Program Text Protection Area

This bulletin summarizes for Discovery's producers the current enforcement of the Program Text Protection Area.

Why the Program Text Protection Area (PTPA) Exists

The PTPA divides the screen real estate into two areas: an area reserved for in-program text and an area reserved for on-air marketing and branding. Discovery has maintained some version of the PTPA since 2006, and the PTPA has largely contributed to a clean and purposeful on-air look. We updated the PTPA in Version Six of the Discovery Global Tech Specs (Tech Specs Six) to provide more on-screen real estate for program text and to make it easier for our content partners to use centered text cards.

Enforcement Policies

While the PTPA changed with the release of Tech Specs Version Six, our enforcement policies did not. Accessibility text that falls outside of the PTPA will still trigger an automatic QC failure, and Media Logistics will not permit the networks to overrule those failures.

What is Accessibility Text?

The 21st Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act (CVAA) requires Discovery to provide closed captioning or other on-screen text to all consumers in the United States. The FCC code requires those captions be legible, readable, accurate, and synchronous with the program content (FCC §79.1). Closed captions, or any other form of text that transcribes the words of the speakers within the program is "accessibility text" and must meet those requirements. Because of this rule, QC will treat any subtitles, transcription, or translation within a program as accessibility text. If any accessibility text falls outside of the PTPA the program will fail QC, and the network will need to have the supplier provide a replacement.

Sometimes accessibility text isn't obvious. If the program has a disclaimer at the beginning of the show and the program's narrator reads that disclaimer aloud, that disclaimer becomes accessibility text. However, in the absence of being read aloud, a disclaimer is normal text. Text that's put on the screen to improve audibility also becomes accessibility text. Any time the text is a transcription or translation of something heard in the program audio, it becomes accessibility text.

What About Other Text?

QC Techs will continue to note other text that falls outside of the PTPA. While this text won't cause an automatic QC failure for the program, it still has consequences. Program text that falls outside of the protection area may be covered by network bugs or branding, as shown in the example on the right. Discovery's content is shown on more than 500 global feeds, each with its own set of branding and bugs. The only way to ensure that program text remains readable is to keep it inside of the PTPA.



In this example we show text both inside and outside of the PTPA (marked with the translucent purple box)



Out-of-bounds text will get covered by network graphics and branding as shown above

