



NEWS

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See MCI v. FCC, 515 F 2d 385 (D.C. Circ 1974).

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DTV Transition Premiers in Wilmington, North Carolina

DTV Test Pilot Program to Begin September 8, 2008

Washington, DC – Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Chairman Kevin Martin today announced Wilmington, North Carolina, will be the first market to test the transition to digital television (DTV) in advance of the nationwide transition to DTV on February 17, 2009. The commercial broadcasters serving the Wilmington television market have voluntarily agreed to turn off their analog signals at noon on September 8, 2008. Beginning at 12:00 pm on September 8, 2008, these local stations, WWAY (ABC), WSFX-TV (FOX), WECT (NBC), WILM-LP (CBS), and W51CW (Trinity Broadcasting) will broadcast only digital signals to their viewers in the five North Carolina counties that comprise this television market.

Representatives of each local affiliate, Donna Barrett, President and CEO of Southeastern Media Holdings, Inc. (WSFX (FOX)), Andy Combs, Station Manager of WWAY (ABC), Jim Goodman, President and CEO of Capitol Broadcasting (WILM-LP (CBS)), Paul McTear, President and CEO of Raycom Media Inc. (WECT (NBC)), and Colby May, Esq. on behalf of Trinity Broadcasting (W51CW) made the announcement along with the Mayor of Wilmington, Bill Saffo, and the President and CEO of the Wilmington Chamber of Commerce, Connie Majure-Rhett.

The DTV transition for the whole country will take place on February 17, 2009, when all full power television stations must turn off their analog signals and broadcast only digital signals. This test market will be an early transition that will give broadcasters and consumers a chance to experience in advance the upcoming DTV transition. The Commission is coordinating with local officials and community groups to accelerate and broaden consumer education outreach efforts. The outreach will focus on the special transition date for Wilmington and the steps viewers may need to take to be ready by September.

In making the announcement, the Chairman said: "On March 3, 2008, my colleague, Commissioner Michael Copps, suggested that the Commission engage in real-world experience readying broadcasters and consumers in advance of the upcoming digital transition, including test markets that would switch to all-digital service before February 17, 2009. I commend the Wilmington broadcasters for their pioneer spirit to go first to help the entire country prepare for the final transition to digital on February 17, 2009. This experience will help us to spot issues that we need to address elsewhere in the country before next February."

The Commission identified Wilmington as one of a limited number of potential test markets to test the transition because all the commercial stations in the market have already completed construction of their DTV channels and are operating at full post-transition power. The Wilmington PBS station, WUNJ, will continue broadcasting in both analog and digital. One other low power station has its digital channel assignment, but will continue broadcasting an analog signal. The Commission will use the test market as an opportunity to work very closely in advance with broadcasters, viewers, cable companies and others who will be affected to anticipate and address any problems. The Commission is also coordinating with NTIA and local retailers to be sure that digital-to-analog converter boxes are readily available in local stores for consumers who rely on over-the-air service and have analog televisions.

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