



It's final: DTV starts tomorrow

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If you're not ready for tomorrow's digital TV conversion, it's scramble or be scrambled.

Because after February's false start, they're really going to do it this time. It's either be prepared for the digital TV age, or go without.

Those with television sets unprepared for the shutdown of analog TV tomorrow will see nothing. According to the FCC, the transition comes for all Boston-market stations Friday between noon and midnight.

Those with cable or satellite service, or who own sets with built-in digital tuners won't need to do anything, according to the government's Web site. And while analog sets should continue to work with gaming consoles, and VCR and DVD players, they'll be obsolete for TV.

There's still time to buy a digital converter box (\$40-\$70, widely available through consumer electronics retailers), but ordering the \$40 coupons to offset the cost of converter boxes means a wait of several weeks. The coupons expire 90 days after they've been mailed and the deadline to order them is July 31.

But what to do with those now-useless analog sets? Recycle. It's the law.

TV sets are laden with lead and banned from landfills and incinerators.

"We're providing people a place they can to get rid of them instead of tossing them in the woods," says Matt Decareau, vice-president of business development for North Andover-based M&K Recovery Group, a precious metals refining and computer recycling group that usually serves private industry.

M&K will offer extended hours June 15-17 (8:30 a.m.-7 p.m.) at its 100 Willow St. headquarters, processing televisions for \$25 per set. As an incentive, they'll process an additional non-TV recyclable for free.

"We don't make money on this," said Decareau. "We probably lose a little. But we're encouraging people to do the right thing."

Lowell and other local towns also offer TV reclamation through local recycling programs. In Lowell, for example, those with curbside trash and recycling should call Allied Waste (978) 649-7564 to schedule a pickup. The fee is \$10 for sets with 26-inch or smaller screens, \$20 for larger sets.

And the city isn't messing around with scofflaws. Sets aren't collected until payment is arranged with Allied by phone, and unwanted sets are not to be left curbside until the day of collection.

According to Lowell's recycling coordinator, Gunther Wellenstein, recycling inspectors are issuing tickets, ranging from \$25 for leaving a set out prior to its scheduled pick-up, to \$200 for illegal dumping.

That's because vandals can "kick or batter in" TVs left dormant, leaving them hazardous and unable to be picked up by Allied, says Wellenstein. Other vandals have stripped TV cords for their copper content.

Since Lowell's BIN-Dependence Day in March, Allied has collected 194 TVs curbside, and another 126 TVs and computer monitors were dropped off at the city's hazardous Waste Day last month.

The switch to digital was ordered by the government to free up frequencies for public safety communications. Digital also provides improved picture and sound, and more broadcasting options.

For details on the switch-over, see www.dtv.gov.

Material from the Associated Press was used in this report.