



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF  
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**National  
Telecommunications &  
Information  
Administration**

## **Commerce's NTIA Announces New Coupon Applicants Will be Placed on Waiting List Due to High Demand for TV Converter Box Coupons**

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WASHINGTON—The Commerce Department's National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) today announced that starting Sunday, January 4, consumers requesting coupons from the agency's TV Converter Box Coupon Program will be placed on a waiting list and coupons will be mailed on a first-come-first-served basis, as funds from expired coupons become available. Because of the high demand for coupons, the program reached its \$1.34 billion ceiling, which consists of ordered and redeemed coupons.

"Households need to consider all of their options and act now to be prepared for the February 17 transition to digital television," said Acting NTIA Administrator Meredith Attwell Baker. "We are working with Congress, the incoming Administration and other stakeholders to ensure everyone is prepared for the transition and no one is left in the dark."

When consumers contact the Coupon Program to request coupons, they will receive a message they have been placed on a waiting list and will receive coupons on a first-come, first-served basis, as coupons become available and funds are returned to the U.S. Treasury from expired coupons. Consumers will receive a reference number that they should write down and use to check the status of their order at the Coupon Program's Web site, [www.DTV2009.gov](http://www.DTV2009.gov).

More than 24 million households have requested more than 46 million coupons and more than 18 million coupons have been redeemed. Consumers holding coupons should redeem them before the coupon expires within 90 days from the date it is mailed. To date, 52.5 percent of coupons requested have been redeemed and more than 13 million coupons have expired.

With 43 days until the transition to digital television, 12.6 million households that rely on television with an antenna have requested coupons, based on consumers self-reporting. The Nielsen Company reported recently that in January 2008, 14.3 million households rely on TV with an antenna.

The Coupon Program helps households with analog televisions--not connected to cable, satellite or other pay TV service--to buy a converter box so the TV works when full-power TV broadcasters transition from analog to 100 percent digital broadcasts on February 17, 2009.

Consumers receiving free, over-the-air television on analog televisions will need to act now to ensure their televisions continue to work when full-power television stations go all-digital. Viewers of over-the-air television need to look at each analog set in their home that is not connected to cable, satellite or other pay television service and make a timely decision. They can connect their television to cable, satellite or pay television service; they can replace it with a digital TV; or they may keep it working with a TV converter box. A converter box, which costs \$40 to \$80, may be purchased with or without a coupon.

### **Background:**

The Digital Television Transition and Public Safety Act of 2005 requires full-power television stations to cease analog broadcasts and switch to digital after February 17, 2009. The Act authorized NTIA to create the TV Converter Box Coupon Program and is funded by the recent airwaves auction. The Act funded the Program at \$1.5 billion, which included an obligation limit of \$1.34 billion for ordered and redeemed coupons. Funds are obligated when coupons are issued. If coupons are not used and expire, those funds are returned to the Program to fill requests. Digital broadcast television offers consumers a clearer picture, more programming choices and will free up the airwaves for better communications among emergency first responders and new telecommunication services.

For consumers choosing the converter box option, the TV Converter Box Coupon Program permits all households to request up to two coupons - each worth \$40 - toward the purchase of certified converter boxes. Coupons may be requested while supplies last, and only one coupon can be used to purchase each coupon-eligible converter box. Coupon requests are now placed on a waiting list and will be fulfilled as funds become available. Consumers can purchase a converter box at one of the more than 34,000 participating local, phone or online retailers. Consumers will receive a list of eligible converter boxes and participating retailers with their coupons. Also, consumers should call stores before shopping to ensure the desired converter box is available. Converter boxes generally cost between \$40 and \$80 and coupons expire 90 days from the date they are mailed.

When consumers receive their coupons in the mail, they should buy a converter box as soon as possible, and try the box with their television to address any potential technical issues before full-power broadcasters turn off the analog signals. Some viewers watch programs over translators or other low-power stations which may continue broadcasting analog signals after February 17, 2009. Those viewers may wish to select a converter box that will pass through analog signals.

Households may apply for coupons online at [www.DTV2009.gov](http://www.DTV2009.gov), by phone at 1-888-DTV-2009 (1-888-388-2009), via fax at 1-877-DTV-4ME2 (1-877-388-4632) or by mail to P.O. Box 2000, Portland, OR 97208-2000. Deaf or hard of hearing callers may dial 1-877-530-2634 (English TTY) or 1-866-495-1161 (Spanish TTY). Nursing home residents may apply with the paper application available downloadable at [www.DTV2009.gov](http://www.DTV2009.gov).

For more information about the Coupon Program, please visit [www.DTV2009.gov](http://www.DTV2009.gov) and for questions about the DTV transition, go to [www.dtv.gov](http://www.dtv.gov) or call 1-888-CALL-FCC.

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