



NEWS

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This is an unofficial announcement of Commission action. Release of the full text of a Commission order constitutes official action.
See MCI v. FCC, 515 F 2d 385 (D.C. Circ 1974).

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FCC Seeks Comment to Ensure All Cable Customers Receive Programming After the Digital Television Transition

Washington, D.C. – The Federal Communications Commission (“FCC”) today asked for comment on proposals to ensure all cable subscribers, including those with analog TV sets, can view must-carry television stations on cable systems after the transition to digital television occurs on February 17, 2009.

The Commission is committed to minimizing the burden to consumers related to the transition. About 50% of all cable subscribers, or approximately 32 million households, are analog cable subscribers, and many digital cable subscribers have one or more television sets that only receive analog cable service. The goal of this proceeding is to prevent service disruption for those consumers.

By statute, cable operators must ensure that all cable subscribers have the ability to view all must-carry local broadcast stations. To ensure that this statutory requirement is satisfied, the FCC proposes that cable operators must either: (1) carry the signals of all must-carry stations in an analog format to all analog cable subscribers, or (2) for all-digital systems, carry those signals only in digital format, provided that all subscribers have the necessary equipment to view the broadcast content.

The FCC reaffirmed that cable systems must carry high definition (“HD”) broadcast signals in HD format. The FCC also asked for comment on whether the Commission should move from a subjective to an objective measure of what constitutes material degradation. One way to do this would be to require that all "content bits" transmitted by the broadcaster be carried by the cable operator. The FCC also sought comment on whether the Commission's existing nondiscrimination requirement—prohibiting cable operators from treating cable programming services more favorably than broadcast signals for purposes of degradation—is a better objective test for material degradation.

Action by the Commission, April 25, 2007, by Second Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (FCC 07-71). Chairman Martin, Commissioners Copps, Adelstein, Tate, and McDowell. Separate Statements Issued by Chairman Martin, Copps, Adelstein, Tate, and McDowell.

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