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JEFFERSON CITY

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## Preparing for a New Wave of Communication

*Digital Television Sparks to Life In Missouri*

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It's hard not to notice the television, radio, and print advertisements that have been informing us for more than a year now about the move from analog to digital television. We have probably heard of the term digital television, but you may be wondering what *is* digital television and why is our state — our country — switching to this new form of broadcasting?

The switch from analog to digital broadcast television is called the “digital TV (DTV) transition.” In 1996, Congress authorized the distribution of an additional broadcast channel to each broadcast TV station so that they could start a digital broadcast channel while simultaneously continuing their analog broadcast channel. For example, I currently receive broadcast channels from the Springfield area — Channel 3 (NBC), Channel 10 (CBS), and Channel 33 (ABC). Each of these major networks have an additional digital broadcast channel — 3.1 (NBC), 10.1 (CBS), and 33.1 (ABC).

Congress has set June 12, 2009, as the final date the full-power television stations such as the ones mentioned above, must broadcast in digital only. However, our local broadcast stations may make the transition before then — and some already have.

Many have asked: Why are we switching from analog to digital signal? What's wrong with the way we receive our broadcast stations now?

There is an important benefit of digital television. All-digital broadcasting frees up parts of the broadcast spectrum in order for public safety officials to communicate to citizens. This includes police, fire departments, and rescue squads. In addition, some of the broadcast spectrum will be sold to companies that will be able to provide consumers with more advanced wireless services, such as wireless broadband.

Those with cable or satellite hooked up to an analog set should not be affected by the transition. However, if you have an analog television and receive free over-the-air television

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programming with a roof-top antenna or “rabbit ears” on your TV, you will need a digital-to-analog converter box to continue to watch broadcast television on your set. This converter box will enable you to see any additional multicast programming that your local stations are offering. Many stations have already converted so make sure you are prepared for the switch.

To help citizens with this transition, the government has created the Digital-to-Analog Converter Box Coupon Program. Every household in the country is eligible to receive up to two \$40 coupons to put toward the purchase of eligible digital-to analog converter boxes, which are sold at participating electronic retailers, range in price from \$40 to \$70, and are a one-time cost to consumers. For more information on the coupon program, visit [www.dtv2009.gov](http://www.dtv2009.gov) or call 1-888-388-2009.

For those who have decided to by a digital television set, there are locations where you can take your old analog set to be recycled. I encourage you to find out where to recycle your unwanted analog television by contacting your community solid waste program, the Missouri Department of Natural Resources (DNR) at 1-800-361-4824, or you can visit DNR’s website at <http://www.dnr.mo.gov/ecyclemo/events.htm> to find a list of scheduled e-waste collection events. You can also visit <http://www.dnr.mo.gov/env/hwp/computerlist.htm> to find a list of recognized e-waste recyclers.

The [Federal Communications Commission](http://www.fcc.gov) (FCC) has a special website you can visit for more information on the switch to digital television. Visit [www.dtv.gov](http://www.dtv.gov) or call 1-888-225-5322. And if you have comments or questions about this week’s column or any other matter involving state government, please feel free to contact me at (573)751-8793 or by e-mail at: [delbertscott@senate.mo.gov](mailto:delbertscott@senate.mo.gov).

*Senator Delbert Scott represents the people of Barton, Benton, Cedar, Dallas, Henry, Hickory, Pettis, Polk and St. Clair counties in the Missouri Senate.*



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