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**National
Telecommunications &
Information
Administration**

Commerce's NTIA, 25 Federal Agencies Partner to Urge Households to Apply for TV Converter Box Coupons by December 31

20 Million Households Request 39 Million Coupons and Redeem 16 Million, to Date

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WASHINGTON -- The Commerce Department's National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) today hosted more than 25 federal agencies to further coordinate efforts to educate vulnerable Americans about the February 17, 2009, deadline to transition to digital television and the TV Converter Box Coupon Program. To date, more than 20 million households have requested more than 39 million coupons and redeemed more than 16 million coupons since the program opened on January 1, 2008.

"I am pleased that over two dozen federal agencies participated in our Interagency meeting today to mobilize the Federal government in assisting consumers with the digital television transition," said Acting NTIA Administrator Meredith Baker. "Throughout the year, we have asked our federal agency partners – and they have responded at every turn—to urge the millions of constituents and customers whom they serve to prepare for the transition, especially by December 31."

Consumers, who rely on an antenna to receive free television channels and want a \$40 coupon to purchase a converter box to keep their TV set working, need to apply for their coupons no later than the end of the year, if they want to receive their coupon prior to the February 17, 2009, deadline. NTIA administers the TV Converter Box Coupon Program permitting all households to request up to two coupons - each worth \$40 - toward the purchase of certified converter boxes.

During the meeting, NTIA and the Federal Communications Commission officials provided updates on their coordinated consumer education activities and other federal agency officials discussed immediate action needed to be taken to urge unprepared consumers to get ready now.

Federal agencies participating in the meeting included the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Aging; U.S. Department of Agriculture; U.S. Department of Homeland Security; the Appalachian Regional Commission; the National Council on Disability; and the Social Security Administration. The Federal partners also met as a group in January at the Commerce Department and in September at the White House.

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.

Consumers receiving free, over-the-air television on analog televisions will need to act now to ensure their televisions continue to work when full power television stations go all-digital. Viewers of over-the-air television need to look at each analog set in their home that is not connected to cable, satellite or other pay television service and make a timely decision. They can connect their television 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 up to two coupons - each worth \$40 - toward the purchase of certified converter boxes. Coupons may be requested until March 31, 2009, or while supplies last, and only one coupon can be used to purchase each coupon-eligible converter box. Consumers can purchase a converter box at one of the more than 34,500 participating local, phone or online retailers. Consumers will receive a list of eligible converter boxes and participating retailers with their coupons. Coupon applications can take several weeks to process and mail so consumers opting to purchase a converter box should act now, and should call stores before shopping to ensure the desired converter box is available. Converter boxes generally cost between \$40 and \$80 and coupons expire 90 days from the date they are mailed.

Consumers who choose to transition to digital television by purchasing a TV converter box with a coupon need to follow three steps and act by the end of the year because the process may take six weeks. Consumers should immediately apply for their coupons, buy a converter box when the coupons arrive, and try the box with their television to address any potential technical issues before full-power broadcasters switch to digital.

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 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). Nursing home residents may apply with the paper application available downloadable at www.DTV2009.gov.

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.