



Commerce's NTIA Releases Statement Regarding the TV Converter Box Coupons

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WASHINGTON—Commerce's National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) released today the following statement on the TV Converter Box Coupon Program.

"We are working with Congress and other stakeholders so coupons can be processed and mailed without further delay," said Meredith Attwell Baker, acting administrator of the National Telecommunications and Information Administration. "While we have reached a temporary limit on the number of coupons we can issue, we expect to be able to issue several million additional coupons during the course of the program, and we are working with Congress to make that happen. Since the program began in January 2008, NTIA has urged households to apply for coupons as soon as possible, so they can be fully prepared by February 17, 2009. We have been communicating with Congress throughout the Program and advised as early as November 6 that coupon demand may hit the \$1.34 billion obligation limit by mid-January."

"NTIA has been committed to efficiently implementing the program to ensure that Americans know their options for the transition. We remain committed to ensuring the smoothest transition possible within the requirements of the program established by Congress. We are confident that we can continue to work with all parties to ensure a successful transition to digital television broadcasts, to ensure that consumers benefit from the enhanced picture and sound quality, as well as channel selection, that will result from the digital switch. A successful digital transition is critical not only to provide these consumer benefits, but also to ensure that our nation's first responders receive additional communications frequencies, as recommended by the 9/11 Commission. The frequencies made available will also carry new commercial wireless services that will benefit households and businesses."

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. Eligible consumers will receive a reference number that they should write down and use to check the status of their request at the Coupon Program's Web site, www.DTV2009.gov. As NTIA has emphasized, consumers should allow at least six weeks to prepare, and should explore all their options, including getting a converter without a coupon, if they want uninterrupted broadcast TV service. Consumers holding coupons should redeem them before the coupon expires within 90 days from the date it is mailed.

Since January 1, 2008, more than 25 million households have requested more than 47.4 million coupons and more than 18.8 million coupons have been redeemed. To date, 52.5 percent of coupons that have reached their 90 day cycle have been redeemed and more than 13.3 million coupons have expired.

In January 2008 the Nielsen Company reported that 14.3 million television households relied solely on over-the-air broadcasts. During the past year, 13.1 million over the air households have requested coupons.

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 that subscribe to cable, satellite, or another pay TV service, as well as those that watch broadcast TV on a set with a digital tuner, do not need to take action to continue receiving TV service.

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. NTIA expects to be able to issue additional coupons over the course of the program, and is working with Congress to ensure that outcome. 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, 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.

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

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