



CHAPTER TWENTY NEWS

society of broadcast engineers
pittsburgh chapter

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Brian Misterka was working in WPXI Master Control while we were there.

Last Meeting ...



WPXI Tour

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Our January meeting was held on the 17th at WPXI-TV. Paul Byers, our new Chapter Chairman presided. Paul talked about some things he would like to do as chairman including having more seminars. We then had the treasurer's report. We are still in sound shape financially due to the success of the last Expo. Dave Kasperek, the new Chapter Vice Chairman then said a few words. He is looking for some good ideas for future meetings. After dinner, Annette Parks and her staff gave us a tour of WPXI's new facility.

<i>Chairman's Corner</i>	<i>p.2</i>
<i>FCC Report</i>	<i>p.2</i>
<i>Musings of a Consultant</i>	<i>p.3</i>
<i>Analog Converter Boxes?</i>	<i>p.3</i>



Next Meeting ...

DTV Transition

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Considerations for all ATSC Operations - It'll Soon Be a Post-analog TV World, Baby!

With the coming end of analog broadcasting just over 12 months from now, we'll try to focus several monthly topics until then on post-analog broadcast topics of interest to all the TV folks. One of our members has proposed more topics of interest to both radio and TV members, and we'll try to get more of those in, too.

This month's program will be presented by Dave Buck of Harris Corporation, along with Chip Schneider, also of Harris. Dave has been in broadcasting and broadcast manufacturing for almost 25 years, and specialized in ATSC issues for the last several. Chip is the Regional Sales Manager. Dave will update us on current and ATSC developments and experiences. Additionally he'll review some key planning considerations for encoders, set top boxes, and translators in the post analog world. Finally he'll review the newer functions being developed and tested for extending the ATSC system. The presentation is designed to be very interactive with the audience, so lot's of questions and impromptu discussion is certainly encouraged.

We are seeking a hopefully somewhat permanent venue for regular monthly meetings, and it's a regular topic of discussion among all your local Chapter Board members. This month we've decided to try the accommodations at the Holiday Inn on McKnight Road in the North Hills. This hotel is only a few miles north of the 279N McKnight Road exit near the intersection of McKnight and Seibert Roads. The Hotel is set back a good ways from the road on a hill behind

Continued on page 3



Chairman's Corner

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Thanks to all who turned out for last month's meeting at WPXI. We enjoyed a good meal from Famous Dave's and the facility tour hosted by Annette Parks and her staff was terrific. Let's keep the ball rolling with another good attendance showing at this month's meeting, which will be held at the McKnight Road Holiday Inn at 7 P.M. on Thursday, February 21st. Dinner is provided courtesy of Chapter 20, so please bring a friend and come a little early to exchange ideas with your fellow engineers.

Don't forget that it's membership renewal time again. Annual SBE membership dues are only \$63 for Regular, Senior and Associate members. Dues for student members are a mere \$20. If you have not received your renewal notice in the mail or would like information about becoming a member, contact the SBE National Office at 317-846-9000.

This month I would like to mention the TV Converter Box Coupon Program, sponsored by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA). As you know, the Digital Television Transition and Public Safety Act of 2005 requires all full power television stations in this country to stop broadcasting an analog signal at 11:59 PM on February 17th, 2009. The Act created the TV Converter Box Coupon Program for households wishing to use their analog televisions after the transition. The Federal government is offering US households up to two \$40 coupons to help pay for the cost of a certified converter box. As of February 10, there are 34 different models of certified converter boxes. Televisions connected to cable or satellite will not need a converter box. If you receive over-the-air television and your television does not have a digital tuner, you need to

take action sometime before February 17th, 2009 so you can continue to receive programs after that date.

You can apply for coupons on line or by telephone. You may also mail or fax a coupon application. Coupon supplies are limited and coupons expire 90 days after they are mailed. Requests must be received by March 31st, 2009. Contact information is listed below.

On Line - www.DTV2009.gov

By Phone - 1-888-DTV-2009 (1-888-388-2009)

TTY - 1-877-530-2634 (English)
1-866-495-1161 (Spanish)

By Mail - PO Box 2000
Portland, OR 97208

By Fax - 1-877-DTV-4ME2

Even if you do need the coupons for yourself, it would be a good idea to request two coupons because you probably have an elderly neighbor or a friend or relative who is not aware of this program and will need to convert their analog television in February 2009.

FCC Report

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The FCC has now posted Form 387 (DTV Transition Status Report) on its web site. All full power television stations must file this form electronically by February 19th, 2008. The Form is used to detail a station's current digital television transition status and any additional steps necessary to be prepared for digital-only operation on February 17, 2009, and a time line for making those steps.

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Musings of a Consultant

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On the last day of 2007, the FCC issued a Report and Order on DTV (Third Periodic Review). Buried deep inside it were two interesting rulings. The first requires updates to PSIP when a program changes at the last minute, like a sports broadcast which goes past its scheduled end. The logistics of this are at best difficult in the short term, since most stations get the extended text in their PSIP from Tribune or DecisionMark (Titan TV). That data is certainly anything but real time. Combining information from station automation and traffic along with external resources, it is possible to craft a “real time PSIP,” but applications will need to be written to facilitate the FCC’s requirement, which is effective 120 days after publication in the Federal Register.

The other decision I was curious about was the decision not to “require” broadcasters to implement Active Format Description, but rather to leave it for later action. Pity, just when we want viewers to have a great experience with wide screen TV they are denied something which would enhance the experience.

It’ll Soon Be a Post-analog TV World, Baby!

Continued from page 3

McDonalds and Staples in the shopping center on the West side of McKnight. Call the hotel for directions (412-366-5200) if unfamiliar with North Hills terrain, or email me before 5 P.M. on the meeting day and I’ll try to help direct you. You can also Google “Holiday Inn McKNIGHT” and get to their website info with directions. If we like the accommodations we may make this a regular meeting place.

Lastly, if time permits on meeting night, I would like to propose we reserve a bit of time at the end of our meeting to discuss practical policies for trafficking HD interstitial announcements. These materials will soon travel between local production houses and broadcasters regularly for a lot of us. It’s a brave new HD world and there are a number of items worth considering and discussing now.

Be Part of a Winning Team

The annual SBE membership drive is from March 1 to May 31. Earn a \$5 credit toward your annual dues for each new member you sign up, and entry in a drawing for prizes.

Analog Converter Boxes?

The NTIA has announced that three of the now thirty-four coupon-eligible set-top converter boxes can pass analog signals through to the TV set. They are Echostar model TR-40, and Philco models TB150HH9 and TB100HH9.

This is important to the up to 80% of America’s TV stations that could still be analog after the full power analog shut- down next year. As of February 8, LPTV stations have not been given a mandatory shut off date for their analog transmitters. So antenna viewers with a non-analog-compatible converter box wanting to watch an analog LPTV station after February 17 will have to find ways to switch around them.

Lack of a mandatory deadline date is not the big holdup because if they could afford it every LPTV station would choose a date between now and February 17, 2009 to change to digital. The FCC has authorized a “Flash Cut” to digital on their current channel or “Displacements” to other channels if interference from new digital stations prevents using their current channels.

Since most LPTV stations are either small businesses or non-profit organizations, it boils down to money. Stations serving areas with less than 20,000 viewers, will be eligible to receive financial help from the same NTIA that provides the converter box coupons. But the rest have to come up with the finances to purchase digital transmitters that can cost from \$50,000 to over \$100,000. In some cases, those with relatively new analog solid state transmitters can get by with just getting new digital exciters and encoders. But a station that has to change channels could be faced with buying a new antenna as well as a transmitter.



Part of the enormous rack room at WPXI.



Dave Kasperek, Henry Lassige, John Humphrey and Armand Roberts check out the new WPXI studio.

Chowin' down on Famous Dave's ribs 'n' fixin's



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Next Meeting

Date: Thursday, February 21

It'll Soon Be a Post-analog TV World, Baby!

Dave Buck and Chip Schneider
Harris Corporation

Location: Holiday Inn, McKnight Road, 412-366-5200

Time: 6:30 PM Gather and shoot the breeze

7:00 PM Dinner

Directions: See the article for directions.