

Subject: TV Receivers

You may have recently received Camping World advertising about a new WineGuard Digital HD receiver that is a "must have" for our RV's. I did some research on this unit and here are my comments.

First of all you should know that by federal mandate production of analog TV sets was to cease in March of this year. That is because in March of 2009 all transmission of analog signals will cease and television stations will only be transmitting digital signals. Currently, television stations transmit both analog and digital signals. Except for satellite service. All satellite transmission is digital. I am not sure about cable. It may also transmit both in analog and digital for now but that is academic.

What does all this mean? If you have an analog TV and you rely on free antenna reception only, you will stop receiving a signal in March 2009 unless you buy a "set top box" similar to the Wineguard unit being advertized. This will accept the digital signal and convert it to analog so you can use your old technology TV.

If you are a satellite TV customer, your current receiver ("set top box") has the capability to receive a digital signal and convert it to analog so whether you have a digital or analog TV does not matter. I am not a cable TV customer but I would assume that the same applies there.

So for those of us who RV and do not have a satellite service we will have no TV available after March 2009 unless we have either a digital TV or get a "set top box" like the Wineguard receiver for our analog TV. The same will be true if we rely strictly on free antenna reception at home.

Assuming that no one relies strictly on free antenna service at home you need to decide if you want to spend the quoted sales price of \$169 for the Wineguard receiver that you will only need when you visit a campground that does not have cable or satellite service. Also be aware that the government will be sending out rebate coupons (I think \$40) to offset the cost of those who will need a "set top box".

But there are some other advantages to using the Wineguard receiver even if you already have satellite dish service. Be aware that local channels now transmit digital sub-channels. This means that someone like KCRA 3 out of Sacramento may have additional programming that you can only receive through free antenna service using a Wineguard type receiver with your analog set or a digital TV. But again, you must have (in most cases) an antenna on top of your house to do so. You can also receive these sub-channels using your RV antenna with either the digital TV or set top box and analog TV combination.

The bottom line is that it seems like more sense to simply buy a new TV with a digital capability when the time comes. (Bear in mind that we are not necessarily talking about the relatively expensive high definition TV's but simply one with a digital receiver rather than an analog receiver.)

Still confused? Don't be afraid to ask me questions.

Ed