



KNOW YOUR FLORIDA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

Matthew M. Carter II, Chairman

DIGITAL TELEVISION IS COMING; WILL YOU BE READY?

If you and your family are still using “rabbit ears”—an antenna rather than cable or satellite to receive TV signals—prepare to retire those ears and enter the digital age.

Congress has set February 17, 2009 as the deadline to switch from analog broadcasting (using antenna) to digital television. The switch is needed to free up frequencies for public safety use—including police, fire, and emergency rescue—to better communicate in emergencies and to provide residents with advanced wireless broadband service.

The Public Service Commission (PSC) is working with the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), the National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners, and the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) to get the word out to millions of Americans who currently have analog televisions and will be affected by the transition.

The PSC is assisting its federal partners to achieve a smooth and successful transition to digital television in Florida. By promoting public awareness about the upcoming switch to digital and its benefits, the PSC hopes to help Florida residents upgrade their television sets by the February 2009 deadline.

To receive local full-power broadcast television stations after the deadline, viewers with analog televisions will have to purchase a converter box to transform digital signals into analog. Not only will the boxes allow analog televisions to display digital television, they will also provide better picture and sound quality and more programming choices, where available.

If you currently subscribe to a digital cable or satellite television service, or own a digital television, a converter box is not necessary to continue receiving your current programming. Check the television owners manual to find out if your TV contains a digital tuner, or the television may be labeled, “Integrated Digital Tuner” or “Digital Tuner Built-In.” As of May 25, 2007, retailers are required by the FCC to disclose if a television does not have a digital tuner. All televisions sold in the U.S. prior to Fall 1998 are analog.

Households that have an analog television with basic cable service (nondigital) will probably have to purchase a converter box. Contact your cable service provider to find out what you need to do, if anything, to prepare for the transition.

Between January 1, 2008 and March 31, 2009, all U.S. households can request two \$40 coupons to be used toward the purchase of certified digital-to-analog converter boxes. Coupons are available on a first-come, first-served basis and will expire 90-days from the date of issue. A total of 33.5 million coupons are available. Retailers estimate that converters will cost between \$50 and \$70.

More than 250 retailers, representing over 15,000 outlets nationwide, are certified to participate, and 19 converter box models are eligible for coupon purchase, with more being tested. Visit www.ntia.doc.gov for a list of certified converter boxes and retailers, to date.

Coupons can be requested in one of four ways:

- ◆ Apply online at www.dtv2009.gov;
- ◆ Call the 24-hour hotline 1-888-DTV-2009 (1-888-388-2009) in English and Spanish. The hearing impaired may call the TTY number 1-877-530-2634 for information in English and Spanish;
- ◆ Mail a coupon application to PO BOX 2000, Portland, OR 97208-2000; or
- ◆ Fax a coupon application to 1-877-DTV-4ME2 (1-877-388-4632).

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. Low-power, Class A, and translator stations (servicing rural or small communities) are not required to make the switch at this time, although the change to digital will come eventually.

For more information on the coupon program, visit the NTIA Web site at www.ntia.doc.gov.

For more information on the digital television transition, visit www.dtv.gov.

Visit www.digitaltips.org for installation advice or to view a helpful video.