



# Consumer Guide

## Low-Power Television (LPTV) Service

The FCC created the Low Power Television (LPTV) service in 1982 to provide opportunities for locally-oriented television service in small communities. These communities may be in rural areas or individual communities within larger urban areas. LPTV service offers programming tailored to the interests of viewers in small localized areas in a less expensive and more flexible way than traditional full-power television stations. It has created opportunities for new entry into television broadcasting, provided a means of local self-expression, and permitted fuller use of the broadcast spectrum. LPTV stations are currently undertaking their transition to digital operations.

### LPTV Digital Transition

Although Congress established a hard deadline of June 12, 2009, for full power TV stations to cease analog broadcasts and begin operating only in digital, and the Commission set a transition date of September 1, 2015, for Class A television stations to complete their transition, neither of these deadlines applied to low power television stations or TV translator stations (referred to herein as "LPTV stations"). Therefore, although all full power and Class A television stations have ceased over-the-air analog broadcasting, LPTV stations are continuing to transmit analog signals.

The FCC has established a new deadline for the termination of all analog operations by LPTV stations. That date is dependent upon the completion of the Commission's incentive auction, which involves a repacking process that will displace some LPTV stations. Therefore, the Commission has determined to allow LPTV stations to wait until the incentive auction is complete before transitioning to digital. LPTV stations will have 12 months from the completion of the 39-month post-incentive auction transition (51 months from the completion of the incentive auction) to cease analog operations and begin operating in digital, at which point analog television will no longer exist in the United States. Until that time, LPTV stations may continue to operate their analog facilities. LPTV stations should monitor the Commission's web site ([www.fcc.gov](http://www.fcc.gov)) for more information on the status of the incentive auction and the establishment of an exact date for the completion of the LPTV digital transition.

LPTV stations have the opportunity to seek either an on-channel digital conversion of their existing analog facilities ("flash cut") or may construct and operate a second digital companion channel during the remainder of the digital transition. However all LPTV stations will be required to decide a single digital channel to continue to operate after the final transition date.

### LPTV Station Operation

LPTV stations are operated by diverse groups and organizations - high schools and colleges, churches and religious groups, local governments, large and small businesses and individual citizens. LPTV modes of operation and programming vary widely. These include satellite-delivered programming services, syndicated programs, movies and a wide range of locally-produced programs. LPTV stations sometimes tailor program segments or entire schedules to specific viewer groups (on the basis of age, language or particular interest).

On the technical side, LPTV stations transmit on one of the standard VHF (2-13) or UHF (14-51) television channels. The distance at which a station can be viewed depends on a variety of factors - antenna height, transmitter power, transmitting antenna and the nature of the environment (rural or urban, hilly or flat terrain). The FCC does not allocate channels for LPTV service. Applicants select channels and apply during a given time period.

Analog LPTV stations are limited to an effective radiated power of 3 kilowatts (VHF) and 150 kilowatts (UHF). Digital LPTV stations are limited to an effective radiated power of 3 kilowatts (VHF) and 15 kilowatts (UHF). There



are no limits on transmitter output power and on antenna height, as long as the tower structure has been registered with the FCC.

### **Owning an LPTV Station**

There is no limit on the number of LPTV stations that may be owned by any one entity. Current broadcast licensees, cable operators and newspapers can own LPTV stations.

### **Applying for an LPTV Station**

New applications for digital LPTV and TV translator stations are only accepted during designated filing window periods. Applications for new analog stations are no longer accepted. The FCC announces these window periods at least 30 days before the opening of the window. The announcement provides details on how to file. Interested applicants should periodically check the FCC's Media Bureau website at [www.fcc.gov/media-bureau](http://www.fcc.gov/media-bureau) for window announcements.

### **Interference Requirements for LPTV Stations**

LPTV stations have “secondary spectrum priority” to full-service stations. This means LPTV stations **must not** cause interference to the reception of existing or future full-service television stations, must accept interference from full-service stations, and must yield to new full-service stations where interference occurs. For more information regarding interference requirements, see Part 74 subpart G of the Commission’s rules at [www.law.cornell.edu/cfr/text/47/74/subpart-G](http://www.law.cornell.edu/cfr/text/47/74/subpart-G)

When there is interference between cable systems and LPTV stations, a “first in time, first in right” policy applies. Under this policy, the cable system or LPTV station that had initial use of the channel has first priority and is not responsible for correcting the interference.

### **Programming and Programming Content**

LPTV stations are subject to a minimum of program-related regulations. There are no prescribed amounts of non-entertainment programming or local programming, and there are no limits on commercials, and no minimum hours of operation. However, the broadcast of obscene material is prohibited at all times, and the broadcast of indecent and profane material is prohibited between 6 A.M. and 10 P.M.

### **Ancillary and Supplementary Services**

Licensed digital LPTV stations and permittees operating pursuant to Special Temporary Authority (STA) must submit an FCC Form 2100 – Schedule G (Ancillary and Supplementary Services Report) by December 1<sup>st</sup> of each year. Stations must report whether they have provided ancillary and supplementary services at any time during the twelve-month period ending on the preceding September 30<sup>th</sup>. If they have, they are required to remit to the Commission an amount equal to 5% of the gross revenues derived from these services. This Report must be filed electronically via the Media Bureau’s Licensing and Management System (LMS). Paper-filed forms will not be accepted. Instructions for use of LMS are available at: <https://enterpriseefiling.fcc.gov/dataentry/login.html> For assistance with electronic filing, call the Help Desk at (877) 480-3201 TTY: (717) 338-2824.

### **Consumer Help Center**

For more information on consumer issues, visit the FCC’s Consumer Help Center at [www.fcc.gov/consumers](http://www.fcc.gov/consumers).

### **Accessible formats**

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