

## Draft Newsletter Article

### Get ready for Digital TV: \$40 coupons to help consumers with transition

On January 1, 1954, NBC broadcast the first coast-to-coast color television program: college football's Tournament of Roses Parade.

More than fifty years later, the next great advance in television is happening with the transition to digital TV. Full-power television broadcasters are required by law to switch from analog broadcasting to digital by February 17, 2009. Digital TV provides movie-quality sound and images, more programs, and interactive capabilities. This means better TV quality, more choices, and more control.

Because digital broadcasting technology uses the nation's airwaves, known as spectrum, more efficiently than the current analog technology, broadcasters will return unused spectrum to the government. This returned spectrum will be used for two important purposes. Some spectrum will be given to firefighters and police, which will enable better communications during emergencies. The remaining spectrum will be auctioned to provide innovative wireless services, and the billions of dollars raised will go to the U.S. Treasury to reduce the deficit.

Today, more than 1,600 local stations are already broadcasting digital content and creating more news, public affairs, sports, and weather programs through "multicasting," using their spectrum to broadcast more than one channel. The digital television transition is opening new ways for Americans to view television and obtain services. However, there are many consumers who are just learning about the transition.

The three ways consumers may embrace the transition to digital TV by February 17, 2009, include buying a converter for their analog TV; checking with and subscribing to cable, satellite, or other pay TV service; or purchasing a TV with a digital tuner. Viewers who use "rabbit ears" or a rooftop antenna for free, over-the-air TV must buy a digital-to-analog converter to enable their TV to work after the transition date. Therefore, consumers do not need to discard their old, analog TV sets or buy a new television. Televisions with digital tuners will not require converters, and neither will subscribers of cable, satellite or other pay TV service.

To determine whether a television supports digital service or not, consumers should check their TV owner's manual, or contact the manufacturer. Also, all televisions sold in the United States prior to Fall 1998 are analog. Consumers may obtain additional information about the digital transition by contacting their local broadcaster, or their cable, satellite or pay TV service provider.

To help households with the transition, the federal government is providing coupons toward the purchase of converters. This program is run by the U.S. Commerce Department's National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA).

Beginning in January 2008, all households in the United States and its territories will be able to request, on a first-come-first-served basis, up to two coupons worth \$40 each toward the purchase of converter boxes. Coupons will expire 90 days after they are issued. The government will develop a simple application process and require consumers to only provide their name, address, whether they subscribe to a pay TV service, and whether they want one or two coupons. Coupon-eligible converters, which are expected to cost between \$50 and \$70, will be available in early 2008 at stores and online retailers, where televisions and other consumer electronics products are purchased.

NTIA will provide consumers a list of eligible converters and participating retailers when coupons are mailed and on its website. Also, participating retailers will be aware of converters eligible for the government coupon. Coupons cannot be combined, so only one coupon may be used toward the purchase of a converter—and coupons must be redeemed at the time converters are purchased.

The success of the Coupon Program will require the participation of a large number of institutions and organizations across the country to assist consumers in many ways, from understanding what their options are, to helping them apply for the coupons, and to assisting with installing the television converter once it is purchased. NTIA is actively developing training materials for community-based organizations and is in discussions with groups interested in community service, to engage them in assisting older Americans with the digital transition. Organizations wanting to work with NTIA to educate consumers about the digital transition, may call (202) 482-9114 for information.

NTIA is targeting its resources toward people who are more likely to rely on over-the-air broadcasting--seniors, the disabled, rural populations, minorities, and the poor--to inform them about the coupon program so they are not at risk of losing their television service. NTIA is aggressively working with organizations, such as the American Library Association and AARP, to inform consumers about the digital transition, ways to transition, about their options and help in applying for and using the coupons. NTIA will continue to work closely with groups to provide consumer friendly tips and advice in different formats and languages, in print and electronically.

Broadcasters, the consumer electronics industry and consumer groups have also started consumer education campaigns. These campaigns feature public service announcements, consumer friendly websites, speaker's bureaus and more to alert the public about the program and the digital transition. Consumers can expect to see public service announcements promoting the transition starting in December 2007. Throughout the digital transition, consumers will have heard about the transition enough to make sound and timely decisions in advance of the February 17, 2009, switch to digital broadcasting.

More information about the coupon program is available at [www.ntia.doc.gov/dtvcoupon](http://www.ntia.doc.gov/dtvcoupon) or by calling toll free 1-888-388-2009 (1-888-DTV-2009) in English and Spanish. The hearing impaired may call the TTY number 1-877-530-2634 for information in English, and for information in Spanish, consumers can call TTY number 1-866-495-1161.

Working together, we can make the digital transition a success for all Americans. The DTV transition deadline will be here soon, and with a little planning, all consumers will enjoy the many benefits that digital television brings.

**Ways to Prepare:**

Your TV tuner is:	You get your programming from:	You will need by Feb. 17, 2009:
Analog	Free, Over-the-air	Digital-to-Analog converter box
Analog	Cable, satellite or pay tv service	Provider will address
Digital	Over-the-air, cable, satellite, pay tv	Nothing