



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION PUBLIC SAFETY ADVISORY ON THE TRANSITION FROM ANALOG TO DIGITAL TELEVISION BROADCASTS (EFFECTIVE FEBRUARY 17, 2009)

This is an educational and training advisory, directed to the nationwide public safety community, from the Federal Communications Commission.

Overview of DTV Transition

The digital television (DTV) transition refers to the switch from analog to digital television broadcasts. On February 17, 2009, federal law requires that all full-power television broadcast stations stop broadcasting in analog format and broadcast only in digital format.

Who is affected by the DTV Transition?

Consumers who own a digital television, or who subscribe to pay television services (e.g. cable or satellite) should not be affected by the February 17, 2009, cut-off date for full-power analog broadcasting. We encourage consumers who subscribe to pay television services to contact their service provider to determine the impact of the DTV transition on their TV viewing and whether any additional components, such as a digital set-top box, may be needed to watch digital broadcast programming. Consumers who do not have subscription TV services and own analog televisions must acquire a digital-to-analog converter box for each of their analog TV sets to continue to receive free over-the-air digital television programming.

While consumers in the United States who use off-the-air television service receive most of their programming from full-power stations, there are three other categories of broadcast TV stations – “low power,” “Class A,” and “translator” stations. There is currently no deadline for these other categories of stations to convert to digital broadcasting. However, consumers that use a digital-to-analog converter box to watch digital broadcasts on an analog TV with an antenna and also wish to continue watching analog LPTV, Class A, or TV translator stations should purchase a converter box with “analog pass-through” capability.

Public Safety Implications

It is estimated that approximately 33.6 million, or 12 percent, of people in the United States watch television via an over-the-air signal only. For many individuals, the television is the primary source of news, weather, emergency and other public safety information in their local communities. Individuals who do not take the appropriate measures to ensure that their analog televisions are capable of receiving digital TV signals after February 17, 2009 may be at risk of losing access to important public safety notifications.



In addition, some individuals and public safety entities may rely on battery-powered analog televisions during power outages that may occur during weather or other emergency situations. Portable, battery-powered analog TVs will not be able to receive digital TV programming after February 17, 2009 unless they have an external antenna or audio/video input that allows them to be connected to a digital-to-analog converter box. Also, currently there are no digital-to-analog converter boxes that operate on batteries. Accordingly, if a converter box is to be used with a battery powered TV at times or locations where power is not available from the local public utility service, it will need an external power source, such as battery power station or an emergency power generator, for it to function. Portable AM/FM and shortwave radios are unaffected by the DTV transition and will continue to function as normal to provide access to emergency information. Radios that are designed to tune the audio portion of analog TV broadcasts will not be capable of receiving the audio portion of digital TV broadcasts. Consumers may wish to consider obtaining new portable digital televisions or radios that can receive the audio portion of digital television as they become available on the market.

What Should Individuals Do To Prepare For The DTV Transition?

Consumers who own analog sets that are not connected to a subscription TV service must purchase a digital-to-analog converter box for each of their analog TV sets to continue to receive over-the-air programming. A government program run by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) is making available \$40 coupons, limited to two per household, to help consumers pay for the converter boxes. More information on the digital-to-analog converter box program is available online at www.dtv2009.gov, or by calling 1-888-388-2009 (voice) or 1-877-530-2634 (TTY).

For Further Information

Additional information on the DTV transition can be found at www.dtv.gov. Individuals can also contact the FCC's Consumer Center by e-mailing dtvinfo@fcc.gov; calling 1-888-CALL-FCC (1-888-225-5322) voice or 1-888-TELL-FCC (1-888-835-5322) TTY; faxing 1-866-418-0232; or writing to:

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Consumer & Governmental Affairs Bureau
Consumer Inquiries and Complaints Division
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