

29 July

Set Top Boxes available in 2010

Set top boxes (STBs) which are to be used as part of the Broadcasting Digital Migration (BDM) process, are likely to be available at retail stores during the first half of 2010.

BDM is a process of converting the broadcast of television signals from analogue to digital technology. The process aims to improve service delivery and further e-governance services to the public.

Director of Broadcasting Policy in the Department of Communications, Dr Mashilo Boloka, said the STBs are expected to be retailed from April 2010.

“Once the services and technology have been tested adequately, and all other related processes are in place, STBs will be made available in retail stores.

“The actual date will be confirmed and communicated to the public as soon as all relevant logistical, legal, technical and policy issues have been addressed. This is anticipated to be during the first half of 2010,” he said.

On 1 November 2008, the country officially switched on the digital signal converting its television broadcasting signals from analogue to digital technology.

The analogue signal is expected to be switched off on 1 November 2011. In order to receive the digital signal on current analogue TV sets, households

will need to purchase STBs that convert the digital signal into analogue signal.

Dr Boloka said a trial was currently being conducted with a small sample of viewers.

He said currently there were a number of areas that still needed to be resolved before the service would be available to the public.

“This includes testing of the service to ensure that everything works as it should before consumers spend money on purchasing STBs,” he added.

In August 2008 the previous minister of Communications, Ivy Matsepe-Casaburri, announced government's Scheme-for-Ownership-Support (SOS) to assist poor households that cannot afford a STB.

As part of the scheme, government said it would subsidise 70% of the expected R700 cost of the STB.

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