

Press Releases

Technical standard for digital terrestrial television service
promulgated(with video)

The Telecommunications Authority today (June 4) announced the adoption of the National Standard as the technical standard for the digital terrestrial television (DTT) service in Hong Kong.

A spokesman for the Office of the Telecommunications Authority (OFTA) said, "The Government has adopted a market-led approach which allows the free-to-air television broadcasters - Asia Television Limited (ATV) and Television Broadcasts Limited (TVB) - to propose the DTT technical standard of their choice for assessment by the TA. The two broadcasters unanimously indicated their preference for the National Standard. After considering their proposals and having regard to the satisfactory outcome of the laboratory tests and field trials with the proposed standard, the Telecommunications Authority has decided to adopt the National Standard as the transmission standard for DTT in Hong Kong."

Following the adoption of DTT transmission standard, the authority will publish the technical specification for DTT receivers within this month so that manufacturers will be able to produce and supply the appropriate DTT set-top boxes and integrated TV sets (DTT receivers) for the Hong Kong market.

"The receiver specification, which will consist of a basic-tier and a higher-tier, is to cater for the different business plans of the two broadcasters and the versatile needs of consumers," the spokesman said.

The basic-tier receivers will allow consumers to receive the four existing local free-to-air television programme channels transmitted in digital format. The higher-tier receivers will allow consumers to enjoy all DTT programmes, including new programmes and high-definition television (HDTV) programmes.

According to the stipulation of the Government, two broadcasters shall simulcast both digital and analogue terrestrial television before the end of 2007.

"By that time, people can still enjoy the analogue television programmes and satellite television programmes without the need of any additional equipment. If people would like to receive the new DTT programmes, they will need to procure DTT receivers in compliance with the specification set out for the Hong Kong market. As to management offices / incorporated owners of multi-storey buildings, they will need to upgrade their communal aerial broadcast distribution systems so that the DTT service is receivable by individual residents of the buildings. OFTA will, via a variety of channels, remind the building management offices / incorporated owners to upgrade their aerial systems before the launch of DTT service.

"No DTT receivers are available in the market yet. Consumers who wish to receive the DTT programmes need not rush to buy receivers now. We expect that such receivers will

gradually be available in the market for consumers' choice in the coming three to six months. DTT will be launched in phases and when DTT is first launched by end 2007, only 50% of Hong Kong will be covered by digital signals. Hence, consumers shall also check whether their residences are covered by DTT service and their aerial systems are able to receive such service before making the purchase decision.

"Existing television sets and displays currently on sale in the market can work with the future DTT set-top boxes. Those television sets which are high-definition ready (HD-ready) with a set-top box connected in future can enjoy HDTV services when DTT is launched. On the other hand, integrated TV sets (with built-in digital decoders) will be available at a later stage," the spokesman explained.

The Government and the broadcasters will mount publicity in relation to DTT and consumer tips for the purchase of DTT receivers nearer the time of the launch of DTT service. For further enquiries, people may surf the Government's website for DTT (<http://www.digitaltv.gov.hk>) or call OFTA's hotline (2961 6333).

According to the Government's implementation framework for DTT, the two free-to-air television broadcasters, ATV and TVB, are required to simulcast both analogue and digital terrestrial television services in 2007 at the latest.

In early 2007, ATV and TVB submitted their technical proposals suggesting the deployment of DTT service based on the National Standard. The authority, having assessed the proposals in the light of the criteria specified in the relevant consultation paper of the Commerce, Industry and Technology Bureau issued on December 5, 2003, sets out his decisions on the transmission standard and receiver specification for DTT on June 4, 2007.

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