

Pirate low quality DTT set-top boxes (STBs) in South Africa

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The influx of illegal DTT set-top boxes (STB) has already reached South African shores. Worryingly, the STBs do not meet the South African Bureau of Standards (SABS) specifications.

e.tv has investigated the availability of these pirate STBs and has found that they are easily available from markets in Johannesburg and Cape Town. These decoders receive the digital terrestrial television (DTT) test channels (which are currently provided free-to-air) and provide recording capabilities to external storage devices.

Local manufacturers are very concerned about these boxes hitting the South African market as their investment in the production of compliant Digital Video Broadcasting - Terrestrial, version 2 standard (DVB-T2) STBs could potentially be scuppered if these pirate STBs flood the local market.

Bronwyn Keene-Young, e.tv's Group COO, says, "There is little to stop pirate set-top boxes from flooding the South African market and destroying the local manufacturing market because South African manufacturers will comply with the SABS standards but won't be able to compete with cheap low quality foreign STBs."

With a lack of copy-protection mechanisms on the HD output to the TV, and into the personal video recording (PVR) functionality on these boxes, the broadcast and manufacturing industry would need to rely on the already heavily-burdened law enforcement agencies to stop these boxes entering the country.

Keene-Young notes, "Having the broadcast signal protected at the commercial launch of DTT will go a long way to make sure that these boxes become redundant and therefore pose no threat to the local manufacturing industry."

Editorial contact

Vasili Vass, Head: Corporate Affairs at vasili.vass@etv.co.za or 021 481 4532 or 084 233 8277

Yudhvir Ranchod, Corporate Affairs Officer at yudhvir.ranchod@etv.co.za or 021 481 4779 or 082 884 4568

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