country. When reporting your experiences, please let us know which issue of the GA-SK you learned about the new feature.*



### Krown Introduces New Braille TTY

Krown Manufacturing Inc. has developed a new Braille-TTY to aid individuals who are Deaf-Blind in having a conversation over the telephone.

The Krown Braille TTY allows the user to communicate with a Relay Operator, another TTY, or even a Braille-TTY user. The conversation is displayed on the Braille display from the ALVA Braille Terminal, which has a 23-cell, 8-dot Braille Navigator. The ALVA display can also be used as a computer navigator with software and cable included. The TTY comes with Auto answer, 9 speed dial numbers, and memory buffers with up to 8000 characters to hold programmable greetings, messages and conversations. The rechargeable battery in the TTY will last for 6 hours of use without interruptions and is rechargeable by plugging in an adapter overnight.

The ASCII option for the Braille TTY allows the user to connect with a computer. It also allows for faster conversa-

tions than the conventional Baudot 45.5. The user is able to switch between typing TTY or Braille on the keyboard. The user can use the Braille -TTY with either a direct telephone line or the acoustic coupler with any telephone handset. The machines are lightweight and comes with a carrying case for easy storage. For more information, go to [www.krownTTY.com](http://www.krownTTY.com).



### New Telephone Uses Bone Conduction Technology

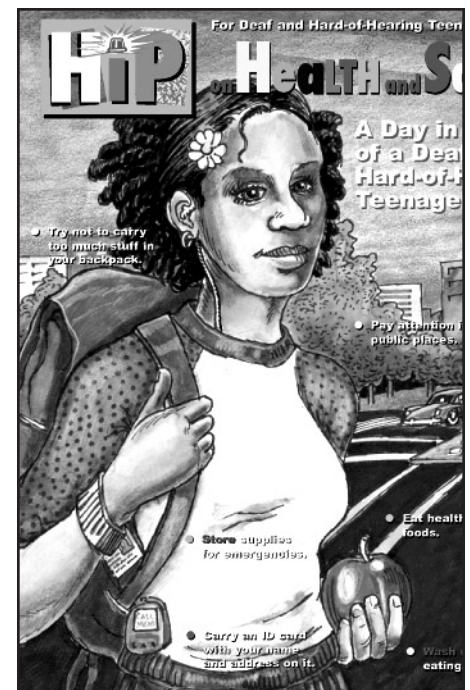
There is a new telephone from Innovations Consumer Marketing, an import/export company based in Southern California. It uses a very unique system of transferring sound called "bone-conduction technology". Instead of using the conventional method of transmitting sound waves via air conduction, this telephone uses direct vibration sending sound waves through the skeletal structures near the ears directly to the sound recognition nerves in the brain. By bypassing the conventional method of transmitting sound, even people with severe hearing disabilities can carry on a normal conversation over the telephone. Studies have shown that about 88% of the participants were able to perceive sound using this product. This product was also the winner of "Best of What's New" by the Popular Science Magazine. For more information, go to [www.innovationscm.com](http://www.innovationscm.com)

### HIP Publishing Group Distributes Free New Booklets on Health & Safety for Deaf and Hard-of-hearing Children

HiP Publishing Group, a San Francisco Bay Area-based publisher of materials for deaf and hard-of-hearing children, has created a booklet and safety kit currently being distributed at no cost to all California school-aged children with hearing loss. Copies have been printed for the estimated 10,000 deaf and hard-of-hearing children in the state. The program was made possible by a \$260,000 grant from The California Endowment, the state's largest health foundation.

"The biggest challenge for deaf and hard-of-hearing children is being shut off from communication -- not being able to overhear conversations or understand what is said in large groups, radio broadcasts or television programs," said Ellen Dolich, the co-founder of HiP Publishing Group and the director of the new health and safety series. "This is especially significant in natural disasters and emergency situations, when the ability to understand mass media or use devices like pay telephones takes on crucial significance."

To address these and other learning and communication challenges, the book-



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lets teach health and safety strategies targeted specifically to children with hearing losses. Topics covered include using telecommunication devices for the deaf for emergency calls, coping with natural catastrophes like earthquakes and fires, learning Internet safety skills, understanding body language and protecting oneself from sexual and substance abuse.

“We want every teacher and parent of a deaf or hard-of-hearing child in California to know these books are available at no charge. We created these booklets because the available health/safety materials for children do not address the special needs of this population. Students learn real world skills that make them less vulnerable to a wide range of dangerous or difficult situations that children without hearing loss often learn more readily,” said Dolich.

Three versions have been published, one each for elementary, middle school and high school students. Materials for older students cover more sophisticated subject matter, such as HIV/AIDS prevention. For more information about the English and Spanish language editions of the booklets and teaching guides, go to [www.hipworks.org/hiponhealth](http://www.hipworks.org/hiponhealth)

*From the newsroom of the Business Wire*

### Suspected Bomb was a Payphone TTY

It looked suspiciously like a bomb -- an unmarked metal box with a flashing red light placed beneath a pay telephone. So authorities evacuated a rehabilitation center at Valley Medical Center for hours. 89 patients with spinal cord and brain injuries, along with scores of workers, were moved while Santa Clara County sheriff's bomb squad technicians were called in. When they finally solved the riddle, the mysterious box turned out to be a payphone TTY that enables the hearing-impaired to use pay phones.

The incident began when two people reported the device -- bolted to a shelf under a pay phone in the front lobby -- to



*From Ultratec*

security staff. No one at the center could identify the metal box or knew when it was installed. Officials called Pacific Bell and described the box to the phone company representative, who also could not identify it and recommended hospital officials call in a bomb squad.

Deputies brought in a \$140,000 remote-controlled robot that is equipped with two television cameras to inspect the box. After a lengthy conversation with a telephone company representative, who came to the center to view images of the box, it was determined that the device was a TTY box, which enables users to send messages and receive them over phone lines with a keyboard.

*From the San Jose Mercury News*

### New Smoke Detectors Aid the Deaf

There is a time when Lauren Dooley wants to be shaken from a peaceful sleep.

Lauren, who is hearing impaired, has a strobe light over her door that's activated by a smoke detector. But soon, she'll have another warning: a disk under her mattress that will violently shake it if there's a fire.

Lauren, who's 9 1/2 and a fourth-grader, said she'll "feel safer if my bed shakes" should a fire break out.

Her parents, Pam and Ira Dooley, are happy to know new technology in smoke detectors

is coming to their home, thanks to a local foundation's grant and caring fire departments.

The West Chester and Liberty Township fire departments, with funding from the Key Community Foundation, which supports nonprofit and community efforts in the two townships, are making the \$170-\$250 devices available to the hearing impaired on request.

“Without her hearing aids - when Lauren's in bed, in the bathroom or swimming - she cannot hear,” Pam Dooley said. “We worry that the strobe in the dark may not be enough to wake her.”



West Chester and Liberty townships are the first in Butler County to offer smoke detectors to the hearing impaired, said Fire Lt. Rick Prinz, West Chester Township's fire prevention officer. “We have four requests now and Liberty Township has three and we expect more once word gets out.”

Gary Miller, director of disaster services for the Cincinnati Chapter for the American Red Cross, said the chapter has been offering smoke detectors to the hearing impaired since 1998 but knowledge about them is lacking. “We have given out about 500 but estimate there are about 3,000 deaf or hearing-impaired people in our area who can use them.”

The new detectors can be programmed to vibrate a bed, turn lamps on and off, emit light and even ring a phone or doorbell. However, none of the new devices can be programmed to do more than one function at a time, Lt. Prinz said. Mr. Miller said the Red Cross is encouraging manufactur-

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ers to design a smoke detector that can provide simultaneous functions.

Lt. Prinz said the detectors "give everyone the opportunity to flee a dangerous situation - hearing impaired or not. We have never had a fire involving a hearing impaired person but we want the hearing impaired ... to know we are aware of their special circumstances. ... We want to serve all equally."

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## 9-1-1 Center Gives Smooth Delivery in Simultaneous Births by Deaf Parents

They're too young to understand, but Brigitta Lyn Luttrell and Sabella Caroline Barron already know how to make an entrance. They proved that a little more than three weeks ago when they were born 10 minutes apart. Brigitta arrived two days after her due date. Sabella arrived a week early. Neither girl waited for the ambulance crews to arrive -- summoned to the Luttrells' home in Jefferson and the Barrons' in Middletown by near-simultaneous TTY calls to the Frederick County 9-1-1 Center.

And the expectant parents weren't the only ones caught by surprise. Dispatchers at the emergency communications center said they normally receive an average of one call a month from Frederick County's 1,000 deaf residents. But on the evening of March 31, they received two TTY calls in a matter of minutes -- both involving deaf women in labor. Dispatcher Robert Carmack, noted that although it was not unusual to get deaf calls, but to get two similar TTY calls, both (involving births), back-to-back is unusual.

*From the newsroom of the Frederick News-Post, Maryland and USA-L News*

## Texgate Provides E-mail Access via TTY in UK

In a ground-breaking world-first, specialist organization Sensory Communications has unveiled TexGate - a free email service that gives anyone with speech or hearing disabilities a new level of communications freedom.

The TexGate service provides users of text telephones with direct access to email services for the first time. Employing unique Internet gateway technology, TexGate's revolutionary capabilities allow anyone to access electronic mail without an expensive or complicated home computer system.

Available initially in the UK, where there are currently some 30,000 users of text telephones, the new service will also benefit anyone who prefers the simplicity of telephone-based instruments. Dal Jdali, Managing Director of Sensory Communications Ltd, commented: "Those with speech and hearing disabilities tend to be a greatly ignored minority. We want to change that, by providing free access to the latest telecommunications developments. Electronic mail is a highly appropriate communications medium for anyone with hearing or speech disabilities, but not everyone has the desire or available budget to invest in a fully-fledged computer system - this is especially true of the elderly. Our service offers a unique bridge between old and new technologies, by enabling a familiar device - the text telephone - to be instantly transformed into an email terminal. This dramatically increases its communications potential without expenditure on additional equipment, service subscriptions or message-handling charges.

"We want to put a new slant on the dot-com phenomenon, applying our specialist

technology to the benefit of others and not for sheer profit. We have concentrated on making TexGate extremely easy to use. It is a two-way process, enabling text telephones to receive email messages, irrespective of their point of origin, and will be extended to include SMS facilities and fax capabilities in the near future. Our objective is to ensure that the deaf and hard of hearing can enjoy straightforward access to the widest range of communications media. All that text phone users need to do is call 020 8964 5530 and try it for themselves."

Users simply dial the service's number to arrange an account, with their own email address being confirmed by return message. All the benefits of electronic mail are then available, allowing voice-free communication with any email address, anywhere in the world - shops, banks, travel agents, friends and relatives, utilities and service companies.

TexGate's servers provide complete compatibility with the recently-introduced V.18 international modem standard, approved by the ITU for voice and data communications via text telephones. This ensures the service's long-term validity, accommodating new equipment developments and removing the traditional inter-working limitations of older equipment. For more information, go to [www.texgate.org](http://www.texgate.org).

## Dutch Disaster Notification System for People with Hearing Loss

The United Kingdom's Ananova is reporting that firefighters in Holland have established a trial program to alert people with hearing loss in the event of a disaster using SMS warning messaging. (Short Message Service - SMS - is a system that allows the transmission of short text messages to mobile devices, typically mobile phones. A comparable system in the US might send a message to a person's Wymtel pager.) The system will be tested in June; if successful, it will be expanded to the entire country.