



CHAPTER TWENTY NEWS

society of broadcast engineers
pittsburgh chapter

April 2009

Volume 17 Number 4



Last Meeting

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Our March meeting was held on the 19th in the downstairs meeting room at Alexander's in Bloomfield. We had 12 SBE members and 2 guests in attendance. In keeping with our new initiative for greater meeting attendance, everyone that signed in was awarded an entry to our special Expo raffle prize drawing. Currently, only 7 members have been able to attend both meetings.

Discussion continued from last month regarding a volunteer-staffed phone bank to help answer viewer questions and concerns regarding the DTV transition as stations turn off their analog transmitters. Members suggested some sources of possible manpower including local amateur radio operators.

Our program for last month brought Scott Barella from Larcen (<http://www.larcen.com>) to present information gathered in the 8VSB digital transition and DTV gap-filling. The focus of the presentation were two FCC documents. NPRM 08-278 amends parts 73 and 74 for Replacement Digital Low Power Television Translator Stations and R&O 08-256 details Digital Television Distributed Transmission

Continued on page 2



Chairman's Corner

DTV Answer Man

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Since my FCC article this month is about the FCC's new rules on DTV Help Centers, I thought I would relate my experiences over the past few weeks as WQED's "official" DTV answer man. Of course we do have a customer service department armed with FAQ sheets, which I prepared and reviewed with them, but any "tough" questions that came in were sent to me.

As you may know, WQED shut off its analog transmitter at 6:00 AM on April 1st (We had already shut off the WQEX analog transmitter on February 17th and only received two calls). This date was significant for two reasons:

1. It was April Fool's Day, so people weren't sure if we were joking about shutting off or not.

2. It marked the 55th anniversary of the date that WQED signed on the air in 1954 as the nation's first community licensed Public Broadcasting station.

Since April 1st, we have gotten approximately 150 calls, of which I have personally answered about 75. The calls have come from all over the Greater Pittsburgh area as well as Ohio, West Virginia and Maryland. I have visited nearly a dozen homes to help people (mostly senior citizens) get their converter boxes or digital TV's connected and have spent over 30 hours on the phone talking people through channel scans. I'm happy to say that in only one case was I not able to resolve a viewer's problem.

Several people I talked to had new televisions that were labeled "HDTV Ready", but in fact only had NTSC tuners. Needless to say these people were disappointed when I told them they would need to buy a digital receiver to connect to the TV if they wanted to see our signal.

I got five calls from people who had been listening to WQED on portable radios with TV

Continued on page 2

Chairman's Corner

Continued from page 1

Band receivers. I had to tell them that these radios would no longer work and that there was no replacement product that would deliver DTV audio reception. (If anyone knows of such a product, please let me know.)

Nearly a third of the people who called did not know that a channel scan was necessary and many thought that channel tuning was still done through their old analog TV and not through the converter box.

By far the most common problem I found was with the use of "rabbit ears" indoor antennas. Explaining to people that they were able to pick up our analog signal with these antennas because the signal was in the VHF band and they would need a UHF antenna to pick up our digital signal was difficult. I have been recommending the Philips PHDTV1 Silver Sensor for indoor reception. The main problems with this antenna are that it is only available for purchase through the internet and it has become so popular that many on-line sites are out of stock.

Another common misconception that I heard over and over again was that broadcasters would not have a digital signal on the air until after they shut off their analog transmitters. When I told people that all local broadcasters had been sending out a digital signal for the last seven years, they could not believe it.

In conclusion, let me say that the predictions of hundreds (or even thousands) of calls when we shut off our analog transmitter never materialized. Between myself and our two-person customer service department, we were easily able to handle (and mostly solve) all questions. I personally have found it very satisfying to get a call from a frustrated viewer and talk them through the steps of getting their converter box working. That moment where they press the channel up button and all of the digital signals appear crystal clear on their old analog TVs make all of our efforts seem worth while. I hope everyone switches back to over the air television. Who needs cable anyway!

Last Meeting

Continued from page 1

System Technologies. Also mentioned was the ATSC document A/110, the Synchronization Standard for Distributed Transmission.

Document links:

(NPRM 08-278) http://www.fcc.gov/Daily_Releases/Daily_Business/2008/db1223/FCC-08-278A1.pdf

(R&O 08-256) http://hraunfoss.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/FCC-08-256A1.pdf

(ATSC A/110) <http://www.atsc.org/standards/a110.php>

FCC Report

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Commission provides guidance to broadcasters on obligation to publicize walk-in DTV help centers

On March 13, 2009, the Commission adopted the Third Report and Order in the Commission's DTV Delay Act proceeding ("Order"). The Order took action to implement the DTV Delay Act, including requiring most analog broadcasters to publicize the locations and hours of walk-in DTV help centers located in their market. The purpose of this Notice is to clarify that requirement by explaining the term "walk-in DTV help center" for purposes of the Commission's consumer education requirements.

For the purposes of Section 73.674(b)(8) of the Commission's rules, a "walk-in DTV help center" has the following characteristics:

Open and staffed (at a minimum) between the hours of 4 and 8 p.m. on Fridays, and 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Saturdays and Sundays. In the 14 calendar days prior to June 12 and for 7 calendar days on and after June 12, each center must be open every day at least from 12 to 8 p.m.

Contains (for hands-on demonstration purposes) the following functioning devices: at least one analog television, one digital-to-analog converter box, one VCR or other recording device (to demonstrate how to hook-up such devices in conjunction with a digital-to-analog converter box), and one antenna able to receive local broadcast stations at the site. A display area for printed literature regarding the digital-to-analog converter box coupon program, connection guides for digital-to-analog converter boxes, guides for antenna and reception issues, DTV publications for those with disabilities, and local broadcast station

Chapter Twenty News is published monthly (except July & August) by



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coverage maps is also required.

Has a DVD player with a separate viewing device so consumers can watch educational videos regarding converter box installations, antennas, reception, and coverage issues. Also required is at least one computer with a high speed Internet connection so that consumers can apply online for converter box coupons and access other DTV transition information. Centers must also provide a local or toll-free phone number so that consumers can call to inquire about location(s) and days and hours of operation.

During the hours that the center is open to the public, there must be a least one individual on site who has been trained and who can demonstrate how to install a digital-to-analog converter box with an analog TV, a VCR or other recording device, and a broadcast antenna, and how to adjust the antenna for maximum reception. The individual must also be able to demonstrate how to operate the converter box, including scanning and rescanning for digital channels and the use of closed captioning features.

Pursuant to the Commission's consumer education requirements, walk-in centers that have the above characteristics and are located in a station's designated market area (DMA) must be identified in that station's consumer education campaign. In order to fully comply with this requirement, stations must update their "help center PSA" within 10 business days of becoming aware of any new walk-in DTV help centers, or change in the operation of any existing centers, in their DMA.

As discussed in the Third Report and Order, formal walk-in centers are only one of several ways to provide face-to-face DTV transition assistance, and "locally-focused efforts are among the best ways to help consumers who remain unprepared." For instance, one-time educational sessions or periodic DTV clinics can be an effective way to reach some citizens, and like full walk-in centers these may be operated by a range of organizations, such as community outreach organizations, broadcasters, and contractors. We encourage broadcasters to publicize such "DTV clinics," "DTV information sessions," or other DTV outreach events that do not have the characteristics of a "walk-in DTV help center," but they should not be described as "walk-in centers." While the Commission's rules do not require outreach efforts, we hope that they will do so in the manner best suited to reach their viewers. Stations may include such information in their required help center notices, as long as any full "walk-in DTV help centers" are properly identified and distinguished.

We recognize that individual broadcast stations may encounter some difficulty in ascertaining the existence and location of all of the walk-in DTV help centers that they must publicize, and of other DTV educational opportunities in their area that they may choose to publicize. To assist stations in this endeavor, and to assist the Commission in providing helpful information to consumers who seek DTV transition assistance, we encourage broadcasters to provide detailed information about all of the opportunities for face-to-face DTV education of which they are aware. The Commission has established a website for the voluntary reporting of information for that purpose, and will make the information collected available online



Musings of a Consultant Nothing New Under the Sun

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"NAB is just a few days away, and it appears that very little new will entice excitement from those hanging out under the desert sun. Refinements can be expected, as they always are. New versions of software, new features in cameras, smaller, cheaper and lighter as always. But other than 3G routing and production hardware (yawn) and deliverable ATSC MH systems (truly a big deal), I don't expect to see much to justify the annual trek.

This is my 40th NAB, but probably not my last one. In the many visits I saw some of the first color quad recorders, first CCD cameras, first digital VTRs and switchers, first compression hardware, and first non-linear editing, all of which were game changing and worth the trip.

It used to be said that those not attending NAB were behind the 8 ball for the next year. I am no longer so sure that is true. And this year tens of thousands will stay away for the second time in 8 years (NAB 2002 was off due to 9/11). The major networks are sending skeleton crews due to cost containment, and many more with limited or non-existent capital budgets don't see a need. I hope I am not going out of habit..."

john

—
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through local referral links in our DTV.gov site and through our National Call Center.

For additional information, contact Lyle Elder, Lyle.Elder@fcc.gov, of the Media Bureau, Policy Division, 202-418-2120, or Eloise Gore, Eloise.Gore@fcc.gov, of the Media Bureau, 202-418-7200. Press inquiries should be directed to Mark Wigfield at 202-418-0253 or Edie Herman at 202-418-2035. TTY: (888) 835-5322.

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*Slides from Scott Barella's
presentation at our March
meeting.*



Next Meeting ...

NAB Re-Cap (but will Nick Cap be there?)

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Our April Meeting Program is a re-cap of this year's NAB. We will meet on April 30 at Noon at the Pittsburgh Steak Company. This is a new location for us and a change of routine time from evenings. Come out and hear what John Humprey of Azcar Digital has to share, as well as what Paul Byers of WQED got to see. Hopefully a few other attending members will have some observations to share as well. In these tough economic times for our industry, it is likely to be a lightly attended NAB by all current accounts. All the more reason to come out and hear what attendees found noteworthy at this year's show. As usual, it's OK to come out a little early for sign up and some informal chat time before noon. Hope to see you there.

Directions to April Meeting

The Pittsburgh Steak Co. is located on Pittsburgh's South Side at 1924 East Carson Street, Pittsburgh, PA 15203. Cross From Second Avenue you can take either the Birmingham Bridge or 10th Street Bridge to Carson Street. If you need more detailed directions call the restaurant at 412-381-5505 or email dkasperek@hearst.com and I'll try to give you specifics. On Carson Street the restaurant is located a bit closer to Birmingham Bridge if you're trying to avoid Carson Street traffic. There are 2 public parking lots proximate to the restaurant. Meeting room is on the second floor.

