

ANALOG TO DIGITAL CONVERSION FAQ

Beginning **Feb. 18, 2009**, anyone who does not own a digital set and still gets their programming via over-the-air antennas will no longer receive a picture. That's the day the television industry completes its transition from old-style analog broadcasting to digital.

After that date, anyone who has an analog television and receives their signal from an antenna will need to have a converter box to correctly view television.

A digital-to-analog converter box is necessary only for analog televisions that receive their programming over-the-air using a rooftop antenna or "rabbit ears" connected to the set. A digital-to-analog converter box is not necessary for a TV connected to cable. *It is also important to note that a cable set-top box is different from a digital-to-analog converter box.*

Will Great Plains Communications' cable customers have to get a new TV?

No. Customers should see no changes in their cable viewing in February 2009.

No matter what kind of television set they have, even an older analog model, cable customers will still be able to receive every program. We will simply convert the new digital broadcast signals to allow them to flow to every TV connected to our cable television service.

Also, analog sets should continue to work with gaming consoles, VCRs, DVD players, and similar products that you use now.

Will GPC cable customers have to get new or additional equipment?

No. Cable customers won't need to get any additional equipment.

All GPC customers will continue to receive programming with their existing setup. If you have set top converter boxes, those will continue to function. If you don't need a cable box to get your current level of subscription (basic cable, for example), you will not need a converter box after February 18, 2009.

What's this I keep hearing about the coupons to buy converter boxes?

The Department of Commerce's National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) has launched the Digital-to-Analog Converter Box Coupon Program (Coupon Program).

Starting January 1, 2008, all U.S. households are eligible to request up to two coupons, worth \$40 each, to be used toward the purchase of up to two, digital-to-analog converter boxes which will translate the signal.

The converter boxes are expected to cost between \$50 and \$70 and will be available at most major electronics retail stores.

33.5 million coupons will be given away. The first 22 million coupons will go to all households which request them.

This includes a residence which gets cable service for one television but has a spare TV that still uses an antenna, for example. The rest of the coupons, however, are meant only for those who do not subscribe to a pay-television service.

To learn more about applying for a converter coupon, customers may go to www.dtv2009.gov or call 1-888-DTV-2009.

How do I know if I already have a Digital TV (DTV)?

Many DTVs and digital television equipment will have labels or markings on them, or statements in the informational materials that came with them, to indicate that they contain digital tuners.

These labels or markings may contain the words “Integrated Digital Tuner,” “Digital Tuner Built-In,” “Digital Receiver,” or “Digital Tuner,” “DTV,” “ATSC,” or “HDTV” (High Definition television). If your television equipment contains any of these labels or markings, you should be able to view digital over-the-air programming without the need for a digital-to-analog converter box.

You should also check the manual or any other materials that came with your television equipment in order to determine whether it contains a digital tuner.

If your television set is labeled as a “Digital Monitor” or “HDTV Monitor,” or as “Digital Ready” or “HDTV Ready,” this does not mean it actually contains a digital tuner. Thus, you still will likely need a separate set-top box which contains a digital tuner in order to view over-the-air digital programming.

If your television set is labeled as “analog” or “NTSC,” and is NOT labeled as containing a digital tuner, it contains an analog tuner only.

If you cannot determine whether your television set or other television equipment contains a digital tuner, you are advised to check your equipment for the manufacturer name and model number, and then contact your consumer electronics retailer, or the manufacturer, to determine whether it contains a digital tuner. This information also may be available online through the manufacturer’s website.

How can I be sure that I am buying a Digital TV (DTV)?

By law, beginning March 1, 2007, all television reception devices (including TVs, VCRs, DVRs, etc.) imported into the U.S. or shipped in interstate commerce must contain a digital tuner. Retailers may continue to sell analog-only devices from existing inventory, but must prominently display on or near the analog-only device a Consumer Alert label with this advisory:

Consumer Alert

This television receiver has only an analog broadcast tuner and will require a converter box after February 17, 2009, to receive over-the-air broadcasts with an antenna because of the Nation’s transition to digital broadcasting. Analog-only TVs should continue to work as before with cable and satellite TV services, gaming consoles, VCRs, DVD players, and similar products. For more information, call the Federal Communications Commission at 1-888-225-5322 (TTY: 1-888-835-5322) or visit the Commission’s digital television website at: www.dtv.gov.

Therefore, all television equipment being sold should contain a digital tuner, or should be identified at the point-of-sale as not having one. Be aware of this label and the limitations of analog-only devices if you are purchasing a new TV or other TV equipment.

If I want a new TV, will I have to buy a High Definition TV (HDTV) to watch digital broadcast television after the transition?

No. The DTV transition is a transition from analog broadcasting to digital broadcasting. It is *not* a transition from analog broadcasting to High Definition broadcasting.

Digital broadcasting allows for High Definition broadcasts, but High Definition is not required, and you do not need to buy a HDTV to watch digital TV. A Standard Definition DTV (which is simply a TV with an internal digital tuner), or a digital-to-analog converter box hooked to an analog TV, is all that is required to continue watching over-the-air broadcast television. *Digital broadcast television includes Standard Definition (SD) and High Definition (HD) formats.*

You can watch High Definition programming on a Standard Definition DTV (or on an analog TV hooked to a digital-to-analog converter box), but it won't be in full High Definition quality. It is also important to know that Standard Definition DTVs are comparably priced to similar sized analog TVs.