



## Low Power Television Service

The FCC created the Low Power Television service (LPTV) in 1982 to provide opportunities for locally oriented television service in small communities. Such communities may be in rural areas or individual communities within larger urban areas. The service offers programming tailored to the interests of viewers in such small localized areas, and it does so in a less expensive and more flexible way than traditional full-power television stations.

Over the years, LPTV has created opportunities for new entry into the television broadcasting business, provided a means of local self-expression, and permitted fuller use of the broadcast spectrum. The service includes LPTV stations that operate in a similar fashion as full-power television stations, only with less power. It also includes television “translator” stations that serve to rebroadcast the signals of full-power stations in areas where the full-power station signals cannot be received due to distance or intervening terrain barriers.

### LPTV/Translator Digital Transition

Although Congress established a deadline of June 12, 2009, for full-power TV stations to cease analog broadcasts and begin operating only in digital, and the FCC set a transition date of Sept. 1, 2015, for Class A television stations to complete their transition, neither deadline applied to LPTV/translator stations. The deadline for the termination of all analog operations by LPTV/translator stations is July 13, 2021. Until then, LPTV/translator stations may continue to operate their analog facilities.

LPTV/translator stations can seek either an on-channel digital conversion of their existing analog facilities (known as “flash cut”) or may construct and operate a second digital companion channel during the remainder of the digital transition. However, all LPTV/translator stations will be required to decide on a single digital channel to continue to operate after the July 13, 2021 transition date.

### LPTV Station Operation

LPTV stations are operated by diverse groups and organizations, including high schools and colleges, churches and religious groups, local governments, large and small businesses, and individual citizens. LPTV modes of operation and programming also vary widely, including satellite-delivered programming services, syndicated programs, movies, and a wide range of locally produced programs. LPTV stations may also tailor program segments or entire schedules to specific viewer groups based on age, language or particular interest.

On the technical side, LPTV stations transmit on one of the standard television channels -- VHF (channels 2 through 13) or UHF (channels 14 through 51). The distance at which a station can be viewed depends on a variety of factors, including the transmitting antenna, its height, transmitter power, and the local terrain (rural or urban, hilly or flat).

The FCC does not allocate channels for LPTV service. Instead, applicants select channels and apply during a given time period.

Analog LPTV stations are limited to an effective radiated power of 3 kilowatts (VHF) and 150 kilowatts (UHF). Digital LPTV stations are limited to an effective radiated power of 3 kilowatts (VHF) and 15 kilowatts (UHF). There are no limits on transmitter output power and on antenna height, provided the tower structure has been registered with the FCC.

## TV Translator Station Operation

TV translator stations provide a means whereby the signals of full-power television stations may be retransmitted to areas where direct reception of such stations is unsatisfactory due to distance or intervening terrain barriers. TV translator stations operate with the same technical rules as LPTV stations. However, TV translator stations are not permitted to originate programming except for emergency warnings of imminent danger, local public service announcements (PSAs), and announcements seeking or acknowledging financial support deemed necessary to the continued operation of the station. PSAs and acknowledgments of financial support are limited to 30 seconds each, no more than once per hour.

## Owning an LPTV/Translator Station

There is no limit on the number of LPTV/translator stations that may be owned by any one entity. Current broadcast licensees, cable operators and newspapers can own LPTV/translator stations.

## Applying for an LPTV Station

New applications for digital LPTV/translator stations are only accepted during designated filing window periods. Applications for new analog stations are no longer accepted. The FCC announces these window periods at least 30 days before the opening of the window, and the announcement provides details on how to file. Interested applicants should periodically check the FCC's [Media Bureau website](http://www.fcc.gov/media-bureau) at [www.fcc.gov/media-bureau](http://www.fcc.gov/media-bureau) for window announcements.

## Interference Requirements for LPTV Stations

LPTV/translator stations have "secondary spectrum priority" to full-service stations. This means LPTV/translator stations must not cause interference to the reception of existing or future full-power television stations, must accept interference from full power stations, and must yield to new full power stations where interference occurs. For more information regarding interference requirements, see [Part 74 subpart G](http://www.law.cornell.edu/cfr/text/47/74/subpart-G) of the Commission's rules at [www.law.cornell.edu/cfr/text/47/74/subpart-G](http://www.law.cornell.edu/cfr/text/47/74/subpart-G)

When there is interference between cable systems and LPTV/translator stations, a "first in time, first in right" policy applies. Under this policy, the cable system or LPTV/translator station that had initial use of the channel has first priority and is not responsible for correcting the interference.

## Programming and Programming Content

LPTV/translator stations are subject to a minimum of program-related regulations. There are no prescribed amounts of non-entertainment programming or local programming, and there are no limits on commercials, and no minimum hours of operation. However, the broadcast of obscene material is prohibited at all times, and the broadcast of indecent and profane material is prohibited between 6 A.M. and 10 P.M.

## Consumer Help Center

For more information on consumer issues, visit the FCC's Consumer Help Center at [www.fcc.gov/consumers](http://www.fcc.gov/consumers).

## Alternate formats

To request this article in an alternate format -- braille, large print, Word or text document or audio -- write or call us at the address or phone number at the bottom of the page, or send an email to [fcc504@fcc.gov](mailto:fcc504@fcc.gov).

*Last Reviewed: 12/09/19*

