

## 700,000 callers phone digital TV hot line

June 13 2009, By RYAN NAKASHIMA , AP Business Writer

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(AP) -- Nearly 700,000 calls were received by a federal hot line this week from people confused about the nationwide switch from analog to digital TV broadcasts that occurred Friday.

The Federal Communications Commission said Saturday that about 317,450 calls went into the help line, 1-888-CALL-FCC, on Friday alone, the day [analog signals](#) were cut off.

About a third of the calls were about federal coupons to pay for digital converter boxes, an indication that at least 100,000 people still didn't have the right equipment to receive [digital signals](#).

Another third of the calls were handled by live agents, and 30 percent of those were about how to operate the converter boxes. The FCC said most of the converter box questions were resolved when callers were told to re-scan the airwaves for digital frequencies.

Over 20 percent of the live calls were about reception issues.

"Our job is far from over," acting FCC Chairman Michael Copps said in a statement. "This transition is not a one-day affair. We have known about re-scanning and reception issues for some time and have been doing our best to get the word out."

The largest volume of calls came from the Chicago area, followed by Dallas-Ft. Worth, New York, Philadelphia and Baltimore.

With 4,000 FCC staffers manning the phones Friday, the average wait time per call was 4.6 minutes.

The National Association of Broadcasters said that 278 stations it surveyed nationwide received 35,500 calls on Friday, and the vast majority were resolved by re-scanning.

Any set hooked up to cable or a satellite dish is unaffected by the end of analog broadcasts, but around 17 million U.S. households rely on antennas. Nielsen Co. said poor and minority households were less likely to be prepared for Friday's analog shutdown, as were households consisting of people younger than 35.

The Commerce Department reported a last-minute rush for the \$40 converter box coupons: It received 319,990 requests Thursday, nearly four times the daily average for the past month. In all, the government has mailed coupons for almost 60 million converter boxes. The limit is two coupons per household.

It takes nine business days for a coupon to reach the mailbox.

Research firm SmithGeiger LLC said Thursday that about 2.2 million households were still unprepared as of last week. Sponsored by the broadcasters' association, it surveyed 948 households that relied on antennas and found that one in eight did not have a [digital TV](#) or digital converter box.

Nielsen Co., which measures TV ratings from a wide panel of households, put the number of unready homes at 2.8 million, or 2.5 percent of the total television market, as of Sunday. In February, the number was 5.8 million.

Both the Nielsen and SmithGeiger surveys counted households as

unprepared even if they have taken some steps toward getting digital signals, like ordering a converter box coupon.

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