



ATW first Wisconsin airport with hearing loop

National expert in hearing loops based in Fox Valley

(Appleton, Wis.) April 29, 2026--Anyone who's been through an airport knows you are flooded with announcements, conversations, wheeled luggage, crying babies and all of it at the same time. Appleton International Airport (ATW) is making this experience easier for individuals with hearing impairment thanks to new hearing loops in the gate areas.

During the airport's expansion, hearing loops were installed under the carpeting in the new concourse. Individuals wearing hearing aids or cochlear implants can simply push a button on their hearing devices and the gate announcements transmit directly into their devices. A tiny, copper wire, called a telecoil inside a hearing device detects magnetic signals and converts them into clear, direct sound **The hearing loop at ATW is the first loop installed at a Wisconsin commercial airport.**

"Background noise in an airport can be a challenge if you're hard of hearing," said Airport Director Abe Weber. "It isn't about making announcements louder; it's about making them clearer. Before installation, we researched systems, consulted with the Hearing Loss Association of America, and searched for experts."

That's when the search led them to one of the nation's top experts in the application of assistive listening technology who happened to be in their backyard.

Dr. Juliëtte Sterkens was an audiologist with clinics in Oshkosh, Ripon, Neenah, and Appleton. She retired to become the National Hearing Loop Advocate for the Hearing Loss Association of America. In this capacity she presents at professional conferences and consumer events on the benefits and the use of hearing aids and hearing loops. Her efforts have leveraged over 1000 induction hearing loops in Wisconsin and many more beyond.

"The Americans with Disabilities Act mandates where a PA system is in use, that an assistive listening system shall be installed, but it's been a slow process in airports because of long lead times and most people don't understand the real nature of hearing loss, the limitations of hearing aids and how effective these systems can be at airports," Sterkens said. She adds that most airports provide little to no accommodations at all.

"I've seen patients for 40 years who think the answer is continually upgrading their hearing aids, but when they hear through a loop, it blows them away," Sterkens said. She was motivated to go into the speech pathology and audiology fields after her father lost significant hearing in high ranges after World War II. She said that kind of common hearing loss makes it very difficult to understand and even miss important announcements in airports such as gate changes.

"Our goal is always to make air travel accessible for all individuals," Weber said. "Our new gate area features family restrooms, our connector area has a gradual incline eliminating the need for escalators, and we added a sensory support room for neurodivergent travelers who might be

overwhelmed by a typical airport setting. Adding hearing loops to make travel easier for the hearing impaired was a logical addition to our expansion and continued renovations.”

At ATW the new terminal was designed with hearing loops at all the new gates. As existing gates are remodeled in the original concourse, hearing loops will also be added.

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About Appleton International Airport

[Appleton International Airport](#) connects our community to the world through American Airlines, Delta Air Lines, United Airlines, Sun Country Airlines, and Allegiant Air. In addition to offering nonstop service to 23 destinations, Appleton Airport connects to 13 major international airport hubs from which travelers can fly to almost anywhere in the world. Using Appleton Airport, travelers can safely and more conveniently get to their destination and home again, leaving them more time for what really matters. Appleton International Airport is the third largest airport in Wisconsin according to arrivals and departures. Visit atwairport.com to learn more.

About Juliëtte Sterkens

Dr. Sterkens holds a degree in speech, language pathology and audiometry from the Hogeschool in Hoensbroeck, the Netherlands, a master's degree in Audiology from University of Wisconsin Oshkosh and a Doctor of Audiology degree from Arizona School of Health Sciences. For her advocacy efforts she has received several awards including the Wisconsin Audiologist of the Year, the American Academy of Audiology Presidential Award, the Humanitarian of the Year Award from the Arizona School of Health Sciences and the Larry Mauldin Award from Beltone which is part of the GN ReSound group. Her TEDx talk “What You Don't Know About Hearing Aids” has garnered over 1.3 million views.