

Cable Helps You Transition to Digital TV

On February 17, 2009 Broadcast TV
Is Switching From Analog to Digital

Are You Ready?

What is the digital transition?

The nation's full power over-the-air local television stations are moving from an old system known as "analog" broadcasting to a new system known as "digital" broadcasting. The U.S. government has set February 17, 2009 as the date for this change. At the end of that day, TV stations will stop transmitting their programs in analog technology, and will start transmitting them only in digital.

Why the switch?

Changing to a digital format will free up signal capacity to be used by first-responders such as local police and fire departments. This will improve public safety. In addition, a change to digital broadcasting helps broadcast full power TV stations improve their sound and picture quality, and they can use the new digital technology to transmit high-definition TV signals and new channels.

What does it mean for TV viewers?

There is an incompatibility between this new way of broadcasting full power TV signals, and many older TV sets still in use. After February 17, 2009, analog TV sets — that is, TV sets without digital tuners — must be connected to a service such as cable, or outfitted with a special digital-to-analog converter, in order to continue displaying over-the-air TV signals.

How to Know if You're Ready

As a cable customer, the good news is, you may not have to do anything to continue enjoying full power commercial broadcast TV stations in their new digital format. **As long as your analog TV sets are connected to cable, they'll continue to display local commercial stations even after the digital transition on February 17, 2009.** That's because your cable company already has technology in place to carry local over-the-air TV stations that are in the new digital format.

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But what if all my TVs aren't hooked up to cable?

Even if you're a cable customer, you may have some televisions in your home that aren't hooked up to cable, and instead use an antenna. These secondary sets are likely to be older and "analog" — that is, they probably don't have the digital tuners that are in the newer "digital" TV sets available today. These older sets won't be able to tune in the signals that full power TV stations are broadcasting after February 17, 2009, although they should continue to receive analog low power, Class A or translator TV stations.

How do I keep these sets useful?

You can call your local cable company and get your secondary sets connected to cable service.

Or, there's a do-it-yourself method: You can buy a special add-on "converter" that will let your old TV sets pick up and display full power over-the-air digital signals. These converters were expected to be available from retailers in early 2008 and cost between \$50 and \$75 each. To help consumers pay for the converters, the federal government has a program through which each home can request up to two coupons worth \$40 each. More information is available at www.DTV2009.gov, or by calling toll-free 1-888-DTV-2009.

Where do I get more information about the digital transition?

Contact your local cable company, go to GetReadyforDigitalTV.com, or DTV.gov.

