

FCC says Ignorance is not Bliss: Debunking the Myths about DTV

Local News

Posted by: David Haviland

Posted on : June 8, 2009 at 6:00 am

Washington, D.C. - Ignorance is bliss in some situations, but not when it comes to understanding the facts about the transition to digital television (DTV). With only four days to go until the switch, the Federal Communications Commission wants to ensure that consumers know what it takes to get ready for the switch on June 12. Here's what consumers should know:

Analog television sets will NOT be obsolete after June 12. Consumers can continue to use their analog TV sets after the transition to DTV is completed on June 12. All they need to do is install a digital-to-analog converter box to each analog TV or connect them to a subscription service, such as cable or satellite TV. Consumers also must have a good antenna with both rabbit ears, or the equivalent for channels 2-13 (VHF) and a loop, bow-tie or equivalent, to get channels 14-51 (UHF). Analog VCRs connected to a converter box can continue to record programs. Gaming consoles, DVD players and other devices that don't rely on a broadcast signal will work without a converter box. **Some viewers may have trouble receiving some digital channels after June 12.** Some stations will change their coverage area in the digital transition. Watch for station announcements: any station that loses 2% or more of the households it served in analog must notify viewers. In addition, if consumers are missing a few channels, they should conduct a channel scan, adjust their antenna and check the signal strength meter on their converter box. If channels are still missing, they may be able to add them individually by entering the number on the converter box remote. For more information regarding reception in your area, visit <http://www.dtv.gov/>. **Converter box coupons WILL be available after June 12, while supplies last.** Consumers will have until July 31, while supplies last, to order coupons by calling 1-888-DTV-2009; however, it is too late to order coupons and receive them in time for the June 12 transition. Coupons will expire 90 days after they are mailed, so consumers must act quickly to redeem them. Consumers should call ahead to confirm availability of coupon-eligible converter boxes on the day they plan to shop.

Free technical assistance WILL still be available after June 12. The FCC will continue to provide assistance after June 12 to anyone that still needs it. In some areas the FCC is offering free in-home installation services and walk-in centers to consumers who need technical assistance until the end of June, and in some locations, through July. The FCC's call center will continue to be available to all consumers. For more information, call 1-888-CALL FCC or visit <http://www.dtv.gov/>.

Installing a converter box will NOT provide high-definition television (HDTV) on your analog TV. Installing a digital-to-analog converter box will not convert an analog TV to high-definition. HDTV is a digital broadcast format that provides the highest resolution and picture quality of all digital broadcast formats. Consumers may receive free, over-the-air HDTV programming if they have an HDTV compatible digital television. But even those who use an analog TV and converter box will usually find that their picture is better than it was with the old analog signal. **The DTV transition will NOT affect TV sets that are connected to most pay TV services.** Any television set that is connected to a paid cable or satellite service will NOT be affected by the transition. The DTV transition applies only to full-power broadcast television stations - stations that use the public airwaves to transmit their programming to viewers through a broadcast antenna. Satellite customers who receive local stations through an antenna, rather than by satellite, may be affected. Check with

your provider. **You do NOT need a special "digital ready" or "HD ready" antenna to receive DTV signals.** DTV signals do not require a special antenna. Over-the-air DTV signals require the same type of antenna (i.e., rooftop, set-top) as analog signals. With digital, however, it's critical that antennas receive both VHF and UHF signals. And consumers should check their existing rooftop antennas for wear-and-tear caused by wind and weather and loose connections that could degrade performance. Weak reception that causes "snow" in analog could result in no digital picture at all: the digital "cliff effect."