"DTV" IS COMING (AND SOONER THAN YOU THINK!)

FCC Consumer Facts

On February 17, 2009, federal law requires that all full-power television broadcast stations stop broadcasting in analog format and broadcast only in digital format. Here's what these requirements will mean for you and your television viewing.

Why Are Broadcast TV Stations Switching to All-Digital?

Congress mandated the conversion to all-digital television broadcasting, also known as the digital television (DTV) transition, because all-digital broadcasting will free up frequencies for public safety communications (such as police, fire, and emergency rescue). Also, digital is a more efficient transmission technology that allows broadcast stations to offer improved picture and sound quality, as well as offer more programming options for consumers through multiple broadcast streams (multicasting). In addition, some of the freed up frequencies will be used for advanced commercial wireless services for consumers.

What Do I Need To Do To Be Ready For The DTV Transition?

What you need to do depends on the source of your television programming, whether you receive programming over-the-air or from a paid provider such as a cable or satellite TV company.

How Do I Receive Digital Broadcasts If I Don't Subscribe To Cable Or Satellite?

If you receive only free over-the-air television programming, the type of TV you own, either a digital TV or an analog TV, is very important. Consumers who receive only free over-the-air television may view digital programming through a TV set with a built-in digital tuner (integrated DTV) or a digital-ready monitor with a separate digital tuner set-top box. (Both of these digital television types are referred to as a DTV). The only additional equipment required to view over-the-air digital programming with a DTV is a regular antenna, either on your roof or a smaller version on your TV such as "rabbit ears."

If you have an analog television, you will have to purchase a digital-to-analog set-top converter box to attach to your TV set to be able to view over-the-air digital programming (see "What About My Analog TV?" below).

How Do I Know Whether I Own a DTV?

As of March 1, 2007, all television receivers shipped in interstate commerce or imported into the United States must contain a digital tuner. In addition, effective May 25, 2007, the Commission required sellers of television receiving equipment that does not include a digital tuner to disclose at the point-of-sale that such devices include only an analog tuner, and therefore will require a digital-to-analog converter box to receive over-the-air broadcast television after the transition date. Retailers must inform consumers by prominently displaying the following text if they are selling TV equipment with only an analog tuner:

> **This television receiver has only an analog broadcast tuner and will require a converter box after February 17, 2009, to receive over-the-air broadcasts with an antenna because of the Nation's transition to digital broadcasting. Analog-only TVs should continue**

to work as before with cable and satellite TV services, gaming consoles, VCRs, DVD players, and similar products. For more information, call the Federal Communications Commission at 1-888-225-5322 (TTY: 1-888-835-5322) or visit the Commission's digital television website at: www.dtv.gov.

Therefore, after May 25, 2007, all television equipment being sold should contain a digital tuner, or should be identified at the point-of-sale as not having one. Be sure to look for this label if you are purchasing a new TV.

As for how to determine whether your television equipment purchased prior to May 25, 2007 is a DTV, many DTVs and digital television equipment will have labels or markings on them, or statements in the informational materials that came with them, to indicate that they contain digital tuners. These labels or markings may contain the words "Integrated Digital Tuner" or "Digital Tuner Built-In." "Receiver" may be substituted for "Tuner," and "DTV," "ATSC," or "HDTV" (high definition television) may be substituted for "Digital." If your television equipment contains any of these labels or markings, you should be able to view digital over-the-air programming without the need for a digital-to-analog converter box. (Remember, you do not need an HDTV to view free over-the-air digital programming. As long as your television equipment contains a digital tuner, you can view over-the-air digital. An HDTV is only necessary if you want to view digital programming in "high definition.")

You should also check the manual or any other materials that came with your television equipment in order to determine whether it contains a digital tuner.

If your television set is labeled as a "Digital Monitor" or "HDTV Monitor," or as "Digital Ready" or "HDTV Ready," this does not mean it actually contains a digital tuner. Thus, you still will likely need a separate set-top box which contains a tuner in order to view programs in the new digital TV transmission standard (which includes HDTV formats) on such a set.

Over-the-air digital set-top boxes can be purchased at retail stores. Cable and satellite TV providers also sell or lease digital set-top boxes for their specific services. (Note: the digital set-top box described here is not the same as the NTIA program digital-to-analog converter box, described below, used to convert free over-the-air digital broadcasts for viewing on an analog TV set.)

If your television set is labeled as "analog" or "NTSC," but is NOT labeled as containing a digital tuner, it contains an analog tuner only.

If you cannot determine whether your television set or other television equipment contains a digital tuner, you are advised to check your equipment for the manufacturer name and model number, and then contact your consumer electronics retailer, or the manufacturer, to determine whether it contains a digital tuner. This information also may be available online through the manufacturer's website.

Because most broadcast stations in all U.S. television markets are already broadcasting in digital, consumers are further advised to contact their local broadcast stations to determine the channel numbers on which the stations are broadcasting digital programming. Consumers should then ensure that their televisions are set up to receive over-the-air programming (as distinguished from the signals of a paid provider such as cable or satellite TV service), and then tune to the over-the-air digital channels to see if they can receive the digital broadcast programming.

What About My Analog TV? Will It Still Work?

After February 17, 2009, you will be able to receive and view over-the-air digital programming with an analog TV only by purchasing a digital-to-analog set-top converter box. Between January 1, 2008, and March 31, 2009, all U.S. households will be able to request up to two coupons, worth $40 each, to be used toward the future purchase of eligible digital-to-analog converter boxes. Eligible converter boxes are for the conversion of over-the-air digital television signals, and therefore are not intended for analog TVs connected to a paid provider such as cable or satellite TV service.

The National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) is administering the coupon program. For more information, visit the NTIA website at www.dtv2009.gov. The Commission's DTV website, www.dtv.gov, also provides information for consumers on the upcoming digital-to-analog converter box coupon program. More detailed information regarding NTIA's coupon program, what digital-to-analog converter boxes will be eligible, where and when they may be purchased, and the related costs involved will be provided by the Commission and NTIA as the commencement of the coupon program on January 1, 2008, approaches.

If I Already Have an Antenna, Do I Need a New One to View the Digital Signals?

A special antenna generally is not needed to receive digital signals. You may have antenna issues, however, if your current antenna does not receive UHF signals (channels 14 and above) well, because most DTV stations are on UHF channels. In such a case, you may need a new antenna or to add a UHF section to your existing antenna system. This equipment should be available at most bricks-and-mortar and Internet consumer electronics retailers.

How Do I Receive Digital Broadcasts If I Subscribe To Cable Or Satellite?

If you receive cable or satellite television service, contact your cable or satellite provider about any additional components, such as a digital set-top box, that you may need to watch digital broadcast programming.

If I Buy a DTV, Will My VCR, DVD Player, Camcorder, Video Games, Or Other Equipment Still Work?

VCRs, DVD players, camcorders and video games will continue to work, even if they are only analog-capable. Such equipment, however, may not provide digital-quality picture and sound. Manufacturers are producing a number of different connectors to hook equipment together and improve picture and sound quality. Check with your equipment retailer to determine the types of connectors that will work with your equipment.

How Much Will DTV Improve My TV Viewing?

While picture quality will vary according to whether you watch digital programming in high definition (HDTV) or standard definition (SDTV) format, over-the-air digital programming provides a better viewing experience than over-the-air analog programming, as long as you have good quality reception through your antenna.

How Much Will a DTV Cost?

Prices vary depending on the many features and options available to consumers, including format, display technology, and screen size. Display technology choices include cathode ray tube screens, rear projection TVs, front projection TVs, and flat panel TVs. Flat panel TVs, often the most expensive, can use either a liquid crystal display (LCD) or plasma screen technology. Screen size is measured

diagonally across the screen, and the larger the screen, generally the more expensive the TV. To determine the equipment and features that are right for you, learn about DTV from our Web Site and discuss your options with your retailer.

For More Information

For more information about the DTV transition, go to www.dtv.gov, which also provides links to several other informative websites, or contact the FCC's Consumer Center by e-mailing dtvinfo@fcc.gov; calling 1-888-CALL-FCC (1-888-225-5322) voice or 1-888-TELL-FCC (1-888-835-5322) TTY; faxing 1-866-418-0232; or writing to:

Federal Communications Commission
Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau
Consumer Inquiries and Complaints Division
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554.

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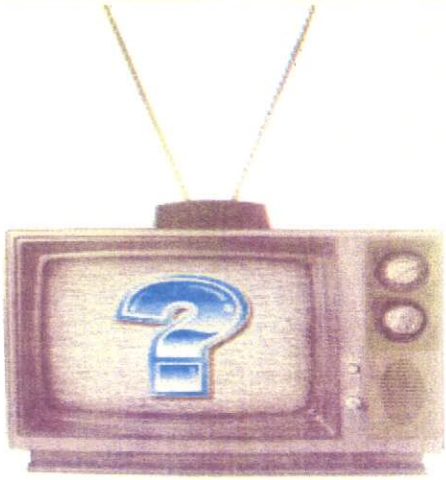
Office Of Consumer Affairs and Business Regulation

Department of Telecommunications and Cable



What is the Digital Broadcast Transition?

At midnight on February 17, 2009, all full-power television stations in the United States will stop broadcasting in analog and switch to 100% digital broadcasting. Digital broadcasting promises to provide a clearer picture and more programming options and will free up airwaves for use by emergency responders.

Who is Affected?

If you have one or more analog-only TV's that don't have cable or satellite service connected to them and are using a "rabbit ear" antenna to receive your local-over-the-air broadcasts , you will be affected by this transition. and will need to take action to continue receiving any local over-the-air broadcasts after February 17, 2009.

Between January 1, 2008 and March 31, 2009, you can request a coupon while supplies last in one of four ways:

- **Apply online at www.dtv2009.gov/ApplyCoupon.aspx**
- **Call the Coupon Program 24-hour hotline 1-888-DTV-2009 (1-888-388-2009), TTY 1-877-530-2634**
- **Mail a coupon application to: P.O. BOX 2000, Portland, OR 97208-2000.**
- **Fax a coupon application to 1-877-DTV-4ME2 (1-877-388-4632)**

Does the Digital Broadcast Transition Affect Cable Subscribers?

No. Some cable companies have decided to switch to digital service. **This is a different issue from the federally mandated Digital Broadcast Transition taking place February 17, 2009.** Please contact your cable service provider for more information.

If you are affected by the Digital Broadcast Transition, you have 3 Options.

Option 1:	Buy a box that converts digital signals to analog signals that your analog set can display.
Estimated Cost:	$40-$70 if you buy a basic converter box ($10-$30 if you use the NTIA coupon worth $40, see info listed to the left of this page)
Option 2:	Buy a new television set with a built in ATSC digital tuner.
Estimated Cost:	$100 and up. (High Definition is not required)
Option 3:	Subscribe to cable or satellite video service. (if available)
Estimated Cost:	At least $8-$20/month ($96-$240/year) plus possible equipment rental fees

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