

## **"Planning for Eldercare" February 6, 2008**

| [Return to Article Page](#) | [Veterans Benefits Book](#) |

### **Department Of Commerce Offers up to \$80 to Help Seniors and Others Convert to HDTV**

Imagine watching your favorite primetime TV program, when all of a sudden your analog TV screen goes to black...for good. There is still time to prevent this situation, as long as you know your options.

On February 17, 2009, all full-powered television stations will begin broadcasting only in digital, as required by law. To assist U.S. households with this historic transition, the National Telecommunication and Information Administration, part of the U.S. Department of Commerce, created the TV Converter Box Coupon Program to help Americans continue receiving over-the-air television after February 17, 2009.

#### **Why is television going from analog broadcasting to digital?**

The Digital Television Transition and Public Safety Act of 2005 requires broadcasters to broadcast only in digital after February 17, 2009. Digital television promises to provide a clearer picture and more programming options and will free up some of the nation's airwaves for use by emergency responders.

#### **What is the significance of the February 17, 2009 digital TV transition date?**

If households receive television programs over-the-air using "rabbit ears" or a rooftop antenna, they must take action to continue using their analog TVs after February 17, 2009. Consumers have three options, which include 1) buying a converter box that will plug into their current analog TV, 2) buying a TV with a digital tuner or 3) connecting their analog TV to cable, satellite or other pay service.

#### **How can the public obtain a \$40 coupon toward purchasing an eligible converter box?**

From now through March 31, 2009, all U.S. households are able to request, on a firstcome, first-served basis, up to two, \$40 coupons to help pay for the cost of a certified converter box. Converter boxes are expected to cost between \$50 and \$70, however, it is a one-time cost with no monthly service charges. Coupons will expire 90 days after they are mailed and cannot be replaced.

For more information about the TV Converter Box Coupon Program, visit [www.DTV2009.gov](http://www.DTV2009.gov) or call toll free 1-888-388-2009 (1-888-DTV-2009). The hearing impaired may call the TTY number 1-877-530-2634 for information in English, and for information in Spanish, consumers can call TTY number 1-866-495-1161. You can also apply by mail at PO Box 2000, Portland, OR 97208 or by fax at 1-877-388-4632.

#### **Where can the public buy a coupon-eligible converter?**

Coupon-eligible converter boxes are only available at certified stores and online retailers where televisions and other consumer electronics are sold, as well as by mail-order. When the coupon is mailed to you, it will include an insert with a list of nearby, participating retailers. You can also go online at [www.DTV2009.gov](http://www.DTV2009.gov), enter your zip code, and locate participating retailers on a map.

### **What can the public do to plan for the transition?**

Now is the time to identify whether any TV in your home is analog and receives over-the-air programming through "rabbit ears" or a roof-top antenna. Television viewers with these sets that are not connected to a pay TV service will need to take action before February 17, 2009, to ensure their TV sets continue to work. It is important to know your options and make sure your family, friends and neighbors are aware of whether they need to take action before the transition date. The important thing is that no one is left in the dark on February 17, 2009.

The TV transition deadline will be here soon. Working together, we can make this historic digital transition a success for all Americans. This article was provided courtesy of the National Care Planning Council, [www.longtermcarelink.net](http://www.longtermcarelink.net).