

Excerpts from Mike Wendland's Tech Blog

<http://www.freep.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080102/BLOG01/80102014/1035/ENT>

## Get your digital TV converter coupon

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At midnight on Feb. 17, **2009**, all full-power television stations in the United States will stop broadcasting in analog and switch to 100% digital broadcasting. Digital broadcasting promises to provide a clearer picture and more programming options.

Analog television sets receiving *free TV using an antenna* will not work after Feb. 17, 2009. Television viewers with these sets that are not connected to a pay TV service will need to take action before Feb. 17, 2009, to ensure their TV sets continue to work.

However, *TVs connected to cable, satellite or other pay TV service will not require a TV converter box* from this program, and you should continue to receive TV programming as usual after the transition.

For those who will need a converter box, the government is now offering \$40 coupons that consumers can use to apply toward the cost of a converter box that will let their old analog TV work when the complete switch to digital television takes place in a little over a year.

A government-run Digital TV Website (<https://www.dtv2009.gov/>) began offering the coupons New Year's Day. Consumers fill out a simple form and, sometime late next month or in March when the converters go on sale, the site promises to mail coupons that will give a \$40 discount on the cost of the converters. You can get up to two of the coupons per household.

Converters, which will allow old analog sets to receive the digital signals, will cost an estimated \$50 to \$70. That means out-of-pocket costs will run from \$10 to \$30.

FYI and, again, *for those who will need a converter box*, TV receivers made before 1998 are analog. If you bought a big-screen, projection TV between 1998 and 2004, it may have a built-in digital tuner inside. But chances aren't great. Only a limited percentage of projection TV sets (and generally only those 42 inches in diameter or larger) included digital tuners before 2004. What you need to know is whether your TV set has something called a "digital tuner" already built in. If it does, your TV set will work after Feb. 17, 2009. The best way to determine whether your TV set has a digital tuner built in is to consult your owner's manual. If that's not possible, you may be able to look up information about your TV set on the manufacturer's website. Or, you can take an up-close look at your TV set. In any case, you're trying to find out if your set has an input connection labeled "digital input" or "ATSC" (for Advanced Television Systems Committee, which is the DTV format).