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National
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Administration

Consumers Urged to Apply for Converter Box Coupons By Year-End

*Consumers Should Plan for Six Weeks to “Apply, Buy and Try”
to Make February Digital TV Transition*

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WASHINGTON—The Commerce Department’s National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA), announced today that “over-the-air” television viewers who want to participate in the TV Converter Box Coupon Program should apply for coupons before the end of the year to minimize the chances of losing TV reception when full-power broadcasters switch to digital. Full-power TV broadcasters switch from analog to 100 percent digital broadcasts on February 17, 2009.

“The Wilmington, North Carolina test showed that households who rely on a TV antenna for reception need to apply early in order to minimize the number of Americans adversely affected when the switch occurs,” said Acting Assistant Secretary and Acting NTIA Administrator Meredith Baker. “We urge consumers who need coupons not to wait until the last minute and to **apply** for your coupon(s), **buy** a converter box, and **try** the box with their television as soon as possible”

For consumers receiving free, over-the-air broadcasts on analog televisions, use the following three steps to make the transition to digital television:

Step 1: Apply.

Apply for a coupon now. Coupons are available on a first-come, first-serve basis. Consumers can apply for coupons online at www.DTV2009.gov, by phone at 1-888-DTV-2009 (1-888-388-2009), by fax at 1-877-DTV-4ME2 (1-877-388-4632) or by mail to PO Box 2000, Portland, OR 97208. Deaf or hard of hearing callers may dial 1-877-530-2634 (English TTY) or 1-866-495-1161 (Spanish TTY).

Step 2: Buy.

Consumers should buy their converter boxes soon after their coupons arrive in the mail. Consumers will receive a list of participating local, phone and online retailers with their coupons. TV viewers are urged to make their choice before the end of the year.

Step 3: Try.

Once a consumer has purchased a converter box, they should connect the box to their analog TV immediately and follow the installation, and channel scanning instructions, and antenna adjustments, if needed. This provides the opportunity to test the converter box and troubleshoot potential problems prior to the transition date. Most importantly, consumers can start enjoying the benefits of a clearer picture and more programming choices now, so don’t wait to install your converter box.

For more information about the Coupon Program, please visit www.DTV2009.gov.

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

Digital broadcast television offers consumers a clearer picture, more programming choices and will free up the airwaves for better communications among emergency first responders and new telecommunications services.

Over-the-air television viewers need to look at each analog TV in their home that is not connected to cable, satellite or other pay television service and make a timely decision. They can connect their TV to cable, satellite or pay television service; they can replace it with a digital TV; or they may keep it working with a TV converter box.

For consumers choosing the converter box option, the TV Converter Box Coupon Program permits all households to request one or two coupons - each worth \$40 - toward the purchase of certified converter boxes. Coupons may be requested until March 31, 2009, or while supplies last. Consumers can purchase a converter box at more than 29,000 participating local, phone or online retailers. Converter boxes generally cost between \$45 and \$80.

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, not including nursing home residents and P.O. Box applicants, may apply now for coupons online at www.DTV2009.gov, by phone at 1-888-DTV-2009 (1-888-388-2009), via fax at 1-877-DTV-4ME2 (1-877-388-4632) or by mail to P.O. Box 2000, Portland, OR 97208-2000. Deaf or hard of hearing callers may dial 1-877-530-2634 (English TTY) or 1-866-495-1161 (Spanish TTY). Consumers will receive a list of eligible converter boxes and participating retailers with their coupons. Coupons expire 90 days after they are mailed, and only one coupon can be used to purchase each coupon-eligible converter box.

If viewers have difficulty receiving digital broadcast stations in their area, the following troubleshooting guide, www.fcc.gov/cgb/consumerfacts/troubleshootguide.html produced by the Federal Communications Commission, provides a checklist for connecting a converter and tips on reception of digital signals.

For more information about the Coupon Program, please visit www.DTV2009.gov and for questions about the DTV transition, go to www.dtv.gov or call 1-888-CALL-FCC.

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

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