

# DIGITAL TERRESTRIAL TELEVISION BROADCASTING REGULATIONS, 2026 PUBLISHED BY ICASA TODAY

Category: Infrastructure and Telecommunications, Media and OTT  
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## Overview

ICASA has, today, published the [Digital Terrestrial Television Broadcasting Regulations, 2026](#), together with a comprehensive Reasons Document. These Regulations establish a **new, permanent regulatory framework** for digital terrestrial television (DTT) in South Africa and will replace the transitional digital migration regime once analogue switch-off and dual illumination formally end. The Digital Terrestrial Television Broadcasting Regulations, 2026 are the culmination of a [consultation process](#) that took part in 2025.

The Digital Terrestrial Television Broadcasting Regulations, 2026 are intended to govern the **post-analogue broadcasting environment**, focusing on spectrum efficiency, multiplex capacity allocation, channel authorisation, and the respective roles of multiplex operators and signal distributors.

# Key Objectives

The Digital Terrestrial Television Broadcasting Regulations, 2026 aim to:

- Allocate and manage **DTT multiplex capacity** in the 470–694 MHz band across seven multiplexes;
- Prevent **spectrum warehousing** and promote efficient use of public spectrum resources;
- Provide certainty on **channel authorisation procedures** in a multichannel digital environment;
- Clarify regulatory oversight of **signal distribution** and **multiplex operations**; and
- Support public, commercial, and community broadcasting within a structured and forward-looking framework.

# Key Regulatory Features

- **Multiplex structure:** Seven multiplexes are defined, with specific allocations for public broadcasting (SABC), commercial free-to-air broadcasters, community television, subscription services, and future innovation and trials.
- **Use-it-or-lose-it rule:** Broadcasters must fully utilise allocated multiplex capacity within **36 months**, failing which ICASA may revoke and reallocate unused capacity.
- **Channel authorisation:** Broadcasters (other than community services) must obtain ICASA approval before launching digital TV channels, with public hearings required only where public-interest issues arise.
- **Multiplex operators:** Multiplexes are operated by **ECNS licensees** assigned spectrum, clarifying that this is not a new licence category but a defined operational role.

# Penalties and Compliance Risk

The Digital Terrestrial Television Broadcasting Regulations, 2026 introduce **significant administrative penalties** for non-compliance. Broadcast service licensees may be fined up to **R500,000 per day** for contraventions such as broadcasting without channel authorisation or failing to meet mandatory obligations (including Electronic Programme Guide requirements). ECNS licensees face equivalent penalties for breaches of signal distribution duties. Penalties are enforced through ICASA's Complaints and Compliance Committee and apply on a per-day basis.

# What broadcasters should do now

- Review current and planned **multiplex capacity utilisation** against the 36-month rule;
- Audit existing and proposed **channel authorisations** for regulatory compliance;
- Assess **signal distribution agreements** and operational dependencies; and
- Prepare internal compliance frameworks to mitigate penalty exposure.

If you need any assistance understanding the implications for your business, or need to understand what your compliance obligations are, please reach out to any of your usual contacts at PPM Attorneys.