

Era of digital TV sweeps into SA



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Aside from more programming and TV channel choices, digital broadcasting will allow government to provide consumers with e-government services over television, special services for the hearing or visually impaired and programming in a multiplicity of languages thereby increasing access to information.

Sentech, South Africa's broadcasting signal distributor is responsible for the modernisation of transmission equipment that will make the migration to digital possible. The state utility has said that they are fast-tracking their work so as to be able to provide digital broadcasting in time for the 2010 FIFA World Cup.

The Department of Communications (DOC) has set a three year period for households to migrate, and will switch off the analogue signal on 1 November 2011.

In order to receive the digital signal, households will either need to purchase digital television sets or set-top-boxes (STBs) that convert the digital signal into an analogue one so that households can continue to receive content once the analogue signal has been turned off.

According to the DOC, the STBs will be produced in high volumes in South Africa in a bid to boost local electronics manufacturing. Minister of Communications Dr Ivy Matsepe-Casaburri has said that technical specifications for STBs have been submitted to the SA Bureau of Standards and that up to eight companies would be awarded tenders to make the devices, reports the Cape Times.

The estimated retail price of the STBs is about R700. However the government has announced that they will subsidise the cost of STBs for poorer households. Under the Scheme for Ownership Support for Poor Households, the government will provide 70% (R490) towards the cost of a STB, leaving poor households to pay R210. It is estimated that this will cost government about R2.45 billion.

For more information on the process of Broadcast Digital Migration visit www.digitalmigration.gov.za or the [Department of Communications website](#).