

How to Prepare for the DTV Transition

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The transition from analog to digital television (DTV) represents the most significant advancement of television technology since color TV was introduced in 1950. But, while nearly every new technology used today has gone digital, many Americans may be completely unaware of the DTV transition, which will be complete on February 17, 2009. To ensure that people don't lose their TV-watching capabilities, local elected officials have an important role to play. They must ask themselves, "Are the citizens in my city ready?"

The benefits of digital television are aplenty — clearer pictures and sound, and additional free channel choices such as weather and all-traffic channels.

More than 90 percent of full-power television stations in the U.S. are already broadcasting in digital, but few consumers are aware of it, or the transition.

The DTV transition doesn't directly affect everyone. Those who have a digital tuner in their television, or subscribe to cable, satellite or a telephone company TV service provider need not worry. However, households that aren't using these capabilities or only subscribe to one of the services for their primary TV but have a secondary set in the house that relies on free, over-the-air broadcasts will be affected. Studies show there are 34 million households with at least one TV set that needs to be upgraded.

Consumers have a choice

To continue receiving free, over-the-air television, a consumer will have to take one of the following simple steps.

- **Purchase a DTV converter box that will convert the digital signal into analog for an existing analog television set.** Converter boxes are now available for purchase at most major electronics retailers and usually cost between \$40 and \$70. To help cover the cost of converter boxes, the federal government is offering two converter box coupons, valued at \$40 each, to all U.S. households.
- **Purchase a new television set with a built-in digital tuner.** Most television sets manufactured in the last few years are likely to have a built-in digital tuner.
- **Subscribe to cable, satellite or a telephone company TV service provider.** Any of these services will allow people to receive digital television signals on analog television sets, as long as all the sets are connected to the service.

Elected Officials can Make a Difference

While informed consumers have nearly 10 months to decide which option might work best for them, many consumers may not yet be aware of the transition, or their options. With DTV transition directly affecting more than 69 million television sets, there is still much outreach to be done.

The following are three simple things a local elected official can do.

- **Be prepared to get the message out and explain the transition to constituents.** An electronic tool kit to help elected officials guide citizens through the transition is available at www.nab.org/xert/television/dtv_email/elected_officials_toolkit.html.
- **Encourage constituents to apply now for converter box coupons.** Constituents can apply for up to two coupons per household online, by phone, fax or U.S. postal mail. Coupons expire 90 days after they are mailed. Requests must be received by March 31, 2009. Additional information and applications are accessible on the electronic tool kit website or directly at www.dtv2009.gov/ApplyCoupon.aspx.
- **Invite a DTV speaker to a town hall meeting or community event.** The National Association of Broadcaster's Speakers Bureau can provide a speaker for a local event at no cost. To schedule a speaker in a community, visit www.dtvanswers.com/dtv_speakersbureau.html.

Details: To learn more about the DTV transition, visit NLC's DTV transition resource [website](#).

To ask further questions or to learn about additional resources, contact Vinnie Mascarenhas, director of external relations at the National Association of Broadcaster, at (202) 429-5358, or VMascarenhas@nab.org.