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National
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Commerce's NTIA Announces Consumer Alert About Microprose Converters

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WASHINGTON, D.C.—The National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA), a division of the U.S. Department of Commerce, today issued the following consumer alert about the Microprose MPI-500 and MPI-500PT digital-to-analog converter boxes. Statements about the models were made in a May 20 press release by the Community Broadcasters Association and Microprose Systems LLC. NTIA is discussing the announcement with these organizations.

The TV Converter Box Coupon Program has certified only one product under the brand name "Microprose." The certified MPI-500 model does not have the analog pass-through feature. The MPI-500PT model has not been certified by the Program as coupon-eligible.

Participating retailers and certified converters are listed on www.dtv2009.gov. Converters listed with an asterisk means the manufacturer has indicated that these models are capable of passing analog and digital signals through to the TV set.

Because many translators and low-power stations will convert to digital after February 17, 2009, consumers may want to consider applying for TV converter box coupons now. To watch analog translators and low-power television after February 17, 2009, consumers should review the following options and determine which is best for their household:

- A. Keep an analog TV connected to an antenna to view an analog station.
- B. Purchase a digital-to-analog converter box which has analog pass-through capability.
- C. Purchase a digital-to-analog converter box without analog pass-through, and then add a splitter or A/B switch to receive both analog and digital signals.
- D. Subscribe to cable, satellite or other pay service which carries the analog station, if any.

For more information about low-power television and the analog pass-through feature, go online to www.dtv2009.gov/lowpower.

Background:

The Digital Television Transition and Public Safety Act of 2005 requires full-power television stations to cease analog broadcasts and switch to digital after February 17, 2009. The Act also authorizes Commerce's National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA)

to create the TV Converter Box Coupon Program, which is funded by the \$19 billion airwaves auction and not tax dollars.

The transition will offer consumers a clearer picture, more programming choices and free up the airwaves for better communications among emergency first responders and new telecommunications services.

By February 17, 2009, consumers need to look at each analog television set in their home that is not connected to cable, satellite, or other pay television service and make a decision:

- They may connect it to cable, satellite, or pay television service;
- They may replace it with a TV with a digital tuner, or
- They may keep it working with a TV converter box.

Some viewers watch programs over translators or other low-power stations which may continue broadcasting analog signals after February 17, 2009. Those viewers may wish to select a converter box that will pass through analog signals.

Households may request two coupons, which are worth \$40 each and can be used toward the purchase of up to two, digital-to-analog converter boxes. Between now, and March 31, 2009, households can request two coupons while funding is available in one of four ways:

- Apply online at www.dtv2009.gov.
- Call the Coupon Program 24-hour hotline 1-888-DTV-2009 (1-888-388-2009), TTY 1-877-530-2634
- Mail a coupon application to: PO BOX 2000, Portland, OR 97208-2000
- Fax a coupon application to 1-877-DTV-4ME2 (1-877-388-4632)

NTIA will provide consumers a list of eligible converters and participating retailers when coupons are mailed. Coupons expire 90 days after they are mailed, and only one coupon can be used to purchase each coupon-eligible converter box.

NTIA is responsible for the development of the domestic and international telecommunications policy of the Executive Branch.