ATSC Standard: Carriage of Legacy TV Data Services

The Advanced Television Systems Committee, Inc., is an international, non-profit organization developing voluntary standards for digital television. The ATSC member organizations represent the broadcast, broadcast equipment, motion picture, consumer electronics, computer, cable, satellite, and semiconductor industries.

Specifically, ATSC is working to coordinate television standards among different communications media focusing on digital television, interactive systems, and broadband multimedia communications. ATSC is also developing digital television implementation strategies and presenting educational seminars on the ATSC standards.

ATSC was formed in 1982 by the member organizations of the Joint Committee on InterSociety Coordination (JCIC): the Electronic Industries Association (EIA), the Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineers (IEEE), the National Association of Broadcasters (NAB), the National Cable Telecommunications Association (NCTA), and the Society of Motion Picture and Television Engineers (SMPTE). Currently, there are approximately 140 members representing the broadcast, broadcast equipment, motion picture, consumer electronics, computer, cable, satellite, and semiconductor industries.

ATSC Digital TV Standards include digital high definition television (HDTV), standard definition television (SDTV), data broadcasting, multichannel surround-sound audio, and satellite direct-to-home broadcasting. Contact information is given below.

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A/99 Revision History

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## Table of Contents

1. **SCOPE**  
   1.1 Introduction and Background  
   1.2 Organization  

2. **REFERENCES**  
   2.1 Normative References  
   2.2 Informative References  

3. **DEFINITION OF TERMS**  
   3.1 Compliance Notation  
   3.2 Treatment of Syntactic Elements  
   3.3 Acronyms and Abbreviation  

4. **VERTICAL BLANKING INTERVAL DATA SERVICES**
1. SCOPE
This supplementary standard establishes how to transport certain data services that are sent by some broadcasters. These services may be sent over NTSC using lines in or near the Vertical Blanking Interval or in digital video using VANC. The method for encapsulating some of these services has been defined in SCTE 127.

1.1 Introduction and Background
This standard establishes a tool intended to help manage technological change by enabling the continuance of optional services using the digital transport. ANSI/SCTE 127 was developed to establish how to transport certain data services that classically were sent using the Vertical Blanking Interval (VBI) or the lines immediately following VBI in NTSC by documenting their encoding and use of Packetized Elementary Streams. SMPTE 2031 then standardized placement of this data within the VANC space of a digital video signal, permitting their use with HD. This standard establishes how these streams may optionally be placed in an ATSC Transport in a standard manner.

1.2 Organization
This document is organized as follows:
- Section 1 – Outlines the scope of this document and provides a general introduction.
- Section 2 – Lists references and applicable documents.
- Section 3 – Provides a definition of terms, acronyms, and abbreviations for this document.
- Section 4 – Establishes the method of transport of defined data services.

2. REFERENCES
At the time of publication, the editions indicated below were valid. All standards are subject to revision, and parties to agreement based on this standard are encouraged to investigate the possibility of applying the most recent editions of the documents listed below.

2.1 Normative References
The following documents contain provisions which, through reference in this text, constitute provisions of this standard.


2.2 Informative References


3. DEFINITION OF TERMS

With respect to definition of terms, abbreviations, and units, the practice of the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE) as outlined in the Institute’s published standards [1] shall be used. Where an abbreviation is not covered by IEEE practice or industry practice differs from IEEE practice, the abbreviation in question will be described in Section 3.2 of this document.

3.1 Compliance Notation

As used in this document, “shall” denotes a mandatory provision of the standard. “Should” denotes a provision that is recommended but not mandatory. “May” denotes a feature whose presence does not preclude compliance, which may or may not be present at the option of the implementer.

3.2 Treatment of Syntactic Elements

This document contains symbolic references to syntactic elements used in the audio, video, and transport coding subsystems. These references are typographically distinguished by the use of a different font (e.g., restricted), may contain the underscore character (e.g., sequence_end_code) and may consist of character strings that are not English words (e.g., dynrng).

3.3 Acronyms and Abbreviation

The following acronyms and abbreviations are used within this specification.

ATSC – Advanced Television Systems Committee.


MPEG – Moving Picture Experts Group.

VBI – An acronym for Vertical Blanking Interval, which is composed of the first 21 horizontal lines in each NTSC field. These lines are not intended to be directly displayed by a receiver. In digital systems, the VBI does not exist.

VANC – An acronym for Vertical ANCillary. In a broadcast facility, in uncompressed SDI, the Vertical ANCillary (VANC) data space is used for VBI and other non-video signals.

4. VERTICAL BLANKING INTERVAL DATA SERVICES

The VBI data Program Elements, each comprised of data structures and fields as defined in ANSI/SCTE 127:2007 [2], are optional elements for the ATSC system. When one or more
Program Elements is present each shall be transported and encoded as described in ANSI/SCTE 127 [2].

**Note:** The term “VBI data” is historical and not necessarily descriptive of data carried as an optional auxiliary element in a DTV system. The payloads specified in ANSI/SCTE 127 [2] can enter an ATSC broadcast facility from:

- encoders with NTSC (analog) input, or
- distribution MPEG-2 Transport Streams with ANSI/SCTE 127 [2] already encoded, or
- in SDI/HD-SDI VANC encoded per SMPTE 2031[3]

**Note:** Some signals carried by ANSI/SCTE 127 [2] are actually placed in the top two lines of active video within an NTSC signal. This was done intentionally, since historically, a number of common devices (tape decks and processing amplifiers) would strip all of the VBI lines.

**Note:** The PMT `stream_type` is set to 0x06 as provided by ETSI EN 300 472, referenced by SCTE 127.

**Note:** When a Program Element is sent as part of a Virtual Channel, the required PMT information is reproduced in the `service_location_descriptor` as provided in A/65, Section 6.9.5.

**Note:** It is expected that the SCTE 127 stream will be part of a “normal” digital television service (e.g. `service_type` 2). Uses with other `service_type` values or in a data-only minor channel, although not forbidden, are not defined here.