

Are You Ready For The Digital TV Switchover?

Did you know that on the 4th of November 2009 the Granada TV region will start the process of switching to digital TV?

This means that the old 'analogue' signals that has been used for over sixty years will be gradually phased out and finally switched off completely.

Digital signals are already being transmitted alongside the analogue ones but after switchover we will be relying solely on digital signals for terrestrial TV.

The digital switchover will not affect satellite or cable TV.

Why is the digital Switchover necessary?

The majority of UK homes currently have digital TV. However one in four cannot get it via their aerial and many still cannot get Channel Five. Only by switching off the analogue signal will it be possible to boost the digital signal and get it to parts of the country that cannot currently receive it.

What are the main benefits?

It frees up airwaves that could be used for innovations such as mobile TV or high definition TV. In simple terms analogue signals take up a lot of space on the bandwidth that it uses when they are transmitted through the air.

Digital signals take much less space. Six to eight digital channels can be transmitted in the space taken by one analogue channel this means far more information and programmes can be transmitted.

What will I get with digital TV?

You will receive all your usual channels and many more as standard, featuring news, films, history and children's programmes. Currently there are about eighteen free TV channels plus interactive red button services and digital radio.



If you choose to take out a subscription you can get even more.

A freeview box can cost between ten and two hundred pounds, most of the channels are free but some freeview boxes incorporate "top up TV" This is a subscription service that offers even more programmes for a monthly charge, your electrical retailer will be able to tell you more.

I do not use an aerial as I have Sky TV or Virgin Media, will I lose my picture when the switchover takes place?

If you watch all your TV through a sky box then switchover will not affect you, your satellite dish picks up the signals.

If you are watching TV using Virgin Media (formally NTL) then switchover will not affect you your signals come through fibre optic cables.

However if you have a separate TV in a bedroom or kitchen you may be using an aerial for these and in which case you will need ensure they are ready for switchover.

Digital Switchover will only affect terrestrial television signals, these signals are transmitted from transmitters usually located in high places. The main one for the Greater Manchester area is *Winter Hill*, your aerial picks up the signals from this transmitter.

I can't get digital TV through an aerial now. Does that mean that I will lose my TV programmes after switchover?

Not necessarily. One of the reasons that switchover is happening is so that more people can get digital TV through their aerial. (Freeview). It is only by switching off the old analogue signal that the power to the digital signals can be increased.

At present digital signals are only being transmitted at half power because of the analogue signals being transmitted at the same time, this means that some areas are not able to receive them as the signal is running at half power. When the switchover takes place the analogue signal will be switched off and only then will the digital signal be boosted up to full power this means it will reach more homes that it could before.

My property is connected to a communal aerial. What do I need to do?

Six Town Housing are currently replacing all communal aerial systems on the flats/ houses that currently have them installed. You will be automatically contacted before switchover so that the arrangements can be made for the new system to be installed, a new connection point will be fitted in your living room. If you are not sure if you are connected to a communal aerial please contact Six Town Housing. You should not have your own aerial equipment installed on the communal blocks without requesting permission.

You will be contacted before the switchover date of November 2009; Most of these types of communal blocks will be getting a full IRS system.

An IRS system means "Integrated Reception system" The system will include a communal satellite dish, TV aerial and radio aerial, the satellite part of this system will be compatible with "sky plus boxes"

Once these systems have been installed all the redundant and old aerial systems will be stripped of the building. Any future requests for individual sky or Freesat dishes or aerials will not be considered

If you wish to install a dish to receive signals that are not picked up by the communal dishes we will consider such applications subject to building regulations.

My property is not connected to a communal aerial – the aerial is therefore my responsibility, do I need to get a new one?

If you get a good analogue picture now your aerial will probably be fine after switchover. You can use teletext page 284 and follow the instructions as a guide to check your aerial and the signal. However if you need to change it or are considering changing it, we have put together some points to consider before going ahead - they are highlighted in this article.

How do I know if I am connected to a communal aerial?

If you are not sure whether you are connected to a communal aerial then please contact Six Town Housing on 0161 686 8000.

What do I have to do with my television?

If you receive your programmes through an aerial you have two choices:

Convert your existing TV set – This is done by plugging a digital box into the back of the TV set. These are available at most electrical retailers including supermarkets, the prices start from about £15 and upwards

OR Take the opportunity to buy a new digital TV – It will let you receive digital TV through an aerial (Freeview) if it is available in your area - Look out for the digital tick as any equipment with this mark will work after switchover.

Don't forget your video recorder – After switchover video recorders & most DVD recorders will record and play back as before. But, if you want to record one digital channel while you are watching another, you'll need a separate freeview box for the recorder. Alternatively you may consider buying a digital recorder

I have more than one TV set in my house. Do they all need to be converted?

You will need to ensure that every TV set in your home that relies on an aerial for the signal has freeview built in to the TV or you will have to convert them by plugging in a freeview box.

How to go digital.

- ❖ Through an aerial (Freeview, Top up TV)
- ❖ Through an aerial and phone line (BT Vision, Tiscalli etc) The phone line must be active
- ❖ Through a satellite dish (Sky, Freesat from Sky, and Freesat from the BBC / ITV)
- ❖ Through a cable (Virgin Media) the network must be installed in your area

see the useful numbers at the bottom of this page.

Not all options are available in all areas and some areas will not be able to get digital TV through an aerial until after switchover. For more information on your digital options visit the digital UK website at www.digitaluk.co.uk alternatively you can telephone them on 08456 505050

What should I look out for if I decide to buy a new TV or recorder?

If you decide to buy any new equipment e.g. a television, a portable television or a recorder, look out for the digital tick logo,

What if I decide to renew or adjust my aerial?

If you decide to have your aerial renewed or altered then look for a Registered Digital Installer (RDI), also recognised by the digital tick logo. To find an RDI visit www.rdi-lb.tv or call digital UK on 0845 505050

Alternatively, if there is not an RDI near you, you can look in the Yellow Pages for an installer who is a member of the Confederation of Aerial Installers (CAI). These companies work to a code of practice that ensures quality of work and value for money.

If you are intending to change your TV aerial and you use an RDI or CAI approved installer then there will be no requirement to seek permission from Six Town Housing. This rule only applies for a standard TV aerial. You will still need permission for the erection of satellite dishes and other types of aerial.

You must not attempt to undertake the work as a DIY task, as it may result in:

- ❖ Death or serious injury by falling from the roof.
- ❖ Damage to the roof structure and chimney stack.
- ❖ Damage to slates, tiles, and guttering etc
- ❖ Aerials not secured to the building properly that will become a hazard.

Why do I have to pay for the aerial to be replaced?

Unless you are connected to a communal aerial system, the aerial and its upkeep is your responsibility in line with your tenancy agreement, the upkeep of a communal system is included in the rent.

How much should I expect to pay?

The cost of the work will vary from contractor to contractor depending on how much work is involved. However the cost to replace a TV aerial should normally be between £50 and £150.

I want to subscribe to Sky TV how do I go about this?

You should contact sky yourself direct to arrange your package but you should be aware of the existing satellite dish arrangement.

If you are living in a block that has a communal satellite dish fitted on the building you will need to inform sky when you contact them to order your package, Sky may already know that your building has such a dish fitted however this cannot be guaranteed. It is important Sky are aware as they need to know that you will not require your own dish fitting. The communal dish will supply you with a dual signal that is ready for all the sky packages however if you want sky multi room you will need more wiring from the dish into your flat.

Sky will advise you on this matter

If you live in a property that is not connected to a communal system and you do not have a sky dish already then you will need to seek permission from Six Town Housing before an engineer installs a dish on your property. In addition to this permission the installation of the dish must comply with current building regulations.

I want to buy Freesat do I need to fit a satellite dish?

Freesat uses satellite signals just like sky TV, but you need to consider any existing dish arrangements.

If you are living in a block that has a communal satellite dish fitted on the building you can use the connection in your living room to connect to your Freesat box or Freesat ready TV, this means you will not need to install a separate dish on your property, you should make your electrical retailer aware that this facility is available if you want them to carry out the installation for you.

If you live in a property that has a sky dish already fitted you may be able to use this dish to watch Freesat which means you will not have to fit a new dish.

If you live in a property that is not connected to a communal system and you do not have a sky dish already then you will need to seek permission from Six Town Housing before an engineer installs a dish on your property. In addition to this permission the installation of the dish must comply with current building regulations. Please ask Six Town Housing for a "permission to install satellite dish" form

Is there any help available with the switchover process?

So that everyone can make the switch, there is a help scheme for those who need it most.

You are eligible for the scheme if you:

- ❖ Are aged 75 years and over at time of switchover

OR

- ❖ Receive attendance allowance, constant attendance allowance, mobility supplement or disability living allowance,

OR

- ❖ Are registered blind or partially sighted.

If you are eligible you will be contacted automatically and sent information from digital UK before your area goes digital. No one will visit you without an appointment. For more information please contact digital UK on 08456 0505050

Six Town Housing or Bury MBC are not connected to this scheme, it is a government scheme to assist the most vulnerable. Digital U.K. will identify the eligible people and contact them before the switchover date.

How can I protect myself from a rogue trader?

- ❖ No one should visit without an appointment. Demand identification and call the company to check they are who they say they are. Turn away uninvited doorstep callers who claim to be linked to Digital UK or Six Town Housing.
- ❖ Don't agree to work on the spot. Take time to think about what work, if any, you want done.
- ❖ Get written quotes from at least two traders to ensure you are paying a fair price.
- ❖ Remember that if an offer seems too good to be true, it probably is. By getting more than one quote, you can find out what an acceptable rate is.
- ❖ Before any work starts, agree the price, payment arrangements and start/finish dates. Don't pay in full until the work is completed to your satisfaction.

If you think you have been cheated or have paid a deposit to a trader you now have concerns about, you can call Consumer Direct on 08454 04 05 06. Their advisers can give you advice on your cancellation rights and getting unsatisfactory work put right.

What can I do if my digital TV equipment doesn't work?

The Digital UK helpline can provide advice on common technical problems and there are technical fact sheets available such as connecting your TV equipment, retuning and more.

If the equipment is faulty, you may be able to get a replacement or a refund from the retailer you bought it from. It's important to act quickly once you realise there's a fault. The longer you wait, the more difficult it will be to prove the item was faulty when you bought it.

It's usually the seller – not the manufacturer – that has a legal responsibility to replace faulty goods or refund your money. So, in the first instance, insist that the seller considers your claim, before referring it to the manufacturer.

For more advice on claiming refunds, repairs or replacements for faulty goods you can contact the Consumer Direct helpline on 08454 **04 05 06***. Their trained advisers can give you advice on what to do. If you prefer face-to-face help and advice visit your local advice agency or Citizens Advice Bureau.

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Useful Contact Numbers

Organisation	Details	Contact Number	Website
Digital U.K.	The government agency overseeing the digital switchover process	08456 505050	www.digitaluk.co

Freesat	The new service from the BBC and ITV offering all the freeview channels and a growing number of HD channels	08450 990990	www.freesat.co.uk
Virgin Media	A TV and broadband subscription service transmitted through fibre optic cables in the ground –not all areas can access this service.	0845 840 7777	www.virginmedia.com
Sky TV	The main satellite provider in the U.K.	08442 414141	www.sky.com
BT Vision	A television service offered through broadband and an aerial connection.	0800 800150	www.bt.com
C.A.I.	The confederation of aerial installers - an organisation that promotes good practice within the aerial industry ask if your installer is a member.	01923 803030	www.cai.org.uk
R.D.I	The register of digital Installers, a body where installers to a recognised code of practice to ensure a quality service	0870 129 8015	www.rdi-lb.tv/installers
ABCA Systems	The organisation carrying out the digital upgrade work on the properties that have communal aerial systems	01204399422	www.abcasystem.com

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Glossary

Analogue signal

The broadcast signal which has been delivering the current four or five (not including other services and regional variations) TV channels to your TV set and video recorder via an aerial.

TV region

The region covered by one of ITV's major regional services, for example Border or Granada. The TV regions are defined by the transmission system. In each region this comprises main transmitters (like Winter Hill) and then a number of smaller relays which feed off the main transmitter.

Digital signal

Television images are sent as compressed data which is then unscrambled by a digital box. The signal is sent by cable, satellite, broadband or through the air to your aerial.

Digital box

Needed for converting existing analogue TVs to be able to receive digital TV – it unscrambles digital signals and turns them back into sound and pictures. (Also see IDTV)

Digital switchover

The process of switching over the UK's current analogue television broadcasting system to digital, as well as ensuring that people have adapted or upgraded their televisions and recording equipment to receive digital TV.

Digital Television Recorder (DTR)

A digital receiver that is also able to record programmes to a hard drive, or onto a DVD. A DTR with a built in digital box (tuner) will enable you to watch one programme while recording another, if the television receives its own digital signal. Some DTRs have two tuners which allow you to convert your TV set so that you can watch one channel whilst recording another.

Digital Terrestrial Television (DTT)

DTT is transmitted through an aerial. In the UK this includes the Freeview service (which includes the terrestrial channels, BBC One, BBC Two, ITV1, Channel Five and S C) and, for an additional monthly subscription, Top Up TV.

Freeview

The main UK DTT service that is transmitted through an aerial. No subscription is required.

Freesat

A new service that offers all the stations available on freeview but through a satellite dish instead of an aerial. Using Freesat also gives you access to some of the HD (High Definition) channels currently being broadcast.

High Definition Television (HDTV)

HDTV is a new technology that will enable viewers to get higher definition television pictures. HDTV has four times as many pixels (dots on the screen) as standard TV broadcasts, meaning a clearer picture and detail on large screen TVs. An HD-ready TV is not necessarily a digital TV. HD is currently available via satellite and cable.

Integrated Digital Television (IDTV)

A TV with a built-in digital receiver which can receive digital terrestrial TV channels through an aerial, with no need for an additional digital box.

Platform

A term for the different options for accessing digital TV. There are four platforms for accessing digital TV: through an aerial (DTT), via cable, via satellite or through the internet.

Scart lead

The best way to connect one TV product to another. It connects the picture and stereo sound in one 21-pin plug. Usually used to connect a television with a video or a digital box.

Spectrum

The electromagnetic spectrum is the set of radio frequencies used to transmit television, radio and other forms of electronic communication.



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