



are you ready to convert?

No more rabbit ears? Not so fast. Consider Ron Caron's story.

Caron likes to watch *Desperate Housewives* on television. And he likes to watch it in high definition. Big, wide, crystal clear, surround-sound. He's not alone. Sales of high definition televisions (HDTVs) tend to peak before the Super Bowl every year.

But Caron doesn't have to pay for HDTV signals on a monthly cable or satellite bill. His over-the-air signal is received with an antennae and translated with a tuner inside his Springvale home.

"I grew up in TV generation. I had heard that HD was amazing to watch. I fell in love with it and bought an HDTV. Then I found out the real story. It was research, research, research. I thought it was supposed to be easy, and it wasn't."

By February 17, all but low-power TV stations (mostly public access channels) will shut down their analog signals and continue broadcasts only in digital. Between now and then, many stations will continue broadcasting in both analog and digital signals. The switchover will not render old TVs, rabbit ears, or rooftop antennas obsolete. But the new digital TV signals require either an antenna and a converter box or switching to a cable or satellite subscription. Since the government supports the notion that TV is supposed to be free, it is offering coupons for converter boxes at dtv.gov.

Digital TV is intended to free up part of the broadcasting spectrum. It also allows stations to broadcast prime-time shows in high definition. The Maine Association of Broadcasters says if a viewer received six free channels in Portland with an analog signal, the person should keep getting six with the new digital signal and a converter box.

"You should, but people aren't," Caron says. "I know one guy that went from six to two channels. He's stood on a chair with aluminum foil to pick up signals, and he can't."

If the signal cuts out—it won't go snowy like the old analog signals—viewers are left to either sign up for cable or satellite or continue adjusting their antennas, he says.

Caron blogs at mainehdtv.blogspot.com and he's not afraid to call just about every TV control room in southern Maine in pursuit of better digital television reception for everyone.

"I knew that if I was confused, what would my mother and grandmother do? They don't understand this. I'm just a nobody that's just caused a lot of ruckus." —P.A.S.

Caron blogs at mainehdtv.blogspot.com. More information about digital TV can be found at dtvforme.com.

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