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DTV.gov

THE DIGITAL TV TRANSITION

What You Need To Know About DTV

The DTV Transition and Viewers Along U.S. Borders

After February 17, 2009, full-power television stations in the United States will stop broadcasting in analog and will continue broadcasting in digital only. This is known as the digital television (DTV) transition. The DTV transition will be an historic moment in the evolution of TV. Broadcast stations can offer viewers improved picture and sound quality and new programming choices. It also will allow us to significantly improve public safety communications and will usher in a new era of advanced wireless services such as the widespread deployment of wireless broadband.

Some consumers living along the U.S. borders with Mexico and Canada currently watch broadcast television programming from stations in Mexico and Canada. Canadian TV stations will also transition from analog to digital broadcasting, but not until August of 2011. Mexico has begun its transition to digital television broadcasting and will complete it in 2021.

U.S. consumers living along the Canadian and Mexican borders are able to watch television programming from Canadian or Mexican broadcast stations with an over-the-air antenna such as “rabbit ears” on their set or an antenna on their roof. Because broadcast stations in Mexico and Canada will not complete their transition to digital broadcasting at the same time as full-power U.S. stations, their broadcasts will remain in analog after February 17, 2009, while the full-power U.S. broadcast stations will be available only in digital.

If you have an analog television that receives free, over-the-air programming with a broadcast antenna, you will need to purchase a digital-to-analog converter box in order to watch digital broadcast television. Each U.S. household is eligible to receive two \$40 coupons to be used toward the purchase of two digital-to-analog converter boxes. The National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) is administering the coupon program. (Please note that these coupons will expire 90 days after mailing). More information can be found at www.dtv2009.gov, or by calling 1-888-388-2009 (voice) or 1-877-530-2634 (TTY).

If you purchase a digital-to-analog converter box to watch digital broadcasts on an analog TV and also wish to continue watching analog programming broadcasts from stations in either Mexico or Canada, you should purchase a converter box with “analog pass-through” capability. This allows analog broadcast signals to pass through the converter box to be tuned by your analog TV. Converter boxes with analog pass-through capability will also enable you to watch analog programming from U.S. low-power, Class A, and translator television stations, many of which will continue to broadcast in analog after February 17, 2009.

(more)



For More Information:

1-888-CALL-FCC (Voice)

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NTIA's TV Converter Box Coupon Program has certified converter box models that have analog pass through capability. A current list of coupon-eligible converter boxes is available at www.ntiadt.gov/cecb_list.cfm. The converter box models with analog pass-through capability are noted on the list with an asterisk next to them. In addition, NTIA will mail a list of current coupon-eligible converter boxes, noting with an asterisk those that have analog pass-through capability, to each household that receives converter box coupons. You can also check with your retailer to determine whether the converter box you are purchasing has analog pass-through capability.

If you purchase a digital-to-analog converter box without analog pass-through capability, you may have to connect an "A/B switch" and/or a "signal splitter" to bypass the box if you wish to view analog TV broadcasts. Check with the manufacturer of the digital-to-analog converter box and your retailer if you need instructions on how to connect the box to view broadcasts from both analog and digital stations.

For more information about the DTV transition, go to www.dtv.gov, or contact the FCC by e-mailing dtvinfo@fcc.gov; calling 1-888-CALL-FCC (1-888-225-5322) or by TTY at 1-888-TELL-FCC (1-888-835-5322).

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