



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF
COMMERCE
NEWS
WASHINGTON, DC 20230

**National
Telecommunications &
Information
Administration**

Commerce's NTIA Applauds Congress for Additional Funding to Eliminate Current TV Converter Box Coupon Waiting List

For Immediate Release: February 19, 2009

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

WASHINGTON - U.S. Department of Commerce's National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) today applauded Congress for additional funding that will allow NTIA to quickly issue TV converter box coupons to all households currently on the waiting list and to start mailing coupons via first class mail.

"This additional funding will help keep more Americans connected to free, over-the-air television broadcasts," said Acting NTIA Administrator Anna Gomez. "We expect to clear out the coupon waiting list expeditiously and get coupons into the hands of the American people. In addition, NTIA is moving swiftly to make the modifications in the TV Converter Box Coupon Program rules and systems to implement the changes authorized in the DTV Delay Act. These changes will ease the financial burden to the viewers of TV stations that are ceasing their analog broadcasting between now and June 12, 2009."

On January 4, 2009, the TV Converter Box Coupon Program reached the \$1.34 billion fund obligation ceiling and placed incoming coupon requests on a waiting list. As of February 18, over 4.2 million coupon requests remained on the waiting list from over 2.3 million households. The total coupon funding of \$1.34 billion allows for 33.5 million redeemed coupons and as of that date over 24.1 million coupons had been redeemed.

The NTIA is currently not accepting requests for replacement coupons. However, upon completion of a rulemaking process, NTIA will be able to issue, upon request, one replacement coupon for each coupon that expired without being redeemed or was cancelled due to being reported as lost.

While June 12, 2009, is now the last date by which all full-power television stations in the country will be required to shut down analog broadcasts, some stations and entire markets may choose to switch between now and then. The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has announced that, of the nation's nearly 1,800 full-power television stations, a total of 641 stations (36%) will have terminated their analog signals as of February 17, 2009. The FCC has released a list of full-power TV broadcast stations terminating analog service on or before February 17, 2009. That list can be found at <http://www.fcc.gov/021609AttachmentA.pdf>. More information on the digital television transition is available by calling 1-888-CALL-FCC (1-888-225-5322) or by going on-line to the Web site www.DTV.gov.

Consumers can receive digital television today by purchasing a TV converter box (with or without a government coupon), buying a digital TV, or subscribing to cable, satellite or another pay service. Consumers who currently have coupons in hand should use them immediately. The coupons may not be used as a rebate and must be presented to the retailer at the time of purchase. If they no longer need the coupon and it has not expired, they may give it to a friend, neighbor, or family member if they need a coupon.

Background:

The Digital Television Transition and Public Safety Act of 2005 originally required 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 currently funded by the airwaves auction proceeds. The Act originally funded the Program at \$1.5 billion, which included an obligation limit of \$1.34 billion for ordered and redeemed coupons. Funds are obligated as coupons are issued. If coupons are not used and expire, those funds are returned to the Program to fill requests. The transition to digital broadcast television will free up the airwaves for better communications among emergency first responders and new telecommunication services and offers consumers a clearer picture and more programming choices.

The TV Converter Box Coupon Program currently 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 34,000 participating local, phone or online retailers. Consumers will receive a list of eligible converter boxes and participating retailers with their coupons and may search for a local retailer on-line at <https://www.dtv2009.gov/VendorSearch.aspx> . Consumers 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.

When consumers receive their coupons in the mail, they should buy a converter box as soon as possible, and try the box with their television to address any potential technical issues. Some viewers watch programs over translators or other low-power stations which may continue broadcasting analog signals after the digital television transition deadline. Those viewers may wish to select a converter box that will pass through analog signals.

Households may apply 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.

###