

Consumer Advisory Committee
Consumer Concerns Regarding Digital Television and Transition from Analog

RECOMMENDATIONS adopted: November 19, 2004

The Consumer Advisory Committee congratulates the FCC and its Consumer and Government Affairs Bureau for its high-profile and timely consumer outreach campaign on digital television, "DTV – Get It!"

As the Commission continues developing the web site at www.DTV.gov and creates tip sheets to be distributed to consumers via consumer electronics stores, we make the following recommendations to enhance the Commission's efforts:

The Commission should convene a high-profile panel on consumer concerns, similar to the industry panels convened on October 4, 2004, to bring these issues to a wider public.

The Commission should strive to make all of the DTV outreach materials and information, distributed electronically or physically, accessible to people with disabilities, speakers of other languages, and those with low literacy skills.

This includes assuring that the web site itself is fully accessible according to section 508 Web accessibility guidelines, captioning videos on the site and those made available to press and stores, and the tip sheets distributed to stores for distribution to consumers.

In the section of the DTV web site which pulls together all relevant Digital Television (DTV) Regulatory Information ("Read all the rules and regulations that relate to the DTV transition"), located at www.fcc.gov/dtv/, a special effort should be made to include Public Notices and regulations relating to requirements for closed captioning in DTV (for example, presently missing, among others, is the very helpful Public Notice DA 02-1860, Released: July 31, 2002, which "REMINDS MANUFACTURERS AND THE PUBLIC OF JULY 1, 2002, DEADLINE FOR PROVIDING DIGITAL TELEVISION RECEIVERS CAPABLE OF PROVIDING CLOSED CAPTIONING"). Consumer and industry confusion regarding DTV closed captioning requirements is still rampant.

When developing tip sheets for widespread consumer distribution, the Commission should seek input from the CAC and allow time for such input to be considered and incorporated prior to mass printing and distribution.

As the Commission works with the Consumer Electronic Association (CEA) and the Consumer Electronics Retailers Coalition (CERC), it should seek solutions to the problem of lack of closed-captioned and video-described DTV content in stores where consumers wish to examine these features of DTV equipment.

Additionally, as the Commission enhances and expands its outreach efforts and web site, other issues the CAC urges the FCC to address or clarify include:

- Hardware-related financial issues in transitioning from analog to digital TV
- Nomenclature confusion: DTV, HDTV, SDTV, digital cable, DVD
- Access services – continuity and reliability of closed captioning and video description
- Emergency warnings and emergency information
- Interference issues and cable reception of off-air signals within the Grade B contour
- FCC ideas re: accelerating the transition via equipment subsidies
- Standards and variations consumers will experience as they receive DTV over the air, via cable, via satellite and via the emerging VDSL (Very-high-speed Digital Subscriber Line) and fiber-to-the-home (FTTH) delivery of DTV by phone companies
- Compatibility with recording devices (Personal Video Recorders, DVD-Recorders, etc.) and display devices

Finally, as a means of "closing the loop" for these recommendations, we would appreciate receiving a formal response to these recommendations at the next scheduled meeting of the newly rechartered CAC.