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Seeing digital

West Lane Translator converts free local TV channels to digital

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Florence television viewers this week were greeted to new digital channels broadcasted by West Lane Translator (WLT), which successfully converted its free "over-the-air" TV services after a month of delays.

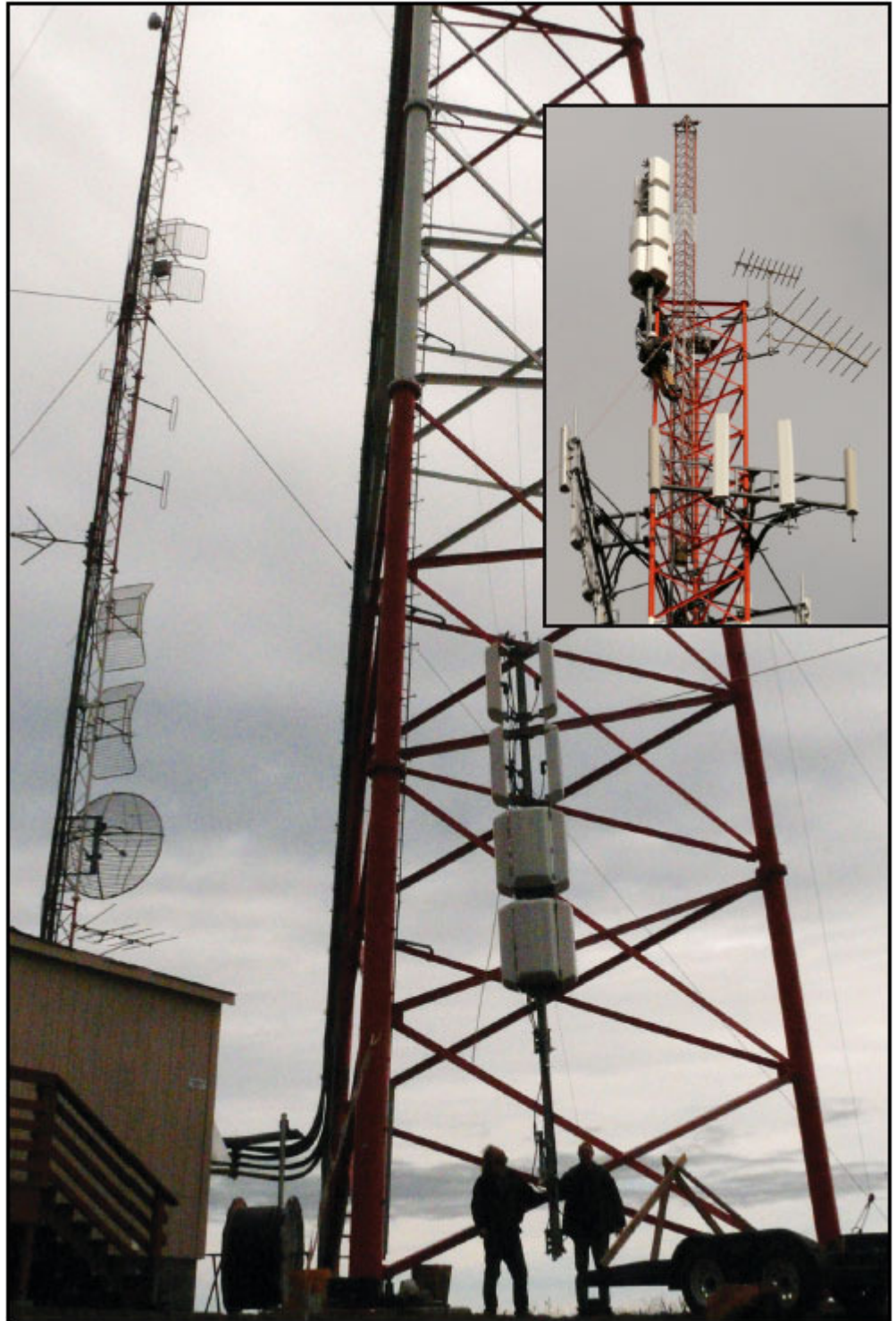
As of Wednesday, the local nonprofit organization's four licensed stations — ABC, CBS, NBC and FOX — and OPB transitioned from analog to digital signals, improving audio and visual quality for viewers.

"The transition to digital for this area might not have happened if we had sat back," said Bill Durst, WLT board member. "In some communities, broadcasters lacking local support are considering turning off the old signal rather than fund digital. Those communities risk going without free television."

Durst said the volunteer WLT board worked hard to obtain a local bridge loan, federal grant and fall-back positions with broadcasters.

"Our mission is promotion of free broadcasting for the community — in a tradition of 50 years of effort — and we believe we will accomplish this," he added.

"We also want to thank new community member supporters who have voluntarily sent in annual or life-time dues."



Workers from Oregon Reception Engineering survey the day's work on the new 240-foot hilltop tower. The original tower still stands at left. Photos by Rand Dawson.



**WLT board member Chris Murray and five new digital translator sets.
Photo by Rand Dawson.**

of the four TV stations and OPB will show up as the following: 9.1 (ABC), 9.2 (Local News/Weather), 13.1 (CBS), 13.2 (This), 16.1 (NBC), 16.2 (CW), 29.1 (OPB HD), 29.2 (OPB SD), 29.3 (OPB PLUS), 29.4 (OPB FM), 34.1 (FOX), 34.2 (MY TV).

WLT will continue to broadcast channels 52, 54, 56, 58 and 60 in analog until the end of January. Once these signals are turned off, however, older non-digital TV sets will require a converter box to get reception.

"We expect the best digital signal will come from using an external UHF antenna. The next best signal will come from using the old in-door rabbit-ear loop antenna," said Dennis Hunt, WLT board member and TV engineer. "Non-digital sets will require the converter box. There is no need to buy an amplified antenna system."

For more information, visit WLT's Web site www.WestLaneTV.org.

Last weekend, Oregon Reception Engineering mounted 1,000 pounds of new antenna equipment to the top of WLT's 240-foot tower located south of Florence. The low-wind weather provided an opportunity for engineering crews to make the strenuous lift.

Stormy conditions last month prevented installation of the 12-panel antenna system, which was essential for the digital switch.

"The delays were unfortunate," Durst said, "We had to take some risk here, both in obtaining this tower and in deciding to buy equipment."

WLT's digital conversion culminates two years of planning and nearly \$500,000 in modern equipment and tower.

New digital signals bring new changes to the local channel lineup. After programming a tuner scan through the television or digital converter box, each