

Monday, September 8, 2008

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ARE NEW YORKERS READY FOR THE NATIONAL DIGITAL TELEVISION TRANSITION?

Consumer Affairs Announces Enforcement Sweep Results; Issues Tips for Consumers, Electronic Stores

New York City Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA) Commissioner Jonathan Mintz today issued a consumer alert and tips to help New Yorkers to prepare for the Federal Communications Commission (FCC)'s digital television (DTV) transition, which launched today in the first test city, Wilmington, N.C.

In 1996, the U.S. Congress mandated that February 17, 2009 would be the last day for full-power television stations – such as the national networks, ABC, CBS, and NBC, and their affiliates – to broadcast in analog. The switch from analog to digital broadcast television is referred to as the digital TV (DTV) transition.

"The federal government has done massive outreach work to consumers nationwide to avoid inconvenience stemming from the transition to digital-only television signaling they're rolling out," said Consumer Affairs Commissioner Mintz. "At the local level, the Department of Consumer Affairs has gone a step further to make sure both that New York businesses are marketing properly and that consumers know how to prepare themselves for this digital revolution."

While businesses are allowed to continue selling analog-only television equipment after the conversion, federal law requires retailers to notify shoppers who purchase analog televisions, which will require additional equipment to work after the DTV transition. The Department enforces New York City's Consumer Protection Law, and thus can issue fines or even suspend or revoke electronic store licenses to businesses who fail to comply with federal law when they do not post the proper notice to consumers.

To ensure such compliance, DCA conducted a month-long enforcement sweep of 130 electronic stores and secondhand electronic dealers throughout the five boroughs. Departmental inspectors found that more than 80 percent of the businesses inspected were in compliance with federal regulations. Noncompliant businesses were issued warnings and are being re-inspected.

At midnight on February 17, 2009, all full-power United States television stations will switch from analog to digital broadcasting. It is estimated that nearly 400,000 New Yorkers currently have analog television sets.

DCA offers the following tips to consumers as they prepare for the digital transition:

TIPS FOR CONSUMERS TO PREPARE FOR THE DIGITAL TELEVISION TRANSITION:

- **Identify what kind of television you have.** Consumers with digital televisions or with cable or satellite service are ready for the DTV transition.

However, those who own analog television sets or who get broadcast reception through rooftop antennas and/or "rabbit ears" must take action to keep their televisions working after the transition.

- **Know your options.** Consumers with analog televisions can prepare for the digital conversion by deciding which transition option works best for them and their budget: buy a digital-to-analog converter box; buy a new TV with a built-in digital tuner; or subscribe to cable or satellite service to ensure reception after the conversion.
- **Buying a converter box through the government's TV Converter Box Coupon Program.** Consumers who choose to purchase a converter box are entitled to two \$40 coupons to help defray the cost of the equipment. The boxes are priced between \$40 to \$80 dollars each. The coupons are free from the federal government but are in limited supply, and expire 90 days after they are mailed. Consumers should act quickly and order their coupons by visiting www.dtv2009.gov or calling the FCC's Coupon Program 24-hour hotline at 1-888-DTV-2009.

Low-power, community access television stations – such as WNYZ, channel 6, and WNXV, channel 26 – however, will continue to broadcast only to analog televisions, even after the digital television transition.

DCA advises the following options to New Yorkers who wish to continue watching low-power, community access stations:

OPTIONS FOR CONSUMERS WITH ANALOG-ONLY TELEVISIONS WHO PLAN TO WATCH COMMUNITY ACCESS CHANNELS:

- Keep an analog TV connected to an antenna, though this TV won't receive regular network programming.
- Buy a digital-to-analog converter box and add a "splitter" or A/B switch to receive both analog and digital signals.
- Buy a digital-to-analog converter box with analog pass-through capability. Analog pass-through allows viewers to watch analog and digital television stations through the converter box.
- Buy a new digital TV set. All new digital TV sets receive both analog and digital stations.

For an updated list of coupon-eligible converter boxes with analog pass-through capability, visit www.ntiadtvtv.gov/cecb_list.cfm. Pass-through models are marked with a red asterisk (*). For more information on the DTV transition, call the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) at 1-888-CALL-FCC (1-888-225-5322) or 1-888-835-5322 (TTY), or visit the FCC's DTV Web site at: www.dtv.gov.

Download DCA's complete tips for [consumers](#) and [businesses](#).

DCA enforces the Consumer Protection Law and other related business laws throughout New York City. Ensuring a fair and vibrant marketplace for consumers and businesses alike, DCA licenses more than 60,000 businesses in 55 different categories. Through targeted outreach, partnerships with community and trade organizations, and informational materials, DCA educates consumers and businesses about their rights and responsibilities. For more information, call 311 or visit DCA online at