DirecTV cuts 3-D channel from 24-hour to part-time

The Associated Press

DirecTV says it has reduced the programming hours of its 24-hour 3-D channel, n3D, due to a shortage of 3-D content.

The satellite TV provider launched the channel to much fanfare in July 2010, boasting the backing of Panasonic Corp. The company said it was the first 3-D channel to operate around the clock.

A dearth of 3-D programs on n3D led to the same shows being run in a constant loop. Now, when there is nothing available, the channel will show the n3D logo. If there's an upcoming special event, details will appear on the program guide two or three weeks in advance.

The reduced hours began June 1.

It's the latest setback for 3-D TV, which has had trouble attracting mainstream audiences.

DirecTV's channel isn't the first 3-D offering to stumble. Last August, AT&T Inc. said its U-verse lineup of video channels would no longer include ESPN 3D. The company said the cost wasn't justified, "especially considering the low demand we've seen from customers."

Meanwhile, sales of 3-D TVs are growing. Tracking firm NPD Group said last month that 3-D TVs accounted for 11 percent of all flat-panel TV sales in the first three months of the year. That's nearly double the rate of a year ago.

DirecTV spokesman Robert Mercer said n3D will continue to air 3-D shows like "Guitar Center Sessions" and plans to air Olympics coverage in 3-D this summer.

To watch the channel, viewers need a 3-D ready TV, an HD receiver, and HD service, which costs $10 a month. The channel is available to all DirecTV subscribers.

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