

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) on Digital Addressable Systems

1. What is Digital Addressable System (DAS)?

Digital Addressable System is a service in which TV channels are sent over network in digital and encrypted form with addressable feature. Only authorized users can receive channels using a Set-Top-Box (STB) and TV set. The authorization is given by the service provider. This system is able to carry large number of TV channels, radio services and other value added services. In this system, the consumers can choose channels/ services of their choice and pay only for the channels/services that they choose.

2. Who are the service providers in DAS?

The Multi-System Operator (MSO) and its linked local cable operators (LCOs), DTH (Direct to Home), HITS (Headend in the Sky), IPTV are the service providers in DAS.

3. How DAS enabled cable TV is different from the earlier analog cable TV system?

The earlier cable TV system was predominately analog in nature. In case of analog cable TV system, the TV channels were sent in analog and unencrypted form. The analog cable TV system could carry up to 80-100 TV channels only. In the analog system, the consumers did not have an option to choose channels/services of their choice and pay accordingly, rather they had to pay for the entire bouquet of channels offered by the cable operator.

On the other hand, the capacity of a DAS is much higher than the analog cable TV system. A consumer under DAS is able to choose channels/services of his choice and pay accordingly. A Set-Top-Box (STB) is required for receiving the channels in DAS.

As per Cable Television (Networks) Regulation Act, 1995, it is obligatory for every cable operator to transmit or re-transmit programmes of any channel in an encrypted form through digital addressable system only.

4. How DAS enabled Cable TV is different from DTH service?

Both are digital addressable systems. In DTH service, TV channels are directly received by the consumer from the satellite using small dish antennas located at the Customer's premises. In DAS enabled cable TV, the transmission is made through the cable network.

5. What are the advantages of DAS for the consumers?

The DAS offers following benefits to the consumer.

- Consumer gets better signal quality for all the channels.
- Consumer gets more choice of channels. DAS supports HD and 3D channels.
- Consumers can choose the channels on a-la-carte (individual) basis and pay only for the channels chosen.
- DAS can offer value added services such as triple play with broadband, movie on demand etc.
- Electronic Programme Guide (EPG) can be provided in DAS which makes it easy for the consumer to select a particular channel or service in a simple and user-friendly manner.

These features, amongst the others, provide a much improved viewing experience to the consumers.

6. For receiving DAS enabled services, what changes will be required at the consumer's end?

As mentioned above, as per Cable Television (Networks) Regulation Act, 1995, it is obligatory for every cable operator to transmit or re-transmit programmes of any channel in an encrypted form through digital addressable system only.

For getting the services in DAS, an additional piece of equipment called Set-Top Box (STB) is required along with TV set. This set top box will facilitate the consumer to access the encrypted digital television signal carried over DAS.

7. What is set top box (STB)?

“Set top box” (STB) is a device, which is connected to a television set at the consumer premises and which allows a consumer to view encrypted channels of her choice. The basic function of the set top box is to decrypt the channels and to convert the digital signals into analog mode for viewing on television sets. A smart card or viewing card is a part of set top box which allow only those channels to be viewed which are subscribed by the consumer and authorized by the service provider.

8. Is it mandatory for the consumers to have an STB? Can I get cable television service in DAS, without an STB?

The TV channels carried in DAS cannot be received without STB. The STB can be a stand-alone unit or TV sets can have STB functions integrated into it.

9. Can I have both DTH and DAS enabled cable TV?

Yes. DTH and DAS- Cable TV are two independent platforms. One can have DTH as well as cable TV.

10. What are mandatory channels?

It is mandatory for service providers to transmit or retransmit the Doordarshan channels or the channels operated by or on behalf of the Parliament of India, as specified by the Central Government under section 8 of the Cable Television Networks (Regulation) Act, 1995 (7 of 1995), as amended from time to time, to each subscriber on its network. A list of such mandatory channels is available on www.digitalindiamib.com

11. What if a consumer has more than one TV set in his/her home? Whether he/she needs separate STB for each TV set?

In case a consumer has more than one television set in her home, she needs to get a separate set top box for each television set.

12. Do I require a particular type of television set for DAS?

No, the consumers can use the same TV set which they have been using for reception of Analog Cable TV. However as mentioned earlier, an STB is required to be connected with the TV set for reception of channels in DAS.

13. What was the reason for TRAI to come out with new Regulatory Framework for Television Services?

Digitization of Cable TV distribution makes it possible for each consumer to select TV Channels as per their individual choice. Pursuant to completion of Digitization in March 2017, overhaul of the regulatory framework became essential. Prepared after an extensive consultative process, the new framework empowers the consumers. It takes into account the current techno-commercial factors and also balances the interests of various stakeholders.

14. How is the new Regulatory Framework beneficial to consumers?

- Transparent display of Channel Price or category as 'Free' on the Electronic Program Guide (EPG) and also on the TV Screen for each channel.
- Freedom to choose what she/he wishes to watch and pay only for that.
- Option of subscribing TV Channels either on a-la-carte basis or as bouquets.
- Mandatory for service providers to issue proper bills and receipt.
- Mandatory provisioning of call centre for consumers and provision of consumer corner on website.
- Time bound redressal of faults. Provision for refund (no charging) if fault exceeds 72 hours.
- Capping of one-time installation and activation charge @ Rs 350 and Rs100 respectively.

15. What is the Network Capacity Fee (NCF)?

‘Network Capacity Fee’ means the amount, excluding taxes, payable by a subscriber to the Distributor of television channels for distribution of TV channels subscribed by that subscriber and it does not include subscription fee for pay channel or bouquet of pay channels, as the case may be.

16. What are ‘Free To Air’ (FTA) channels? Are these channels completely free?

Yes, FTA channels, as the name suggests, are free. However, Network Capacity Fee is to be paid to the service-provider.

17. Does subscriber has flexibility to choose any channel?

Yes, subscriber can choose any channels which are available on the platform of the distributor, either in a-la-carte form or bouquet or combination of both.

18. Can rates of pay channels vary among cities/towns?

No. Maximum Retail Price (MRP) of pay channels declared by broadcasters will be uniform across the country and across all the platforms.

19. Does the Regulation have provision for schemes for Set Top Box (STB)? Are there clauses specifying the rights of consumers as regards the ownership and repair liability for the STB?

The QOS Regulations, 2017 explicitly provides for clarity over the ownership of STB. The framework mandates that distributors should provide STB through an outright purchase scheme, rental scheme and any combinations thereof. The Distributor of television channels or its linked local cable operators, as the case may be, must specify the retail price of STB along with details on guarantee/warranty period.

The framework stipulates a minimum guarantee/ warranty of one year under outright purchase scheme. The ownership of such customer premises equipment shall rest with the subscriber.

Under the rental scheme or bundled scheme distributor or a cable operator is responsible for maintaining the Set Top Box. The MSO/ LCO has to maintain the STB in a good working condition for a minimum period of 3 years.

20. If a consumer wants to subscribe to only 10 pay channels. Whether she/he would be required to pay Network Capacity Fee in addition to price of Pay Channels?

Yes.

21. Can a cable operator / DTH operator change the channels or bouquet of channels in a package?

No. Distributor should not discontinue any bouquet or channels in a bouquet subscribed by a subscriber during period for which advance is paid by the subscriber if all the channels forming part of the bouquet is available on its platform.

However if a channel is discontinued from the distribution platform, the subscriber will be provided with appropriate refund for the charges, if any paid in advance.

22. What can I do if my DTH operator does not provide me channels on a-la carte rate and forces me to subscribe to the bouquet?

The interconnection regulations mandate broadcasters to offer a-la-carte rates to all Distributors. Therefore, Distributors are required to provide channels on a-la-carte basis as well to the subscribers. Any violation of the provisions of regulations will be dealt with as per the provisions of TRAI Act.

23. Has TRAI provided any regulations for complaint redressal under the new regulations?

For redressal of complaints, the Distributor shall establish a customer care centre which shall contain toll free customer care number having sufficient number of lines, interactive voice response system having 3 levels. Further, the details of complaints redressal shall be published on its website and also use different means such as SMS, TV scrolls, printing in bills etc.

**24. To what extent is my personal information/data shared with distributors/
Local Cable operators are safe?**

Every Distributor of television channels or its linked local cable operator, shall ensure privacy and protection of subscribers' personal information and the same shall not be used for any other purpose except in accordance with law.
