

Digital Television Transition

Sample Press Release #1

[Cut and paste this press release onto your organization's letterhead. Be sure to double-space. If the press release runs more than two pages, consider using a smaller typeface or line-and-one-half spacing, or edit the text.]

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: [Insert date]

CONTACT: [Insert name, phone number]

[NAME OF YOUR ORGANIZATION] URGES TV VIEWERS TO GEAR UP FOR THE CONVERSION TO ALL-DIGITAL TELEVISION

[Your City and State] – Congress has recently extended the deadline until June 12, 2009, as to when all full-power television stations will broadcast in digital only. Even though the deadline has been pushed back, your local broadcasters may make the transition before then and some already have. So is important that consumers be ready, and act now. In 1996, the U.S. Congress authorized the distribution of an additional broadcast channel to each broadcast TV station so that they could start a digital broadcast channel while simultaneously continuing their analog broadcast channel. The switch from analog to digital broadcast television is referred to as the digital TV (DTV) transition. Broadcast stations in all U.S. markets are currently broadcasting in both analog and digital.

[Your spokesman] said, “June 2009 will be here sooner than we think. Now is the time for us all to get up to speed on DTV: what is it; what does it mean to me; what do I need to do? We at [your organization] encourage everyone to educate themselves on this important issue and help our friends and family.”

Digital broadcasting allows stations to offer improved picture and sound quality, and digital is much more efficient than analog. For example, rather than being limited to providing one analog program, a broadcaster is able to offer a super sharp “high definition” (HD) digital program or multiple “standard definition” (SD) digital programs simultaneously through a process called “multicasting.” Multicasting allows broadcast stations to offer several channels of digital programming at the same time, using the same amount of spectrum required for one analog program. So, for example, while a station broadcasting in analog on channel 7 is only able to offer viewers one program, a station broadcasting in digital on channel 7 can offer viewers one digital program on channel 7-1, a second digital program on channel 7-2, a third digital program on channel 7-3, and so on. This means more programming choices for viewers. Further, DTV can provide interactive video and data services that are not possible with analog technology.

An important benefit of the switch to all-digital broadcasting is that it will free up parts of the valuable broadcast spectrum for public safety communications (such as police, fire departments, and rescue squads). Also, some of the spectrum will be auctioned to companies that will be able to provide consumers with more advanced wireless services (such as wireless broadband).

For viewers who have one or more televisions that receive free over-the-air programming (with a roof-top antenna or “rabbit ears” on the TV), the type of TV you own is very important. A digital television (a TV with an internal digital tuner) will allow you to continue to watch free over-the-air

programming after your broadcast station transitions to all digital. However, if you have an analog television, you will need a digital-to-analog converter box to continue to watch broadcast television on that set. This converter box will also enable you to see any additional multicast programming that your local stations are offering.

To help consumers with the DTV transition, the Government established the Digital-to-Analog Converter Box Coupon Program. The National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA), a part of the Department of Commerce, administers this program. Every U.S. household is eligible to receive up to two coupons, worth \$40 each, toward the purchase of eligible digital-to-analog converter boxes. Digital to analog converter boxes can be hooked up today, and you can begin receiving the benefits of digital immediately. The coupons may only be used for eligible converter boxes sold at participating consumer electronics retailers, and the coupons must be used at the time of purchase. (Please note that these coupons will expire 90 days after mailing). Manufacturers estimate that digital-to-analog converter boxes will sell from \$40 to \$70 each. This is a one-time cost. For more information on the Digital-to-Analog Converter Box Coupon Program, visit the NTIA's Web site at www.dtv2009.gov, or call 1-888-388-2009 (voice) or 1-877-530-2634 (TTY).

Cable and satellite TV subscribers with analog TVs hooked up to their cable or satellite service should not be affected by the June 12, 2009, cut-off date for full-power analog broadcasting, but should contact their provider to find out anything is needed to be prepared for the June deadline.

There are many sources of information about the digital transition but one of the best is the government's Web site www.dtv.gov. It contains information on what DTV is, questions consumers should ask when purchasing new television sets, what programs are available in DTV, and much more. You can also call 1-888-CALL-FCC.

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