

FCC Consumer Advisory

Buying the Right TV: What Every Consumer Should Know

The Digital Television Transition – What is it?

The DTV transition refers to the switch from analog to digital broadcast television. Digital technology will provide improved picture quality and sound quality like that experienced at the movies. Congress set the deadline of February 17, 2009 for the DTV transition. This means that on that date all U.S. full-power television stations will stop broadcasting in analog format as they do now, and will transmit only in digital instead. (Most full-power television stations are currently broadcasting in both analog and digital.)

What Consumers Considering the Purchase of a TV Set Should Know

When buying television sets and other TV equipment such as DVD players, consumers should know whether or not the equipment includes a digital tuner. (TV equipment that includes a digital tuner is sometimes referred to as a “digital receiver.”) Consumers who want to continue to receive their local full-power broadcast television stations after February 17, 2009 must either purchase a TV set equipped with a digital tuner or purchase a digital-to-analog converter box that will convert those over-the-air digital signals into analog so that they can be displayed on an analog device. Analog-only TVs should continue to work as before with cable and satellite TV services.

Digital-to-Analog Converter Box Coupon Program

Between January 1, 2008, and March 31, 2009, all U.S. households will be eligible to request up to two coupons, worth \$40 each, to be used toward the purchase of digital-to-analog converter boxes. As described above, these converter boxes are designed to make over-the-air digital television signals viewable on analog-only TVs, and thus are not intended for analog-only TVs hooked up to cable or satellite service. The National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) is running the coupon program. For more information, visit the NTIA website at www.dtv2009.gov.

Some Sets Being Sold May Have Analog Tuners Only – Look for the Label

Although, by law, the import or interstate shipment of any TV device containing an analog tuner is now prohibited, unless it also contains a digital tuner, some stores may still have in their inventory TV equipment with only analog tuners. A television set or other TV equipment with only an analog tuner will not receive over-the-air local full-power broadcast TV station programming after February 17, 2009, unless it is connected to a digital-to-analog converter box.

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The Commission has required that retailers fully inform consumers by prominently displaying the following text if they are selling TV equipment with only an analog tuner:

This television receiver has only an analog broadcast tuner and will require a converter box after February 17, 2009, to receive over-the-air-broadcasts with an antenna because of the Nation's transition to digital broadcasting. Analog-only TVs should continue to work as before with cable and satellite TV services, gaming consoles, VCRs, DVD players, and similar products. For more information, call the Federal Communications Commission at 1-888-225-5322 (TTY: 1-888-835-5322) or visit the Commission's digital television website at: www.dtv.gov.

Consumers are urged to look for this label when shopping for a new TV set or other TV equipment and to take into consideration the limitations of analog-only TVs when making purchasing decisions. For more information about the DTV transition, go to www.dtv.gov or 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:

Federal Communications Commission
Consumer & Governmental Affairs Bureau
Consumer Inquiries and Complaints Division
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554.

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