

Satellite Television, the FCC's Analog-to-Digital Conversion, and You

Changes are coming to the world of television, courtesy of the U.S. government. On June 12, 2009 (extended from February 17, 2009) federal law requires that all full-power television broadcast stations stop broadcasting in analog format and broadcast only in digital format. This change is raising questions both among home owners as well as people like you, who enjoy life on the go, spending time in your RV or boat while enjoying satellite TV with your TracVision® antenna system.

Analog? Digital? What's the difference?

It all comes down to how TV signals are transmitted.

The analog video signal is transmitted in AM, while the audio is transmitted in FM, just like radio. As a result, the quality of analog TV can suffer, either from interference that results in snow and ghost images, or from weak signals as you move farther from the transmitter.

Digital TV, however, works in the same way as your computer or your Internet connection. The video and audio data are transmitted as bits of information that are either on or off so there's no static or snow. A digital signal is also able to carry far more data using the same amount of bandwidth required for an analog signal. This means that the picture and audio will offer higher quality.

At the same time, broadcasters can fit additional information (programming guides with detailed information about shows, etc.) into the space that's left over. This means that you can experience more features – high-definition, multiple languages, surround sound, and wide-screen format. Sound familiar? It should ... as a satellite TV subscriber, you've been enjoying these benefits for years!

Q&A:

What exactly is changing?

Congress passed legislation requiring television stations to switch to all-digital television broadcasting because all-digital broadcasting will allow broadcast stations to offer improved picture and sound quality, as well as more programming options for consumers. Plus it will make more AM and FM frequencies available for public safety communications (such as police, fire, and emergency rescue).

I have satellite television on my RV and boat. Will this change affect me at all?

No, it won't! Satellite TV broadcasts and all modern satellite TV antennas (like KVH's TracVision) are already using digital technology! It doesn't get any easier than that!

So my existing TracVision satellite TV system will continue to work?

Absolutely! You don't need to change a thing to continue enjoying premium satellite TV throughout the United States and its waters.

Is this the same thing as HDTV?

No, the option to receive HDTV, which is already digital, is just one benefit of digital programming. However, this conversion does not mean that you'll automatically get HDTV.

What if I use a regular over-the-air antenna to get local channels when I'm traveling?

Generally, you won't need a new over-the-air antenna but you may need a digital-to-analog set-top converter box if you have an older, analog-only TV.

How do I get a converter box?

Digital-to-analog converter boxes are available at several national and local retailers, and cost between \$40 and \$80. Visit www.dtv2009.gov/VendorSearch.aspx for a list of retailers.