

INDUSTRY AGREES PLAN FOR DIGITAL TV MARKET

The UK's electrical industry today announces measures to increase the supply of digital television products and phase out analogue-only kit ahead of switchover.

The Digital Switchover Supply Chain Group, representing independent retailers and well-known names such as Currys, Comet, Tesco, Sony and Panasonic, will also take steps to improve levels of information about equipment available to consumers.

The measures to be introduced by the end of 2007 include:

- Accelerating the availability of Digital TVs across all product lines, including small sets (16" screen and below)
- Withdrawing analogue TV equipment from sale in reach region in the 12 months leading up to switchover in that area – or bundling its sale with a digital solution¹
- Clear consumer information in stores making clear that analogue sets will require conversion at switchover
- Labeling all digital equipment with the 'digital tick' indicating it will work before, during and after switchover
- Phasing out the sale of non-digital recorders, including analogue DVD recorders

In the first seven months of 2007, UK consumers purchased more than 4m televisions. Almost nine out of ten (89%) larger sets purchased had digital tuners built in.² Nearly two million (1.9m) smaller screen sets – under 26" – were sold during the same period, of which 85% were analogue.³ In the recorder market, 1.4m items have been sold so far this year, 64% of which were analogue.

With the start of digital switchover just one month away, the industry is already moving towards phasing out analogue equipment. Sony and Panasonic are among the manufacturers who are now selling digital-only product lines. In Whitehaven, the first area to switch⁴, most stores have stopped stocking analogue televisions.

Danny Churchill, Co-Chairman of the Digital Switchover Supply Chain Group, said: "We've already seen a rapid transformation in the market for larger, flat screen televisions, the vast majority of which are now digital. The moves we are announcing today will further benefit consumers by continuing that transformation across the full range of television and recording equipment."

Ford Ennals, Chief Executive of Digital UK, the organisation co-ordinating digital switchover, said: "It's good to see the electrical industry joining forces to make such a positive contribution to preparing the UK for switchover. Consumers need a full range of digital products to choose from and clear labeling to ensure that any purchase is made in the full knowledge that analogue TV will soon be a thing of the past."

Stephen Timms MP, Minister of State for Competitiveness, said: "I am delighted that representatives of TV equipment manufacturers and retailers have come forward with sensible and practical measures to address the issue of continuing sales of analogue televisions and recording equipment. These should provide important support to consumers as they prepare for digital switchover."

ends; notes follow -

Notes to editors

1. Lead region 12-month countdowns to switchover commence in the following quarters:

Border	Q4 2007 (switches from Q4 2008)
West Country	Q2 2008 (switches from Q2 2009)
Wales	Q3 2008 (switches from Q3 2009)
Granada	Q4 2008 (switches from Q4 2009)

Analogue equipment may still be sold during this period if bundled with a set-top box or personal video recorder.

2. Source: GfK July 2007
3. UK small screen TV sales, Q2 2007 - 84% analogue, 16% digital (Source GfK July 2007)
4. Switchover starts in Whitehaven, Cumbria, on October 17, 2007 and completes four weeks later on November 14.

The Digital Switchover Supply Chain Group was established to help ensure the best environment for its member organisations to manufacture, sell and install digital receiver equipment and assist consumers in support of digital switchover.

Switchover will create a fairer situation in which everyone has access to a choice of affordable digital TV services. Between 2008 and 2012, all TV services in the UK will go completely digital, region by region. The UK's old analogue television signal is being switched off and replaced with a digital signal, a process that will also allow the UK to remain a world leader in broadcasting.

Images of switchover and Digital UK are available to media, free of charge, from vismedia.co.uk

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