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## **TV Viewers Who Do Not Prepare for February 17 Digital Conversion Will Lose their TV Signal**

*Potentially Millions of Bewildered Consumers Will Lose TV on February 18  
An estimated 7% of U.S. Consumers Are Unprepared*

With less than two months to go before the federally mandated conversion to digital television, studies have shown that millions of U.S. television viewers are unprepared and will completely lose their television signal on February 18.

Over the last year, WHYY has engaged its local community in an attempt to raise awareness of the options available to viewers through speaking engagements at community centers, on-air digital readiness tests and more. Despite this extensive consumer awareness campaign, Nielsen Media Research estimates that seven percent of U.S. households remain unprepared for the digital transition.

"It is clear that a large segment of the community still needs help understanding the technical issues around the conversion," said WHYY Chief Technology Officer Bill Weber. "Many consumers still do not have converter boxes, consumers have not used their coupons which have now expired, and many are still confused about what they need to do. We want to help viewers avoid a situation where they wake up on February 18 and discover they no longer have access to the programs on WHYY they have come to value over the years."

### **What to Do**

Anyone receiving their TV signal over the air — whether through a rabbit ears antenna on top of the set or an antenna on the roof — will need to buy a converter box in order to continue getting a signal. Some people may also need a new antenna.

To help reduce the expense of acquiring the converter boxes, which cost about \$50 for basic models, consumers can get two government rebate coupons worth \$40 a box. These coupons are available at [www.dtv2009.gov](http://www.dtv2009.gov) or by calling 888-388-2009.

A person can also subscribe to a cable or satellite service or buy a new digital TV.



### ***DTV Background/Facts:***

- ❖ Two years ago, Congress set a date requiring the U.S. switch to digital TV. Digital signals don't take up as much air space as analog signals, and Congress wanted to auction off some of the airwaves left vacant by the switch. It also set aside some of those airwaves for a future network for police, firefighters and first-response medical officials who encountered communications problems during disasters.
- ❖ Almost 20 million homes rely on free, over-the-air television, according to recent government estimates. An additional 15 million households have cable or satellite TV but also own spare TVs that may require converter boxes.
- ❖ The National Association of Area Agencies on Aging was given \$2.7 million to instruct people at community centers and other sites about the need to get a converter box and how to set it up.
- ❖ The National Association of Broadcasters has offered to create a phone bank to handle an estimated one million calls from confused consumers on Feb. 18, and another million in the following days.
- ❖ Nielsen Media Research estimated that 7% of U.S. households remain unprepared for the digital transition.
- ❖ With demand for the coupons growing, Congress is concerned that it hasn't set aside enough money to pay for them. About \$180 million of the \$1.34 billion set aside for coupons is currently available for new requests.
- ❖ Nearly 17 million of the \$40 government coupons have been redeemed to buy converter boxes. The boxes, which cost about \$40 to \$60 each, allow analog TVs to pick up and convert digital signals.
- ❖ Time is growing short for viewers to receive coupons, which can take upward of a month to arrive in the mail. Government and industry officials have urged consumers to apply before January 1, or they risk not getting a coupon before the switch.
- ❖ Alerts, readiness tests and messages with phone hotlines will continue. Messages will graduate the sense of urgency needed to push consumers to take action.

**WHYY conducted an over the air digital readiness test in December which solicited hundreds of calls from regional viewers. Here are the five most commonly asked questions:**

### ***How Can I Request the Coupons?***

Consumers can request two (2) \$40 coupons by doing the following:

- Complete the online form at [www.dtv2009.gov](http://www.dtv2009.gov)
- Call 1-888-388-2009 (voice) or 1-877-530-2634 (TTY)
- Mail coupon application to PO Box 2000, Portland, OR 97208
- Fax completed coupon application to 1-877-388-4632



***I have installed the set top converter box on my TV and I can get most channels except Channel 12. Why is that?***

Currently WHYY is operating a low power digital transmitter, which makes the signal difficult to receive in some areas. On February 17 when WHYY makes the switch to digital it will be operating with a new, high power transmitter which will eliminate this signal reception problem encountered by some viewers. All over-the-air TV viewers are advised to re-scan available channels on February 18.

***I bought a set top converter box, do I need to buy a new antenna or will it work with my traditional rabbit ear or roof top antenna.***

Yes. The converter box works with both the rabbit ears and roof top antennas.

***If I Have A Question and/or Experience Problems Connecting the Converter Box, Who Can I Call?***

Consumers should contact the manufacturer of the converter box first. This number should be listed in the owner's manual or on the box that the converter box came in. They can also call the WHYY DTV Hotline at 1-888-640-9499.

***I have cable or satellite TV, do I still need a converter box?***

No. Cable and/or satellite television subscribers do not require a converter box, however secondary TV's in the house which are not cable or satellite connected will require converter boxes to continue reception.

For information on the digital conversion call the hotline or visit: [www.whyy.org/dtv](http://www.whyy.org/dtv)

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