

Digital Television is Coming Don't Lose Your Television Signal

On January 1, 1954, NBC broadcast the first coast-to-coast color television program: college football's Tournament of Roses Parade. More than fifty years later, the next great advance in television will come to Seattle (and the rest of the country) on February 18, 2009, with the transition to digital TV.

In Seattle, 20% of us get our television reception for free, using "rabbit ears" or other antennas. After the change to digital in 2009, televisions that use an antenna will not receive a signal unless they have a digital converter box. Viewers who subscribe to cable or satellite service won't see any change in their TV reception. This article tells you why this change is happening and what you can do.

Why is TV changing to digital?

Congress determined that the country should move from our current broadcast standard, known as analog, to a new standard, called digital. Digital television provides a clearer picture and more programming and does it more efficiently, using less of the airwaves. Digital broadcasting will free up some of the nation's airwaves for firefighters and police to better communicate during emergencies and will allow consumers access to next-generation wireless services. For you, this means better TV quality, more choices, and more control.

Starting February 18, 2009, all analog TVs (probably yours if it's more than three years old) will need a special television converter box to keep receiving free TV. To assist households with the digital transition, the federal government created the Digital-to-Analog Converter Box Coupon Program. If you have a newer TV with a digital tuner, you will not need to get a converter. If you're not sure, check your TV registration number and check with the manufacturer to see if it's digital.

So what do I have to do?

There are three things you can do: 1) get a digital converter box (see below); 2) subscribe to cable or satellite TV; or 3) get a new TV with a digital tuner. It is important to emphasize that you do **not** have to buy cable or a new TV; getting the converter boxes will work just fine. Here's some additional information to tell you how to get the digital converter box.

A maximum of two \$40 coupons per household will be available to help offset the cost of a converter, which is expected to cost between \$50 and \$70 and to be in stores in 2008. All households in Seattle are eligible to request a coupon(s).

To get your converter box coupons, you can do one of three things starting January 1, 2008, and running through March 31, 2009:

1. call 1-888-388-2009 (1-888-DTV-2009)
2. get online information from the federal government at www.dtv2009.gov*

- request a coupon(s) by writing to DTV Coupons, P.O. Box 2000, Portland, OR 97208

Where can I buy a converter box?

We expect that you will be able to buy the boxes at the “big box” retailers, chain electronic stores, and national discount stores. The federal government is working to get local independent retailers involved as well. They will provide a list of eligible converters, participating retailers and online vendors when coupons are mailed to consumers.

When can I buy one of the converter boxes?

Starting in January, 2008, and running through March 31, 2009, you will be able to use the coupons to buy the digital converters. The federal government believes that as more people buy the boxes, the price will come down, so you don’t have to rush. As a very important note, though, once you have the coupon(s) **you must use the coupon within 90 days!** If you don’t, it will expire and you will have to pay full price for the converter.

Other important information

The coupon is only good for a digital converter box. It is **not** good for a digital video recorder (dvr) or digital television.

Ways to Prepare:

Your TV tuner is:	You get your programming from:	You will need by Feb. 17, 2009:
Analog	Free, Over-the-air	Digital-to-Analog converter box
Analog	Cable, satellite or pay tv service	Nothing; your provider will address
Digital	Over-the-air, cable, satellite, pay tv	Nothing

If you have any questions about the digital converter coupon program, you can go to the federal website at www.dtv2009.gov or to Seattle’s website at www.seattle.gov/digitaltv or call 206-386-1989 or our 24 hour cable message line at 206-684-8498.

*If you do not have a computer at your residence, there are computers with Internet available for your use in City of Seattle libraries, community centers, neighborhood service centers (little City Halls) and some non profit agencies in the community. If you would like to know where your nearest community computer is, please call Vicky Yuki at 206-233-7877.