



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF
COMMERCE
NEWS
WASHINGTON, DC 20230

**National
Telecommunications &
Information
Administration**

Commerce's NTIA Marks Two Months until Digital TV Transition and Announces 76 Percent of Over-the-Air, Reliant TV Households Have Requested Coupons

For Immediate Release: December 17, 2008

Contact: Todd Sedmak or Bart Forbes, (202) 482-7002 or press@ntia.doc.gov

WASHINGTON—The Commerce Department's National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) today announced that with two months until the transition to digital television concludes, 76 percent of all households that rely on television with an antenna have requested coupons from the TV Converter Box Coupon Program. Based on self-reporting, 11 million households have requested coupons out of 14.3 million that Nielsen says rely on TV over-the-air. The program helps households switch to digital television when full-power TV broadcasters transition from analog to 100 percent digital broadcasts on February 17, 2009.

"With only two months until the digital TV transition, I urge those who need the \$40 coupons to apply before December 31, buy a converter when the coupons arrive in the mail, and connect the converter to their television," said Acting NTIA Administrator Meredith Baker. "If households that rely on TV with an antenna fail to act in a timely manner, they temporarily risk losing their television reception."

To date, 22 million households have requested more than 41 million coupons and nearly 17 million coupons have been redeemed from the TV Converter Box Coupon Program.

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. NTIA started accepting requests for coupons on January 1 and began redeeming coupons in early March after the coupon eligible converter boxes became widely available at NTIA-certified retail stores.

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 authorized NTIA to create the TV Converter Box Coupon Program, which is funded by the \$19 billion airwaves auction and not tax dollars. The Act funded the Program at \$1.5 billion, including \$1.34 billion for coupons. Currently, NTIA has obligated \$1.16 billion in coupons, which is a combination of coupons redeemed and coupons ordered.

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 telecommunication 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 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.

###