

TIPS ON TELEPHONE/WEB CONFERENCING

- **Watch those time zones.** If participants from across the country or abroad are going to be included, schedule the event in the time zone most convenient to the majority of participants. Schedule web conferences in the AM EDT or EST, if possible, due to a lower volume of Internet traffic.
- **Construct an agenda.** Your agenda should consist of an outline of the key points to be covered or questions to be answered. If the issues are complex, circulate a draft agenda several weeks beforehand and ask for a critique of the agenda itself. Include a list of those participating with the agenda.
- **Take attendance.** Run through the list of participants at the start of the conference. This produces a permanent record of participation and lets everyone know who is on the line.
- **Announce comings and goings.** If someone makes the group aware that they're entering or leaving the conference, confirm this verbally to the entire group. Ideally, you'll know who is arriving late and who is leaving early. You can then announce this at the beginning of the session.
- **Speak clearly.** Articulate speech is crucial in this type of event. Speak directly into the microphone or handset and enunciate carefully. Avoid the use of speakerphones as they can make your voice difficult to hear and can create too much background noise.
- **Avoid rustling.** One of the perils of teleconferences is the rustling of papers, pens, and other materials; the noise can be magnified over the telephone lines. The same is true of coughing and background sounds. Remind participants to keep the noise level down.
- **Allow only one speaker at a time.** Presenters need to ensure that only one person has the floor at any given time.
- **Repeat important comments.** When you sense that the group is developing consensus on an issue or that the group must consider a key questions, repeat your understanding of the matter back to the group.
- **Take minutes.** Appoint a recorder or secretary responsible for taking minutes and circulating them to the entire group, just as you would any other meeting. This is especially important when participants don't have the advantage of visual cues and may have differing recollections of the event.¹

¹ "Conference Calls That Make the Connection" by Richard Ensmann