



Consumer Guide

DTV Transition Did Not Require Cable Systems to Switch to Digital

IF YOU ARE A CABLE SUBSCRIBER, YOU SHOULD BE AWARE:

The 2009 DTV transition required all full-power TV broadcast stations to switch from an analog to a digital format. Cable companies were not required to make this change.

- “Digital broadcast” refers to the method of transmission of broadcast signals over-the-air, while “digital cable” refers to the way in which some -- or even all -- of a cable company’s signals are transmitted through its cable wires or fiber.
- Your cable company may offer cable channels in an analog tier and others in a digital tier, or it may have transitioned to all-digital service where all of its channels are transmitted using digital technology. The decision to carry channels in analog, analog and digital (sometimes referred to as a “hybrid” system), or solely digital is left to the cable company’s discretion. There is no government requirement for the way cable companies transmit their signals.
- If your cable company moves some or all of its channels onto a digital service tier, it may notify you that you need to get “digital cable” equipment to continue receiving those channels. Your cable company may also require you to lease from them a digital cable set-top box or CableCARD, or to purchase at retail a set-top device or a digital cable ready TV equipped with a CableCARD slot. This digital cable equipment is different from the digital-to-analog converter boxes required to receive broadcast signals over-the-air. If you have a digital TV, you may be able to view broadcast stations through your cable system without additional equipment. You should ask your cable company about the equipment options that may be available to you, including any options to purchase equipment from a retailer.
- Any analog television not hooked up to cable must use a digital-to-analog converter box to receive broadcast signals over-the-air.

Consumer Help Center

For more information on consumer issues, visit the FCC’s Consumer Help Center at www.fcc.gov/consumers.

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