

What Does the Change to Digital Broadcast Television Mean?

As of February 19, 2009, all analog television broadcasting will stop, to be replaced by digital television broadcasts. While this sounds like an odd change to make, there are good reasons for it. More importantly, if you still receive your television programming "over the air" rather than through cable or satellite, you'll need to get either a new television or a box to convert the digital signals into something your analog set understands. Digital television makes more efficient use of the available broadcast bandwidth. When the changeover completes on February 19 of 2009, the space that the analog broadcasts used to require will be available for other uses. Broadcasters could potentially use the added space to add extra services. There are of course disadvantages as well. Too much compression into the digital format can impact video quality. For those who don't already have digital-ready televisions, a new television or a converter box will need to be purchased, or cable or satellite television can be subscribed to. For those wishing to stick with their analog televisions, the news is not all bad. The government is offering two \$40 coupons for people wanting to purchase the set top converters (ATSC tuners). They will be good with selected retailers. If you already have cable or satellite television, you may well not need to do anything, particularly if you are already on their digital subscriptions. I know that Cox cable switched my in-laws to digital cable, even though they hadn't wanted it, because they were changing the service. If you're on plain cable still, it would not surprise me to learn that this rolls out in other areas. The other challenge with digital television is one familiar to those who have satellite and digital cable service already; it takes a few moments for each channel to load, which can greatly slow channel surfing if you need to see the pictures. On the other hand, if it works as satellite and digital cable do, you may be able to see the show's name across the bottom of the screen quickly, and so channel surfing might not be too difficult. For a lot of people, this change will not mean anything in terms of buying equipment. Cable companies and satellite television providers have been working on the necessary changes already, and consumers can check with their providers to see if they need to do anything. But those who get over the air broadcasts need to start preparing so that they can take advantage of the coupons that will bring their new equipment costs down.

About the Author

Stephanie Foster runs <http://www.comparesatellite.info/> for people wanting to compare satellite television services. The site compares some of the features of cable and satellite television at <http://www.comparesatellite.info/satellite-cable.php>

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