

Cord cutting is still a thing. All of the major cable and satellite companies report huge drop offs in subscribers as TV watchers cut the cord and switch to streaming. Antenna sales are up too and if you don't already have one for every TV in the house, there are some things you should know. Don't get scammed by antennas you see for sale online and in stores. Here are some facts and myths you should know before buying an antenna.

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SUPER:

0-8 Jamey Tucker/whatthetech.tv

ON CAMERA TEASE

I'm almost always talking about new technology, this time, it's old technology. The oldest in the world of television. I'm Jamey Tucker, stay tuned in to find out how antenna companies are trying to scam you.

ANCHOR INTRO

THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE CUTTING THE CABLE AND SATELLITE CORD CONTINUES TO GROW. NEARLY 10 MILLION HOMES ARE EXPECTED TO STOP PAYING FOR CABLE THIS YEAR IN FAVOR OF STREAMING.

AND THIS 'NEW TECHNOLOGY' CAN BENEFIT FROM A RELIC OF THE PAST. OUR CONSUMER TECHNOLOGY REPORTER JAMEY TUCKER TAKES A LOOK AT SO-CALLED 'HIGH-DEFINITION ANTENNAS', AND HOW SOME COMPANIES ARE CONNING CUSTOMERS TO MAKE A BUCK.

PACKAGE SCRIPT

Your grandparents probably used a TV antenna back they're important again to anyone with a TV. But what kind of antenna do you really need? Sadly, too many antenna makers advertise claims that are flat-out lies.

Let's look at this listing. 330-mile range. 4k, and capable of tuning in cable and pay TV channels.

TV antennas can not tune in to channels hundreds of miles away. Reception requires line-of-sight between the antenna and the broadcast tower. The curvature of the earth prevents the signal from traveling hundreds of miles away. It's science.

Indoor antennas can tune in stations from 30-40 miles away. Outdoor antennas can receive signals 70-90 miles away if there are no mountains in the way.

Lie #2. Antennas won't get channels in 4K. Stations don't broadcast a 4K signal. At least not yet. When they do, any antenna can tune them in.

Lie #3. You won't get cable channels, no matter what the box says. Some TV markets have ATSC 3.0 which means smart TVs and antennas will receive more channels, but not live cable channels like ESPN or HBO.

While they'll work as an antenna should, be skeptical of listings like this. A \$160 antenna with a 900-mile range and cable channels. A 30-40 dollar antenna will work just as well.

an old antenna works okay. I found this one in my dad's garage and it gets HD as clear as can be. and don't forget to scan for channels every few months. You may find channels will come in clearer and you may get channels you didn't get before.

That's What the Tech? I'm Jamey Tucker

ANCHOR TAG

THE GOVERNMENT HAS CRACKED DOWN ON ANTENNA COMPANIES AND FALSE ADVERTISING. THE F.C.C. FINED ONE COMPANY 30 MILLION DOLLARS FOR ADVERTISING FALSE CLAIMS.

web story

As more and more people cut the cable and satellite cord in favor of streaming, sales of TV antennas are up. Once thought of as antiquated technology rabbit ears, rooftop, and attic antennas are important again.

One of the most obvious reasons is the ability to watch totally free TV channels including local stations and their sub-channels. An antenna also provides the ability to watch breaking news and weather even when the internet goes out.

As you might expect when there's a demand for a new, or in this case old, technology, companies aim to sell that technology at a premium to people who don't know the facts about the devices and gadgets.

Browsing Amazon and Walmart for TV antennas I ran across quite a few questionable listings that aren't 100% true.

Here's what you should know about those claims before adding an antenna to your shopping cart:

It's true that attaching a TV antenna to the cable or coaxial connection will get you free channels in high-definition. It isn't just HD but a higher definition that you'll find streaming a local channel. It's true 1080 HDi while the same channels are only in 720p on cable and streaming.

But let's look at the claims that are flat-out lies.

I saw one ad on Walmart that says the antenna can get ESPN, CNN, HBO, and other cable channels. That isn't remotely true. An antenna will get network TV stations near you. You'll likely see those stations' sub-channels that offer old TV shows. You'll also see quite a few shopping and religious channels.

Most antenna listings claim to get stations hundreds of miles away. Not true. Antennas must be able to "see" the station transmitter. A mountain can be in the way. And the earth's curvature prevents a line of site over 70 miles or so for any antenna, indoor or outdoor. That doesn't necessarily mean that you need to be that close to the TV station itself but to either the main broadcast tower or a repeater.

The smartphone app "Antenna Point" shows where TV transmitters are located which will help you decide where to put the antenna. One close or affixed to a window facing the TV tower is best.

Indoor antennas can generally get stations from 20-30 miles away. Outdoor antennas might get stations 70 miles away or so. If you place the antenna on the rooftop, you may get stations that are unavailable to you over cable, satellite or streaming. And again, they're free.

If you live in an older house check the attic. Back in the 60s, 70s, and 80s, many homeowners put box antennas in the attic and they're probably still there.

You won't get 4K TV, at least not right now as stations don't broadcast signals in 4K over the air. You will get full HD which is a much better picture than you'll get from cable, satellite, or streaming. Free out-of-the-air broadcasts are usually a few seconds ahead of streaming too. I enjoy watching a game show on an antenna and shouting out the answer after it's given. That drives the rest of my family who's watching in another room over streaming crazy wondering why I'm so smart.

Why get an antenna? For cord-cutters who only subscribe to Netflix or Hulu, an antenna will allow you to see network programming and, more importantly, local news and weather which is extremely important during storms.

How much can you expect to pay? Maybe \$30-\$40 depending on whether the antenna is for outdoors or indoors and whether it is amplified or not. But if you've got an old antenna somewhere, even one your grandparents used, that'll work just as well. I found a dusty old antenna in my dad's garage that works great and picks up all of the channels the newer antenna can get.

If you have an antenna, it's a good idea to re-scan for channels every few months. The signal might have improved and you may get a channel you didn't get the last time.