

Sinclair to Document Portable TV Services

BALTIMORE, Dec. 4 /PRNewswire/ --

Sinclair Broadcast Group, Inc. (Nasdaq: SBGI) announced today that it will begin testing and documenting benchmark service for television portability.

This study of available NTSC analog television service will aid industry and government decision-makers in the ongoing review of the ATSC digital television (DTV) standard and its impact on consumer adoption of DTV receivers.

"The U.S. adoption of DTV has failed to replicate service that is currently available with today's less-expensive analog television," said Mark Hyman, VP of Corporate Relations for Sinclair. "Developers of the ATSC DTV standard played semantics when promising 'replication of coverage,' which falls far short of the consumers' requirement for 'replication of service.'" Hyman noted that the ATSC DTV standard fails to provide reliable ease of reception as expected by the public. While other industry testing is focusing on reception by stationary receivers, such as consoles or theater-sized sets, Sinclair's tests will focus on portable and pedestrian reception.

DTV adoption in Europe, which uses a different global DTV standard referred to as DVB-T, has outpaced that of the U.S. by a wide margin. U.S. consumers have purchased fewer than 50,000 DTV receivers in the more than two years since DTV was launched. By comparison, UK consumers possess nearly one million receivers. Equivalent sales in the U.S. would have been five million, a one hundred-fold difference. Spain has over 100,000 receivers in consumer homes despite having just launched its DTV service in May 2000. Hyman reported that no country has adopted the U.S. based ATSC DTV standard since 1998, while over 30 countries have adopted a global DTV standard, DVB-T. Further, the five remaining countries that had adopted ATSC are now conducting various levels of industry or government reviews or have stated an intention to rescind adoption of ATSC.

"Portable service has been a feature of television for decades. The public expects it," said Nat Ostroff, VP of New Technology for Sinclair. "In volume sales, the most popular analog TV is the 19-inch set which consumers can easily move from place-to-place." Ostroff noted that while electronic devices are getting smaller and more portable, the current business model for DTV in the U.S. requires a fixed receiver to be connected to an outdoor thirty-foot high directional antenna for reception. He stated that this business model has contributed to the failed DTV rollout. "The American public has voted against DTV with its feet by walking out of the high-priced electronics stores empty-handed, and are not interested in paying more money for a less-capable TV." Ostroff reported that rather than purchase DTV sets, American consumers will have purchased 25 million analog TV sets by year-end. Such a large volume of analog-only TV set sales has created a natural obstacle to consumer adoption of digital TV. Ostroff stated that adoption of the global standard, DVB-T, is a necessary step toward rescuing the U.S. DTV rollout.

"There have been only incremental improvements to U.S. DTV since its inception," reported Hyman. "And none of these improvements have allowed the ATSC standard of DTV to replicate the service available with decades-old NTSC analog service. Select companies, which are protective of their patents and other narrow business interests, have argued for exclusive reliance on the current DTV standard. Meanwhile the rest of the world is leaving the U.S. behind in the dust."

About the tests

The tests will establish a base-line benchmark for portable and pedestrian reception in multiple environments. For the definitions of service, Sinclair will draw directly from the latest industry agreements regarding service definitions, which were recently accepted by the Advanced Television Systems

Committee and other organizations:

Portable: Portable service means a television receiver that can be moved from place to place, using a self-contained receiving antenna, but remaining essentially stationary during operation. For example, a receiver operating on a counter top in a kitchen would be considered portable, if it is not connected to an external (out-of-doors) antenna. Receivers used at a sports stadium are other examples.

Pedestrian: Pedestrian service allows for operation while a television receiver is moving up to 5 kilometers per hour (3 mph). For example, a pedestrian receiver could be carried on a person while moving about or walking.

Multiple sites will be investigated, and subjective viewing information based on the industry standard of CCIR definitions for picture image will be documented for portable and pedestrian service. In addition, subjective analysis of audio quality for pedestrian service will also be documented.

A preliminary test report will be made available to the public by year-end.

About Sinclair

Sinclair Broadcast Group, Inc. is a diversified broadcasting company that currently owns or programs 62 television stations in 40 markets. Sinclair's television group reaches approximately 25.0% of all U.S. television households and includes ABC, CBS, FOX, NBC, WB and UPN affiliates. Sinclair, through its wholly-owned subsidiary, Sinclair Ventures, owns equity interests in Internet-related companies including G1440, an Internet development and integration company, VisionAIR, a wireless data applications developer, and BeautyBuys.com, Inc. and Synergy Brands, Inc. Sinclair has a strategic alliance with Acrodyne Communications, Inc., a manufacturer of transmitters and other television broadcast equipment. For more information, please visit our website at www.sbgi.net.

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