

WEST VIRGINIA CONSUMER PROTECTION GUIDE: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE DIGITAL TELEVISION TRANSITION (DTV)

Key Numbers for Consumers

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| DTV Help Center that can assist WV | 1-877-388-5473 |
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| To Apply for a Converter Box Coupon | 1-888-388-2009 |
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When will the digital transition occur?

The new end-date for the transition is June 12, 2009, but 39 percent of the nation's broadcasters – including a few in West Virginia – filed with the Federal Communications Commission this week to go forward on February 17, 2009.

Why is this digital transition occurring?

Several years ago, Congress mandated that broadcasters switch to digital-only signals to free up much needed spectrum space for emergency communications by first responders and to help speed up the deployment of high-speed wireless internet.

Who will be affected by the transition?

Only people who get signals over-the-air using rooftop antennas or indoor “rabbit ear” antennas and have older, analog TV sets need to take action. The transition does not impact West Virginians who currently have – or are subscribing to – cable or satellite TV service.

Why do I need digital television?

Currently, over-the-air broadcasters – ABC, CBS, NBC, FOX and PBS – transmit their programming through an analog signal. Depending on location and distance from the transmitter, the programming can be spotty and the number of channels available can be limited. Digital television is supposed to allow for a clearer picture and even greater channel choices – although, in some areas, channel reception could be reduced. Most importantly, the switch frees up much needed signal spectrum for emergency communications used by first-responders.

What do I need to do to prepare?

West Virginians who receive television programming through cable or satellite won't be affected. If you currently receive your television signal through a roof-top antenna or rabbit ears and have an older television, you'll need to purchase a digital converter box which retails between \$50 - \$60, plus tax. To help defray the costs to the consumer, the government has made available a \$40 coupon to help pay for the new converter box.

How much is it going to cost me?

If you have cable or satellite – no cost at all because there will be no impact to your television. There is a one-time expense for a digital converter box (between \$50-\$60, plus tax) that you hook up to your existing antenna to receive the signal, and there may be an additional expense if you need to replace an older antenna. After that, even though you'll be receiving many more channels, expanded programming, and a better picture, it will still be free to you as a consumer.

How do I apply for a converter box coupon?

Call 1-888-DTV-2009 (1-888-388-2009), please note this is an automated line – you can also go to www.dtv2009.gov. Consumers who apply now will be put on a waiting list, and will receive their coupons as new ones become available. Consumers are encouraged to be patient as there are 3 million Americans already on the waiting list. Senator Rockefeller has been working hard to speed up this coupon program but given the number of requests coming in each day it could take 1-2 months for a coupon to arrive in your mailbox.

If I've already applied for a coupon, how can I find out when it will arrive in my mailbox?

The only way to track your coupon request is online at www.dtv2009.gov. Click on “Where are my coupons?”

I have a coupon but it expired, what can I do?

Senator Rockefeller helped change the law to allow West Virginians who have expired coupons to reapply. Call 1-888-DTV-2009 (1-888-388-2009) or go to www.dtv2009.gov.

Where can I find a digital converter box?

Many large retailers in West Virginia, including Target, Wal-Mart, RadioShack, Best Buy, and Rite Aid, carry the converter box. A list of local retailers should also be included in the mailing when you receive your coupon.

Converter boxes can be ordered over the phone and online from retailers like RadioShack (1-877-773-8848) or Best Buy (1-877-229-3889) or from Amazon.com.

I have my digital converter box but need help installing it. Is there anyone I can call?

In West Virginia, you can reach the DTV Help Center by calling 1-877-388-5473 for more information and direct help. The Federal Communications Commission has people standing by to help walk you through the installation process. You can reach them at 1-888-CALL-FCC (1-888-225-5322).

After February 17, even if I installed a converter box, what do I do if I still can't receive television broadcasts?

There are a couple reasons why you may not be receiving television broadcasts. First, not all West Virginia broadcasters are making the transition at the same time - it is possible that some networks will not be available. You should follow the instructions that came with your converter box to rescan your television to see if new stations have become available.

Before the transition, you may have received a channel with a weak signal and fuzzy picture. Digital television provides a crystal-clear picture or none at all. A new antenna could help, and some guidance is offered online at www.antennaweb.org.

West Virginians can also contact their local television station, whose engineers will be best equipped to answer reception related questions.

I have cable or satellite service, but I'm not getting broadcasts on a spare television set, what do I do?

If your second television isn't hooked up to cable, you'll need to purchase a digital converter box to receive the over-the-air broadcasts like you did before the digital transition.

Can I return my converter box?

Return policies vary from store to store, but most national retailers accept converter box returns. Most national stores will allow West Virginians to exchange a converter box for another model. Retailers cannot reissue coupons, however, and if the box was purchased with a coupon, consumers will only be reimbursed for their out of pocket expense.

After June 12, 2009, all television will stop broadcasting through an analog signal – if you don't have cable, satellite, a converter box, or a television made in the last several years, your TV set will be dark.