



DIGITAL TELEVISION TRANSITION

by Texas Attorney General Greg Abbott

BY NOW, YOU'VE NO DOUBT HEARD ABOUT the upcoming changes coming to your favorite television channels. Television watchers need to be prepared for a significant change that may affect their ability to watch broadcast stations with existing equipment. Beginning Feb. 17, all full-power broadcast television stations in the United States will switch their broadcasting signals from an analog to digital format. While this change may sound technical and complicated, Texans do not need any technical expertise to successfully navigate the transition to digital TV (DTV).

The switch to digital TV, which was mandated by Congress, will end analog television signal broadcasts. These soon-to-be-extinct transmissions are received via a traditional set-top ("rabbit ears") or rooftop antenna. DTV will enable broadcast TV stations to provide an improved digital picture and sound quality. It will also give viewers a wider array of programming options.

Importantly, digital signals require less bandwidth, so television stations can provide many digital channels using the same amount of broadcast spectrum required for one analog program. The DTV transition will free up parts of the broadcast spectrum for public safety communications, such as those used by police and fire departments. More airwaves also will be available for advanced wireless service providers, like those that

offer broadband Internet connections.

Many television sets are already equipped to receive digital signals. Since March 1, 2007, all televisions imported to or shipped through the United States have been required to include a digital tuner. Texans can look through labels or statements in owners' manuals to learn whether their television contains a digital tuner. Words commonly used to indicate digital-ready equipment include "Integrated Digital Tuner," "Digital Tuner Built-In;" "Digital Receiver," or "Digital Tuner;" "DTV," "ATSC" or "HDTV."

Devices that are labeled "Digital Monitor," "HDTV Monitor," "Digital Ready" or "HDTV Ready," may not have digital tuners and will therefore likely need a separate converter box.

Texans who are unable to determine whether their television set is digital ready may want to contact the device's manufacturer.

To continue watching television on an analog device, Texans can obtain a digital-to-analog converter box. Connecting a converter to an analog TV allows non-digital devices to play over-the-air digital broadcasts.

To help consumers with the DTV transition, the federal government established the Digital-to-Analog Converter Box Coupon Program. This program allows each U.S. household to receive up to two \$40 coupons that can be used to purchase qualified digital-to-

analog converter boxes. Texans can use these coupons at participating consumer electronics retailers. Most converter boxes are priced between \$40 and \$70 each. The coupons expire 90 days after they are mailed to the requestor. For more information about the Digital-to-Analog Converter Box Coupon Program, visit www.dtv2009.gov, or call (888) 388-2009.

Cable television subscribers already receive digital signals and will not be affected by the Feb. 17 cut-off date for analog broadcasting. Satellite TV subscribers who receive their local TV stations through their satellite service will not be affected. If local TV stations are not available through the satellite service, viewers may have to obtain a converter box to receive those stations.

The majority of broadcast stations in U.S. television markets are already broadcasting in a digital format. To verify the channel numbers currently broadcasting digital programming, Texans should contact their local broadcast stations.

Texans who choose to discard old analog televisions may want to participate in a TV recycling program. The Web site MyGreenElectronics.org explains disposal options and offers help locating recycling programs in their area.

Texans with questions about the DTV transition can find out more at www.dtv.gov, a Web site run by the Federal Communications Commission.

POINTS TO REMEMBER



DIGITAL TV TRANSITIONS

- Beginning Feb. 17, all full-power broadcast U.S. television stations will switch broadcasting from analog to digital.
- Digital TV enables broadcasters to offer better picture and sound quality.
- A converter box will be needed to watch digital television on an older analog set.

OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL
(800) 252-8011
www.texasattorneygeneral.gov

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
www.fcc.gov
DTVinfo@fcc.gov
(888) 225-5322 (TTY: 1-888-835-5322)

CONVERTER BOX COUPON PROGRAM
www.dtv2009.gov
(888) 388-2009

RECYCLING INFORMATION
www.mygreenelectronics.org

For more information about this and other consumer topics, visit the Office of the Attorney General online at www.texasattorneygeneral.gov.



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT