

FCC Consumer Advisory

DTV Transition Does Not Require Cable Systems to Switch to Digital

IF YOU ARE A CABLE SUBSCRIBER, YOU SHOULD BE AWARE –

- The digital (DTV) transition applies only to full-power TV broadcast stations. It refers to the switch from analog to digital broadcast television.
- The DTV transition does not require cable companies to switch their cable systems to digital.
- For voluntary business reasons, your cable company may decide to move some cable channels from its analog tier onto a digital tier, or may switch to all-digital service and stop providing any analog service. This is not required by the government.
- As long as your cable company offers any analog service, it must provide you with your local broadcast stations so you can watch them without a cable set-top box.

The DTV transition has many benefits. It will free up frequencies for police, fire, and emergency rescue communications, provide frequencies for advanced wireless services, and allow TV broadcast stations to offer more programming with better picture and sound quality.

If you have an analog television that receives free over-the-air programming with a broadcast antenna (such as “rabbit ears” on your set or an antenna on your roof), you will need to purchase a digital-to-analog converter box in order to watch digital broadcast television. Each U.S. household is eligible to receive two \$40 coupons to be used toward the purchase of two digital-to-analog converter boxes. (Please note that these coupons will expire 90 days after mailing. For more information on the Coupon Program, visit www.dtv2009.gov, or call 1-888-388-2009 (voice) or 1-877-530-2634 (TTY).)

However, if you subscribe to cable service, the DTV transition should not affect any TV sets that are connected to your cable service. The DTV transition applies only to full-power broadcast television stations – stations that use the public airwaves to transmit their programming for free to viewers through a broadcast antenna. Cable companies are not required to switch their privately-owned systems from analog service to digital service. In fact, if your cable company offers any analog service, it is required to provide you with your local broadcast stations in analog so that you can watch them on an analog TV without a cable set-top box.

Some cable companies have decided to switch to digital service. This is a business decision made by the cable companies and is not required by the federal government. Your cable company may decide to move certain cable channels off of its analog service tier and onto a digital service tier, or it may decide to switch to all-digital service at once,



so that there is no analog service tier for any subscribers. If your cable company decides to move some or all of the channels it provides onto a digital service tier, it may notify you that you need to get “digital cable” equipment to continue receiving that cable service. This may include renting or purchasing a digital cable set-top box or purchasing a digital cable ready TV equipped with a “CableCARD” slot. This digital cable equipment is different from the digital-to-analog converter boxes discussed above, and digital cable equipment is not eligible for the \$40 coupons. If you have a digital TV, you may be able to view broadcast stations through your cable system without additional equipment. You should ask your cable company about the equipment options that may be available to you, including any options to purchase equipment from a retailer if you do not wish to rent equipment from your cable company.

For more information about the DTV transition, go to www.dtv.gov or contact the FCC 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 & Governmental Affairs Bureau
Consumer Inquiries and Complaints Division
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554.

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