

Frequently Asked Questions

Broadcast of ABC, NBC, CBS and FOX channels in Trinidad and Tobago

The Telecommunications Authority of Trinidad and Tobago (TATT) has directed subscription television service providers operating in this country to remove free to air channels such as ABC, NBC, CBS and FOX from their lineup. Enforcement action will commence from **Wednesday 1st January, 2020**.

Why didn't TATT take this action before?

TATT first brought this matter to the attention of local subscription television providers in 2015 towards finding a solution to the problem and exercised forbearance. From that time TATT held extensive discussions with relevant local and foreign bodies towards a favorable outcome for our local providers. These foreign bodies included the United States Embassy, United States Copyright Office, United States Trade Representative and the United States Department of State as well as the networks themselves.

Why is TATT taking this action now?

During the forbearance period TATT asked the networks to consider extending the rights to Trinidad and Tobago, however this has not occurred.

In 2019, TATT was advised by the US Department of State and US Copyright Office that the broadcast of ABC, NBC, CBS and FOX networks is breach of US intellectual property rights. Furthermore, these networks have advised TATT that authorization has not been granted for their broadcast in Trinidad and Tobago, since the rights to broadcast their 'wholesale-packaged' stations are not available in the Caribbean region.

If these are free to air stations why is it that local operators cannot have free access to them?

Channels such as ABC, NBC, CBS and FOX are available as 'free to air' stations ONLY in the United States of America (USA) and its territories where providers have been given the rights to broadcast these channels.

Thus, free to air for the USA and its territories does not apply to non-US territories such as Trinidad and Tobago.

Could there be any repercussions for Trinidad and Tobago on this issue?

The United States Department of State via the US Copyright Office and the US Trade Representative has advised TATT and the Government of Trinidad and Tobago (GoRTT), that this country's non-adherence to intellectual property rights with regard to these networks will impact our ability to re-negotiate trade agreements with the USA .

Can customers expect a price reduction when the channels are removed?

Customers should contact their service providers as this issue will be dependent on the terms and conditions agreed to by both the service provider and the paying customer.

What action will TATT take if local subscription television service providers do not remove these channels from their line up?

Each local subscription television service provider signs an agreement with the Minister responsible for telecommunications and broadcasting. This agreement is called a concession which outlines the terms and conditions of the service to be offered to the public.

It is TATT's responsibility to enforce these terms and conditions. If the service provider fails to remove these channels, a breach of concession would have occurred.

Condition D13 of the concession states *"The concessionaire shall not broadcast any programmes, information or other material without first obtaining all required permissions from the relevant owners of any intellectual property in such programmes, information and other material, and shall not otherwise infringe the intellectual property rights of any person"*.

TATT will therefore take appropriate action under the Telecommunications Act Chap. 47:31 against any concessionaire that fails to comply.