

FCC Consumer Advisory

HOW TO RECEIVE A BROADCAST TV STATION IF IT IS DROPPED FROM YOUR PAY TV SERVICE

Cable operators and other pay TV service providers, such as satellite operators, carry local television broadcast stations based on contracts with the stations. When these contracts end, the parties generally extend or renew these contracts. The process by which the contracts are negotiated is known as “retransmission consent.” In almost all cases, agreement is reached and stations continue to be carried without interruption. On some occasions, the pay TV service provider and the station fail to reach an agreement, and the pay TV service provider is required by law to stop carrying that station until an agreement is reached. These are private agreements, though federal law requires the parties to negotiate with each other in good faith.

What can I do if a local broadcast television station is no longer available on my pay TV service?

If you wish to view the station, you may be able to do so through one of the following options:

1. Watch the station (and other broadcasting stations) over the air using an antenna and a digital television.
2. Watch the station (and other broadcasting stations) over the air using an antenna and an analog television attached to a digital-to-analog converter box.
3. Subscribe to another pay service that is carrying the station. Available pay services vary based on your location. You should contact the pay service provider to determine whether it provides service to your residence. In addition, you should be aware that different pay TV service providers’ agreements for the same broadcast television station may expire on different dates. Switching to another pay service is not a guarantee that your new service will continue to carry a particular broadcast television station.
4. In addition, some broadcast network programming is available on the Internet, though it is often delayed for some time after its initial broadcast.

How can I watch a station over the air without a pay TV subscription?

To watch a television station over the air, you need either:

- A digital TV set.

OR

- An analog TV set connected to a digital-to-analog converter box.



In either case, you will need an appropriate antenna connected to the TV set or the converter box. Depending on your location, this could be either an outdoor rooftop antenna or an indoor antenna.

To check for the over-the-air signals that can be received at your location, use the DTV Reception Maps available at www.dtv.gov/maps/.

For more information on antennas, see the Antenna Guide at www.fcc.gov/guides/antennas-and-digital-television.

Why do I need a converter box if I have an analog TV set?

- Federal law required that by June 12, 2009, all full-power broadcast TV stations stop broadcasting in analog format and broadcast only in digital format. Although cable subscribers can still rely on analog TVs to work with their cable systems, if you are using an analog-only TV and want to watch a station over the air, you will need to use a converter box that receives the digital signals broadcast over the air and converts them so that you can see them on your analog TV.
- Converter boxes may be available from consumer electronics retailers in your community and online.

Are non-broadcast television programmers affected by the negotiations between broadcasters and pay TV service providers?

Sometimes, retransmission consent negotiations between broadcasters and pay TV service providers also involve the continued carriage of non-broadcast television. If a television broadcaster and a pay TV service provider fail to renew or extend their agreement to carry an associated non-broadcast television programmer, the pay TV service provider must stop carrying that programming service. Non-broadcast television programmers are not governed by the FCC's retransmission consent rules, and are not available over the air. They may, however, be available from other pay TV services in your area. You can find out from the pay TV service providers serving your area what programming networks they carry.

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