

Utilization of Terrestrial Digital TV Broadcasts and the Government's role in its wider dissemination

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[Summary]

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Introduction

In light of the purposes and merits of digitalizing broadcasts the Japanese government should ensure all possible efforts are made to facilitate a full transition to terrestrial digital TV broadcasts by July 2011. Each party fulfilling their role based on this policy report will enable the full migration to digital.

[Purposes and merits of digitalizing broadcasts]

1. Merits for viewers include high-quality video and audio broadcasts, “One-seg” services, multi-programs within the same channel, Electronic Program Guide (EPG), and subtitled caption broadcasts
2. Streamlining of frequencies enables more effective use for other applications with which there is a growing need for frequencies.
3. New services and a positive impact on the economy can also be expected.

Chapter 1 Current Situation with Promotion of Terrestrial Digital TV Broadcasts I

1. Current situation with reception side

- a. Recognition among people of analogue broadcasts being discontinued is 96.6% and its scheduling 91.3%
- b. Abstract information on analogue broadcasts being discontinued is recognized whereas specific information on digital reception is c. yet to be fully recognized.
- d. The penetration rate of reception facilities compatible with terrestrial digital TV broadcasts is 83.8% (as of March 2010), which is e. higher than the targeted 81.6%
- f. The percentage of households with reception facilities compatible with terrestrial digital TV broadcasts and capable of receiving it g. is 77.7%
- h. Digitalization of shared reception facilities for areas with poor reception, residential complexes, and remote area is taking longer i. than previously planned.

2. Current situation with the sending side

- a. Coverage by electrical waves had been improved to 97.5% of all households by the end of 2010
- b. CATV subscriber households numbered approx. 24,700,000 (as of March 2010), which is a little less than half all households
- c. (approx. 50,000,000)
- d. Households to which digital broadcasts cannot be sent via terrestrial broadcast systems by July 2011 will have satellite broadcasts
- e. tentatively made available. 118 areas (approx. 11,000 households) had been listed as target households as of April 2010.

Chapter 1 Current Situation with Promotion of Terrestrial Digital TV Broadcasts II

3. Other circumstances

1. Vicious business practices

The approach of the termination of analogue broadcast has involved nine cases of vicious business practices being reported this year. The police and the National Consumer Affairs Center of Japan will cooperate in preventing any damages and their spread.

2. Disposal and recycling

The number of disposed and recycled analogue TVs in 2011 is estimated to be approx. 16,500,000 (including approx. 15,500,000 CRT-TVs) and the recycling of disposed of analogue TVs going well.

3. Digitalization of public facilities

Digitalization of 73.5% of public facilities has been completed, while up to 46.0% of countermeasures for poor reception in public facilities have been completed

4. Effective utilization of terrestrial digital TV broadcasts

(i) Employment promotion in the public sector (ii) Promotion of subtitled caption broadcasts (iii) Programs utilizing special features of digital broadcasts

5. International expansion of Japan's digital broadcast system

Utilized in Latin American countries (8 countries including Brazil, Peru, Argentine, and Chile) and the Philippines

4. Future challenges after termination of analogue broadcasts

1. Redistribution of terrestrial frequencies (“repack implementation plan”)

Digital relay stations temporarily using 53 or more channels due to tight frequencies caused by simul-broadcasting (simultaneous broadcasts of both analogue and digital) will continue broadcasting by switching to less than 52 channels during the period of between July 2011 and July 2012.

2. Transfer of transmitting station to Tokyo Sky Tree

- NHK and 7 commercial broadcasters in the Kanto area will transfer their transmission facilities from Tokyo Tower to Tokyo Sky Tree (Sumida-ku, Tokyo) in providing more stable broadcast services.
- Impact on viewers including directional adjustment of antennas is anticipated. The possible impact of the transfer will be handled by terrestrial digital TV broadcasters as their own responsibility.

[Points to Keep in Mind]

1. Improved engagement of interested parties in fulfilling the objectives

The interested parties have been involved in the necessary matters in fulfilling the shared objectives. Areas where the target objectives are yet to be fulfilled (e.g. Delayed digitalization of shared reception facilities) will require the utmost effort in meeting the targets.

2. Dispersion of transfer actions and consultations

Specific methods will need to be focused in dispersing transfer actions and consultations. Towards this end the Government and terrestrial digital TV broadcasters, need to work closely together with the interested parties and identify the specific future path of when and how to create small peaks.

[5 Major Considerations]

1. Systems and Measures Intensified in Terminating the Current Analogue TV Broadcasts

→ Chapter 3

2. Ensuring Everyone is Informed of the Transition in Every Possible Way → Chapter 4

3. Efforts for the Elderly and Low-income Households with Non-digital Compliant devices

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4. Countermeasures for Delayed Digitalization of Shared Reception Facilities → Chapter 6

5. Countermeasures for Households that Will Lose Reception of TV Broadcasts → Chapter 7

Chapter 3 Systems and Measures Intensified in Terminating the Current Analogue TV Broadcasts

In the effective implementation of countermeasures determine and make available on websites, etc. indexes for progress of the migration to digital broadcasts, including the penetration rate of terrestrial digital TV broadcasts at households. Also make available analysis of areas with low household penetration rates and create countermeasures against them as precisely as possible

1. Actions for dispersion of inquiry timing (encouraging early inquiries)

- Encourage consultations at an early stage in avoid heavy telephone line traffic and confusion among callers around July 2011.

2. Actions for dispersion of points of inquiries

- Create a mechanism that supports as efficiently as possible the sorting of incoming calls according to the type of inquiry at busy times at DTV Call Centers
- Create a mechanism to facilitate dispersed contact points in enhancing their structure and cooperate as necessary in order to be able to collect and analyze information in promptly addressing possible problems.

3. Increase the numbers of personnel and DTV Call Center and DTV Support Center lines

- Drastically increase the number of personnel and DTV Call Center and DTV Support Center lines as soon as possible (by June 2011 at the latest)

4. Create a mechanism that leads “inquiries” into becoming “actions (including installations)”

- A mechanism used to introduce electronics stores or electricians if the installation of antenna, etc. is necessary in encouraging a rapid migration to digitalization

5. Facilitate installation systems

- Renovation work on antennas or shared reception facilities can be expected to peak to some extent around July 2011. Organize systems to properly process those needs and ensure the availability of electricians and priority measures to be taken in case of a shortage of electricians

6. Establish accessible temporary consultation corners

- Establish temporary consultation corners in accessible local areas (e.g. at the municipal level) for a short period of time around July 2011.

7. Final checks on the elderly households including face-to-face contact by DTV volunteers

- Facilitate local support systems via using accessible volunteers, for example, to help in resolving elementary problems.

Chapter 4 Ensuring Everyone is Informed of the Transition in Every Possible Way

The Government, DTV Support Centers and terrestrial digital TV broadcasters will publicize the migration from analogue to digital as well cooperate with other organizations, thereby intensifying publicity on the migration and preventing confusion when analogue broadcasts end.

Future publicity will be intensified not only when analogue broadcasts end (July 24, 2011) but also during the transition from normal analogue broadcast programs to final informative broadcasts that strongly encourage migrating to digital reception (currently planned for July 1, 2011).

1. The Government and DTV Support Centers

- Utilize briefing and consultation sessions, house-to-house visits, public announcements, newspapers, and radio
- Reminders from local welfare commissioners, posters and face-to-face contact with the elderly with the cooperation of hospitals, welfare facilities, etc.
- Publicize “residential fire alarms” of the Fire and Disaster Management Agency and cooperate with them

2. Terrestrial digital TV broadcasters

- Intensify display of informative messages during analogue broadcasts (In principal constantly from January 2011. Starting in the Kanto area, ahead of other areas.)
- Broadcast TV programs explaining in detail how to get ready for digital TV broadcasts

3. Electronics stores

- Posters or leaflets in stores, consultation corners set up on DTV in stores, DTV publicity along with manufacturers' products

4. Local governments

- Publicity utilizing public relations magazines, posters, circulars, and informative programs (TV and radio)

5 CATV broadcasters

- Enclose “Information” with correspondence addressed to subscribers, publicity via community channels

6. Manufacturers

7. Consumer organizations

Chapter 5 Efforts for the Elderly and Low-income Households with Non-digital Compliant Devices

Efforts made with the Elderly will include consultation sessions being provided by DTV Support Centers and house-to-house visits, as well as the following:

(i) Establishment of accessible “temporary consultation corners”

- Establish temporary consultation corners in accessible local areas (e.g. at the municipal level) for a short period of time around July 2011.

(ii) Final checks on the elderly households, including face-to-face contact with DTV volunteers

- The DTV Support Centers will provide materials and dispatch lecturers to consultation sessions hosted by local welfare commissioners, NPO, and others.
- Facilitate local support systems via accessible volunteers, for example, helping to resolve elementary problems.

In the light of the fact that some low-income households are living without welfare efforts for low-income households will include the following:

2. Efforts made with the low-income households

(i) Publicity on supports for tuners, etc. to households exempt from a full NHK license fee

Intensify publicity through direct messages like sending application forms to targeted households as well as the general provision of information via TV, radio, public announcements, etc. and indirect publicity with the cooperation of local governments, organizations for the disabled, social welfare facility business organizations, etc.

(ii) Discuss strengthening support for households where digitalization of devices is financially difficult

Discuss strengthening support for low-income households based on the perspective that some households that are not exempted from NHK license fees may still be financially unable to digitalize their devices and the fact that the penetration rate of digital broadcasting compatible reception facilities among those with household incomes of less than 2 million yen is significantly lower than the overall mean.

Chapter 6 Countermeasures for Delayed Digitalization of Shared Reception Facilities

In addition to the action plan of “Acceleration Program for Digitalization of Shared Reception Facilities” (March 2010) the following actions will be taken:

1. Facilitate migration to individual reception in aiding areas with poor reception

- Focused publicity from the DTV Support Center in preventing households capable of individual reception from remaining uninformed.
- Strengthen supply system of reasonable simple antennas, promote reception of terrestrial digital TV broadcasts by CATV and broadband.

2. Strongly encourage renovation of existing facilities with poor reception into digital facilities

- Focus on contacting facility administrators via visits or gathering facility information
- Encourage utilization of various support systems for shared reception facilities for areas with poor reception, including reception examinations, funds, and legal consultations.

3. Intensify countermeasures against impaired facilities (e.g. unknown administrator or unregistered)

- For shared reception facilities for areas with poor reception, of which smooth digitalization is expected to be challenging, integrated consultation will be reinforced that will include gathering administrator information, support for registration applications, and renovation work with the cooperation of CATV carriers, electricians, and local governments.
- Focused guidance for unregistered facilities

4. Intensify removal of discontinued shared reception facilities for areas with poor reception

- Focused direction in encouraging removal of those facilities

5. Focused support to shared reception facilities of residential complexes, mainly in the southern Kanto area

- House-to-house visits to ensure digitalization of complex housing, request the provision of information from the real estate industry or CATV carriers, deploy confirmation activities targeting neighborhood and corporate housing with the cooperation of interested parties
- Promote aid funds to complex housing in need of being renovated to digital-compatible facilities with the cooperation of the real estate industry.

6. Promote retransmission services only for terrestrial digital broadcasts by CATV, etc.

- Substantially promote migration to digital of shared reception facilities for areas with poor reception or residential complexes
- Implement user-friendly service menu into retransmission services only for DTV programs provided by CATV.

Chapter 7 Countermeasures for Households that Will Lose Reception of TV Broadcasts

Concerns that a number of households within covered areas will be locally unable to receive digital broadcasts at the latest stage of migration due to topographical reasons, influence of structural objects, broadcast interference, etc. In addition to ongoing measures all possible means will need to be taken including considering transient measures. With the top priority on preventing any unavailability of TV reception when analogue broadcasts end the following measures will be taken:

1. Early recognition of poor reception and promotion of renovation work

- Focus on promoting digital broadcasting reception through publicity as well as establishing an appropriate system for gathering information from electricians
- Align consultations and renovation work together in reinforce renovation of facilities where possible. Share local information on poor reception among interested parties.

2. Utilization of satellite broadcasts as a countermeasure against poor reception of DTV

- For cases where electronics stores cannot help solve technically challenging situations or a delay of renovation work is inevitable use satellite broadcasting as a countermeasure against poor reception of DTV.

3. Discuss other tentative countermeasures

- In case that satellite broadcasting is unavailable, in areas with available CATV or others, consider other measures like temporary CATV subscriptions

Chapter 8 Other Challenges

○ Digitalization of public facilities

- The national and local governments must digitalize their facilities as their own responsibility by the end December 2010.

○ Establish a crisis control system at the national government level

- Discuss establishing a crisis control system in ensuring a smooth transition with no confusion within the nation at the latest stage

○ IP retransmission

- Make available an IP retransmission road map by the end of year 2010