



Digital Television Transition

Millions of Americans depend on television as a reliable source of information, especially to receive public alerts and warnings about disaster preparedness and response. The Digital Television Transition is a critical public safety issue and Citizen Corps Councils and Partners are encouraged to assist in ensuring uninterrupted service, especially to vulnerable populations. Because analog TVs cannot receive a digital signal, analog TVs will need to be connected to a DTV Converter Box or a paid TV service, such as cable or satellite, to continue to work after television stations have transitioned to digital signals. Digital TVs will be unaffected and do not need a converter box.



DTV Converter Box

On **June 12, 2009**, traditional analog TV service will end and free over-the-air TV service will be broadcast only via a digital signal. This transition date has been delayed (the transition was previously scheduled for February 17, 2009) based on an Act passed by the U.S. House of Representatives on February 4, 2009. The DTV Delay Act (S 352) preserves the right of stations to terminate analog prior to that date as long as stations follow rules established by the Federal Communication Commission (FCC). Residents are encouraged to contact local television service providers to determine individual community transition dates.

Additionally, the DTV Delay Act will extend the TV Converter Box Coupon Program until July 31, 2009 and requires the National Telecommunications and Information Administration to issue, upon request, replacement coupons for each coupon that expires without being redeemed.

To ensure uninterrupted service, consumers with analog television sets have three options:

1. Purchase and install a DTV converter box
2. Purchase a TV set with a built-in digital tuner
3. Subscribe to cable, satellite or other paid TV service

How can Citizen Corps Councils support the Digital Transition?

While the Digital Transition is being well publicized through multi-media outlets, the message may not be reaching populations who are most vulnerable in emergency situations. The loss of emergency communications via television could jeopardize an at-risk individual's ability to respond appropriately in a crisis. Senior, non-English speaking and special needs populations are at risk of not understanding or being able to access Digital Transition resources and may require additional assistance purchasing and installing a DTV converter box. Since the TV Converter Box Coupon ordering process and other Digital Transition information has been primarily web-based, the above named populations may not have a clear understanding of the transition and how to ensure they have uninterrupted television communication.

Following the transition, the FCC estimates up to 20 million individuals could be left without television communications. Many community members will continue to need assistance

to make the switch from analog to digital. Working with government and community leaders will be essential in assisting those who need support.

Citizen Corps Councils, working with all sectors of the community, to include State and local government agencies, community based organizations, the private sector, and Citizen Corps Partners and Affiliates, can support these at-risk groups by providing focused, grassroots outreach and hands-on assistance.

Citizen Corps Councils and partner organizations can support local initiatives by taking these steps and making sure everyone in the community stays connected!

- **Contact local media outlets to coordinate Digital Transition outreach efforts for key populations.** By coordinating with the State and local broadcasters, cable companies, and public television stations; Citizen Corps Councils can assure they are providing accurate information and resources. National Citizen Corps Affiliate, the **Association of Public Televisions (APTS)**, provides contact information for local public television stations in all fifty states and DTV outreach materials. To learn more, please visit http://www.aptv.org/getinvolved/Find_Your_PTV_Station.cfm
- **Coordinate with government and related community based organizations to reach vulnerable populations.** Coordination with State and local Human Services Offices and population specific non-profit organizations (i.e. Meals On Wheels, La Raza Affiliate Network, the local Arc Chapters) will provide opportunities for outreach about the DTV transition to key populations. National Citizen Corps Affiliate, **Meals On Wheels Across America (MOWAA)**, supports spreading the DTV message and has contact information for their local counter parts on their website. To contact a Meals On Wheels Program in your community, please visit <http://www.mowaa.org/Page.aspx?pid=253>
- **Work with the United Way or local 211 information line and/or create a local hotline where people can call with DTV transition questions and ask for assistance before and after the transition date.** To find a local United Way in your community, please visit <http://www.liveunited.org/index.cfm>
- **Develop consistent messages with local 9-1-1 call centers and first responders.** When the Digital Transition occurs, community members who have not adapted their analog TVs may become confused and contact 9-1-1 or first responders to report the problem. Coordinate with 9-1-1 operators and response agencies to provide consistent messages and guidance on how to obtain a converter box.
- **Assist community members in evaluating whether their television set requires a converter box.** The DTV converter is only necessary for analog TVs without a paid television service. Community members may not know what type of television they have and may need assistance in determining whether they need a converter box. Learn more by going to <https://www.dtv2009.gov/FAQ.aspx>
- **Help community members apply for a coupon.** Many lower income and homebound community members do not have internet access or may not know about the DTV hotline phone number. Help at-risk community members apply for a coupon on the TV Converter Box Coupon Program Website or call the hotline on their behalf. Remember, coupons are on a first come first serve basis and it is important to



help individuals that only have access to analog televisions apply for a coupon as soon as possible. The FCC reports over one million people are currently on a waiting list to receive coupons so the coupon could take several weeks to arrive. When applying for the coupons, it is important to keep the “reference number” in order to track the status of the application online and to find out when to expect the coupon by mail. Please note the “reference number” can only be obtained through the online and the phone applications. To learn more, please visit www.mydtv2009.gov or call 1-800-DTV-2009.

- **Provide transportation for community members.** Drive community members to local retailers to purchase converter boxes; contact retailers in advance to confirm inventory availability. To find a retailer near you, please visit <https://www.dtv2009.gov/VendorSearch.aspx>
- **Organize a donations drive for digital television sets or donations to purchase converter boxes for at-risk community members.** Promote community participation in a donation drive for digital television sets and/or receiving donations to purchase converter boxes by coordinating with community based organizations and partners to serve as drop off and collection points.
- **Organize a recycling drive for discarded analog television sets.** For information about recycling televisions, visit the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's DTV website (<http://www.epa.gov/epawaste/consERVE/materials/ecycling/tv-convert.htm>)
- **Help connect a converter box.** Most converter boxes are easy to install, but installation can be challenging especially for seniors and people with disabilities. Organize volunteers who can help install converter boxes for community members in need. At the request of the FCC, the **American Radio Relay League (ARRL)** can provide information about the installation and testing the connectivity of converter boxes. To find local ARRL club contacts, please visit <http://www.arrl.org/findaclub>