

What You Need to Know About Digital Transition

You may be hearing about a February 2009 “Digital Transition”. **Bottom line is that CMA customers won’t be impacted.** We’ve addressed some frequently asked questions below:

TV Sets that currently receive programming through cable or satellite are NOT likely to be affected by the transition to digital. CMA will be converting the digital signals back to analog and send them through the cable line directly to the non-digital and digital television sets. Therefore, CMA Communications customers do NOT need to purchase Digital Television sets.

What is the digital TV transition?

The digital TV (DTV) Transition is the switch from traditional analog TV to digital TV, a modern technology with many benefits. February 17, 2009 is the deadline by which traditional analog TV service will be shut off. The DTV service will be what remains. Most television stations are currently broadcasting their programming in both analog and digital until February 17, 2009. Analog television sets receiving free, over-the-air programming will still work after that date, but owners of these TVs will need to acquire converter boxes to change digital broadcasts back into the old analog format. **If you are a cable or satellite subscriber, you aren’t likely to be affected by the DTV transition.**

What is analog television?

In all systems, CMA carries local off-air broadcast signals. Usually CBS, NBC, ABC, Fox, PBS, etc.... Analog television service is the traditional method of transmitting TV signals and has been the standard broadcast technology since the inception of television. Analog television service isn’t as efficient as DTV. It uses up much more valuable spectrum that – once the DTV transition is completed – will be provided to public safety organizations, such as first responders including fire and police departments. Remaining spectrum will be auctioned off for the production of new services.

What is DTV?

Digital television (DTV) is a new type of broadcasting technology that is transforming television as we know it. By transmitting the information used to make a TV picture and sound as “data bits” (like a computer), a digital broadcaster can carry more information than is currently possible with analog broadcast technology. The difference between analog and digital broadcasting is similar to that between compact discs and cassette tapes. Digital TV offers a better viewing experience with vastly improved picture and sound quality. CMA customers will still be able to enjoy their local off-air channels. The technology used to distribute it to their homes will change, but CMA customers will still enjoy their favorite programs.

What are the benefits of digital television?

Digital technology allows the transmission of pictures with higher resolution for dramatically better picture and sound quality than currently available. DTV also allows the transmission of several TV programs at once – called “multicasting”. DTV technology can also be used to provide interactive video and data services that are not possible with “analog” technology.

When will DTV transition be complete?

The final transition is February 17, 2009. At that point, broadcasting of the current analog channels will end and the spectrum that had been used for analog transmission will be put to other uses. Until the transition to DTV is complete, television stations will continue broadcasting on both their digital and analog channels.

Will Customers need a new TV?

Current televisions will work as it does now until analog broadcasting stops. Even after the transition is over, your current TV will NOT become obsolete. If you use your analog set with cable television, it will continue to work as it always has. If you do not have cable or satellite, a set-top converter box can be used to receive broadcast DTV signals and change them into the format of the current television. Only customers with analog TV who do NOT subscribe to CMA or Direct Satellite are at risk.

How do Customers get a set-top converter box for an analog television?

By early 2008, set-top converter boxes will be available for purchase at electronics retailers. The cost of the box is expected to range from \$50-\$70. Beginning January 2008, U.S. households can request up to two coupons for the converter boxes, which will be valued at \$40 each. Coupons will be mailed via the U.S. Postal Service and consumers will have approximately three months to redeem them. Consumers who wish to retain their analog television sets may also switch to CMA Communications.

What is the Digital-to-analog Converter Box Assistance Program?

On February 18, 2009, broadcast television stations will stop analog broadcasting and complete the transition to digital broadcasting. If you don't subscribe to cable or satellite services, you'll need either a television set capable of receiving DTV programming, or a digital-to-analog converter box. Digital-to-analog converter boxes will make DTV signals viewable on analog TV sets. These converter boxes will be available in retail stores during the transition. The National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) of the U.S. Department of Commerce is developing rules that will allow households to obtain coupons that can be applied toward the purchase of digital-to-analog converter boxes. Consumers can go to www.ntia.doc.gov for information on the coupons.

How can consumers prepare for the DTV transition?

Preparing for the DTV transition is easy and requires one of three steps by February 17, 2009:

- 1) **Subscribe to CMA Communications (or other Cable Television or Satellite providers). They will convert all local broadcaster digital signals back to analog signals and send directly through the cable wire to your analog TV set.**
- 2) Purchase a new television set with a built-in digital tuner.
- 3) Purchase a digital to analog converter box that plugs into an existing television. The boxes are expected to cost between \$50 and \$70 and will be available for purchase in early 2008. Beginning on January 1, 2008, U.S. households can request up to two coupons valued at \$40 each. Each coupon can go toward the purchase of a single set-top converter box that will allow you to continue watching free "over-the-air" television on an analog set.

Any of these steps will ensure that "over-the-air" television consumers will continue to receive programming.

What do DTV sets look like and what will they cost?

Most DTV sets have wider, more rectangular screens than current analog TVs. The widescreen format allows for images that are more like those shown in a movie theater. Like current TV sets, a range of sizes is available. As with most new consumer electronics technologies, DTV sets have become less expensive since their introduction. Prices are expected to continue to decrease over time and will vary depending on screen size, display technology, and other features.

Do Cable Customers already have DTV signals?

If you subscribe to the digital or High Definition package and receive digital or HD programming from CMA Communications you have DTV. If you have an analog television set, then you aren't viewing true DTV, even though the signal you're watching may be somewhat improved. In order to view the true DTV and enjoy all the attributes of digital television service, you must view television signals on a DTV set. Also, in order to view programs in High Definition (HDTV), you must be equipped with a TV set capable of displaying pictures in high-definition. A Cable set-top box or the CableCARD will provide HDTV channels.

What about the VCR, DVD player and camcorder? Will consumers be able to use them with an HDTV or DTV set?

HDTV and DTV sets are compatible with existing analog equipment (VCRs, DVD players, camcorders, video games, etc.) and will work on digital TV sets, but not in high definition. The video will be displayed in the maximum resolution that is available with each product.

Are DTV and HDTV the same?

NO. HDTV, or high-definition television, is the highest quality digital television (DTV) available, offering more than five times the sharpness of today's analog television, along with digital surround sound capability. DTV is also available as EDTV (enhanced definition TV) or SDTV (standard definition TV), each with improved pictures and sound over today's analog televisions.

How does digital TV use closed captions?

Analog TV has only one format for closed captions in which the captions are encoded invisibly in the analog TV signal. Digital TV can support two formats. The second format is newer and offers more choices of font, color, and size, which can result in better visibility and ease of use. Digital TV carries captions of either format as data analog with the digital audio and video content, but unlike analog TV, the captions are not embedded in the video signal. It is up to the originator of the programming to provide the captions for any given program and to select the format. When the captions are decoded and displayed, the resulting text and symbols appear on the screen. The caption decoding function, by U.S. government mandate, is included in all digital TVs that have a screen size 13 inches or larger. It is also included in all separate, stand-alone digital TV tuners (set-top boxes). In either case, the digital TV tuner reads the closed caption data, interprets it, and writes it into the video so it becomes visible when the video is displayed on a screen.