



COMMERCE NEWS

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Commerce Secretary Gutierrez Announces Ten Millionth Coupon Requested for TV Converter Box Program

WASHINGTON—Commerce Secretary Carlos M. Gutierrez announced over 10 million coupons have been requested since the launch of the TV Converter Box Program on January 1, 2008. The February 17, 2009 transition will offer consumers a clearer picture, more programming choices and free up the airwaves for better communications among emergency first responders. The Commerce Department's National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) is administering the TV Converter Box Coupon Program.

“With ten million coupons requested, the TV Converter Box Coupon Program is running strong,” said Gutierrez. “While we’re pleased with this high level of participation and the program so far, challenges remain, and the NTIA is working hard to ensure a smooth transition.”

As of April 1, 2008, more than 1,100 retailers are participating in the program representing 11,448 participating outlets nationwide, including locations in all 50 states, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. To date, NTIA has certified 66 converter boxes. Additionally, consumers can choose from among ten online retailers and four phone retailers. Consumers – even those in areas where the closest consumer electronics retailer is fifty or one hundred miles away – will have ready access to coupon-eligible converter boxes.

The transition to digital television is an unprecedented effort, and the NTIA is working to ensure all Americans are aware of the transition and take the necessary action before February, 2009. NTIA is leveraging relationships with consumer groups, community organizations, federal agencies, and industry to inform consumers of their options. NTIA is collaborating with more than 200 partner organizations, including social service and community organizations with ties to the senior citizens, rural, minority, and disabled communities, as well as a variety of federal agencies with direct communications with other constituent groups.

“Our combined efforts to get the word out and educate consumers are succeeding, but we must continue to inform the American public about their options for making the transition,” added Gutierrez.

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.

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.

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