

AoA DTV enews

Countdown to DTV

U.S. Assistant Secretary for Aging Secretary Josefina G. Carbonell urges everyone to take action soon to prepare themselves and their older family members for the Digital TV Transition (DTV) which is scheduled to take place on February 17, 2009. “We are 70 days from the biggest change in TV since colorization. The transition from analog to digital will make our TV picture quality better and with more options, but more importantly, it will free up valuable spectrum space for use by emergency responders to communicate with each other should the need arise. I urge everyone to take appropriate steps now to prepare yourself and your older family members and friends to ensure that they remain connected after February 17, 2009.”

The Administration on Aging (AoA) has been working with the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) and the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) as well as its national aging network of community-based organizations since the summer 2007 to address issues of concern regarding at risk populations who will make the switch from analog to digital TV. Assistant Secretary Carbonell is the lead spokesperson for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services on this topic, having testified before the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation on September 23, 2008 about issues related to education, outreach and converter box installation assistance to at risk populations and pledging AoA’s strong support as a partner in this national effort. You can read the Assistant Secretary’s [testimony](#) here.

Guest Commentary from Dennis Streets, Director, North Carolina Division of Aging and Adult Services (Wilmington, NC was selected as a pilot site to make an early transition to DTV on September 8, 2008.)

UPDATE ON NORTH CAROLINA’S DTV TRANSITION

The NC Division of Aging and Adult Services has continued to work closely with the federal agencies involved in the transition as well as its area agencies on aging, local senior centers and aging and adult services network. Throughout the state its area agencies on aging and senior centers have used the available publicity materials and speaker's bureaus and have held presentations. Many received positive media attention. The Division continues to post information about the transition and coupon program on its web site and ran an in-depth article on this subject in its June 2008 agency e-newsletter http://www.ncdhhs.gov/aging/pub/At_A_Glance_summer08.pdf

The City of Wilmington became the first television market in the nation to switch to all digital TV on September 8, 2008. The city is serving as a test market to work out any problems before

the rest of the nation goes digital in February 2009. Wilmington has found that education tailored to older persons, their families, and the aging/health/human service agencies working with these populations proved to be very valuable because it could be woven into conversations by the professionals, i.e. when home-delivered meal assessments/reassessments were being conducted, etc. The city also found that providing information to individuals on their Disaster Special Needs Registry, both in printed form and through phone calls was very beneficial.

Education to persons residing in skilled nursing facilities and assisted living facilities posed special challenges. A consumer education emphasis to administration, families, and Long Term Care Ombudsmen was found to be crucial as there are frail persons who will need to get coupons and pay for, obtain and install the converter box. Families and/or facility administration/building maintenance will be especially instrumental in this process. However, none of this would have occurred locally without the community partnerships of aging and disabled network agencies, faith communities, local government, media outlets and interested citizens working together.

For the older persons who utilize over the air transmission for TV reception, there were economic challenges to affording the co-pay for the converter box, transportation to get to a “big box” store to purchase the converter box or a new antenna, and installation if necessary. In many cases trained volunteers could certainly assist, but must be a trusted entity and it is not reasonable to believe that overworked Meals on Wheels volunteers, in home aide staff, or others providing supportive services are able to also add another task.

The City of Wilmington found that in order to provide consumer education, assistance with converter box procurement and installation, and to troubleshoot problems after the transition, designated, trusted agencies must have sufficient funding to offer these services to their senior and general population. The Area Agency on Aging for the Wilmington area and its aging network providers did not have the benefit of a funding stream pre/post DTV transition and had to rely upon already overworked staff.

Partnering and collaboration were needed to make positive impacts in the community and have a successful transition. The media was an important link in all this, as there was an unbelievable volume of information broadcasted on a daily basis, on television station websites, newspaper articles, inserts in church bulletins, etc. These methods were successfully utilized by older citizens to learn about the transition.

Guest Commentary from Noemi Pendleton, Director, Hawaii Executive Office on Aging. (Hawaii’s full power stations will be making the transition on January 15, 2009 due to environmental issues) Read here how Hawaii is helping prepare older Hawaiians for this major change one month ahead of the rest of the United States. With the exception of residents on Kauai, households that receive TV signals over the air will need to connect a converter box to sets in order to continue watching TV. Kauai receives over-the-air television signals via low-power translators that are not affected by the DTV transition.

The Hawaii Association of Broadcasting (HAB) and Federal Communications Commission (FCC) are the lead agencies handling the transition. The FCC has a new website for Hawaii residents at www.dtv.gov/hawaii and another website linked from HAB is www.hawaiigoesdigital.com. Hawaii's Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs (DCCA) is also plugged into the awareness efforts of the transition, and they handle constituent inquiries.

To ensure that all older Hawaiians and their families are aware of the transition, the Executive Office on Aging (EOA) is distributing to the Area Agencies on Aging (AAA) flyers received from the US Dept of Commerce regarding the TV Converter Box Coupon Program. EOA and AAAs will include information in upcoming newsletters, emails, and meetings/events/fairs about the transition. On Dec. 9, 2008, Lt. Governor James “Duke” Aiona will hold a news conference with FCC Commissioner Jonathan S. Adelstein to raise awareness about the Jan. 15 transition. The FCC is coordinating workshops throughout the state, and HAB is coordinating public service announcements on all of the transitioning television stations. FCC outreach events will also be held in Maui on December 10 and in Hilo on December 11.

News You Can Use on DTV (Excerpts from recent NTIA and FCC Press Announcements)

Commerce’s NTIA Awards \$2.7 Million to National Association of Area Agencies on Aging to Help Seniors Transition to Digital TV

November 18, 2008 WASHINGTON—The Commerce Department’s National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) announced an award of \$2.7 million to the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a) to help seniors transition to digital television through the TV Converter Box Coupon Program. The association will assist seniors with completing a coupon application, obtaining a converter box and connecting the device to a television in the home now to the end of April. N4a is partnering with the Keeping Seniors Connected (KSC) Coalition, 11 national aging organizations which joined together in early 2008 to target issues of concern to older Americans related to the DTV transition.

Press Release: Gutierrez Announces Nursing Homes Residents and P.O. Box Households Eligible to Receive Converter Box Coupons

September 16, 2008 WASHINGTON

U.S. Secretary of Commerce Carlos M. Gutierrez announced that residents of licensed nursing homes, intermediate care facilities, assisted living facilities and households that use a post office box for mail delivery will be eligible to request coupons from the TV Converter Box Coupon Program. The rule change takes effect 30 days after publication in the Federal Register. Applicants living in licensed nursing homes, intermediate care facilities and assisted living facilities will be required to provide their name, address of the facility and whether they receive television exclusively with an antenna, or through cable, satellite or other pay television service. A family member or a representative from the licensed facility may apply for one coupon for a nursing home resident, but the coupon will be mailed directly to the nursing home resident. A special application will be made available for nursing home residents to fill out once the rule becomes effective.

Also, applicants who utilize a post office box for mail delivery will be able to request two coupons through the normal application process. Applicants will be required to provide their physical residence in addition to their post office box number.

Press Release: Consumers Urged to Apply for Converter Box Coupons By Year-End

September 30, 2008 WASHINGTON

The Commerce Department's National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA), announced today that "over-the-air" television viewers who want to participate in the TV Converter Box Coupon Program should apply for coupons before the end of the year to minimize the chances of losing TV reception when full-power broadcasters switch to digital. Full-power TV broadcasters switch from analog to 100 percent digital broadcasts on February 17, 2009. For consumers receiving free, over-the-air broadcasts on analog televisions, use the following three steps to make the transition to digital television:

Step 1: Apply.

Apply for a coupon now. Coupons are available on a first-come, first-serve basis. Consumers can apply for coupons online at www.DTV2009.gov, by phone at 1-888-DTV-2009 (1-888-388-2009), by fax at 1-877-DTV-4ME2 (1-877-388-4632) or by mail to PO Box 2000, Portland, OR 97208. Deaf or hard of hearing callers may dial 1-877-530-2634 (English TTY) or 1-866-495-1161 (Spanish TTY).

Step 2: Buy.

Consumers should buy their converter boxes soon after their coupons arrive in the mail. Consumers will receive a list of participating local, phone and online retailers with their coupons. TV viewers are urged to make their choice before the end of the year.

Step 3: Try.

Once a consumer has purchased a converter box, they should connect the box to their analog TV immediately and follow the installation, and channel scanning instructions, and antenna adjustments, if needed. This provides the opportunity to test the converter box and troubleshoot potential problems prior to the transition date. Most importantly, consumers can start enjoying the benefits of a clearer picture and more programming choices now, so don't wait to install your converter box.

Helpful DTV Transition Websites:

FCC: <http://www.dtv.gov/>

Frequently Asked Questions: <http://www.dtv.gov/consumercorner.html>

NTIA Converter Box Coupon Program <https://www.dtv2009.gov/>