

Newsletter Article

Broadcast Digital Television Is Coming: Are Your Constituents Ready?

Broadcast Stations are switching to Digital

Congress mandated that over-the-air broadcast television stations convert to all-digital television broadcasting by February 17, 2009. The change to digital broadcasting will free up frequencies for public safety communications (such as police, fire, and emergency rescue) and providing new commercial wireless services, including mobile broadband. This transition is known as the Broadcast Digital Television ("DTV") transition.

So what does it mean for you and your constituents?

First things first – if your TV is hooked up to your local cable system or another subscription video provider, your service will not be impacted.

However, if a consumer owns an "analog" TV set that is not connected to cable and functions with the help of "rabbit ears" or an antenna, they will not be able to watch broadcast TV channels on it as of February 17, 2009.

If you are unsure whether your TV is "analog" or "digital," look for a label that says "Integrated Digital Tuner," "Digital Tuner Built-In," "Digital Receiver," or "Digital Tuner," "DTV," "ATSC," or "HDTV" (High Definition television). If your TV has any of those labels, you should be OK and not need to take any other action

So effectively, what the DTV Transition means for you and your constituents is that any consumer who relies on over-the-air/antenna reception of local broadcast signals for their analog TVs will have to do something as a result of the switch to digital broadcasting. If not, their TV set will no longer receive local broadcast TV signals as of February 17, 2009.

They can choose one of three options:

- Purchase digital converter boxes to use with their current TV's (\$40.00 government issued coupons are available by visiting to www.DTV.gov, or by calling 1-888-DTV-2009.) Note: coupons are available on a first-come, first-served basis.
- Purchase a new digital TV.
- Connect their analog TV to the service provided by your local cable company or another video service provider.

What can you do to help prepare your communities for the DTV transition?

The best thing that you can do to help your constituents prepare for the upcoming Broadcast Digital Television Transition is to educate them on the issue. Let them know that the DTV Transition is coming and they need to make plans now. Talk to them about what it will mean for them and direct them to register for the coupon program today.

You can find more information on the broadcast DTV transition by visiting www.dtvtransition.org or by calling 1-888-DTV-2009.

For more information on the converter box coupon program, go to www.DTV2009.gov or call, toll-free, 1-888-225-5322.