New Gadget Frees Mobile TV from Blocky Attachment

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LOS ANGELES (AP) — A new gadget lets you watch TV on your phone or tablet without a blocky attachment.

Audiovox's "mobiletv" gizmo allows you to pick up free TV signals and watch them on Apple and Android mobile devices without eating into your cellular data plan. The accessory doesn't have to be attached to the mobile device physically. Previous mobile TV antennas could hang precariously from the charging port.

The consumer electronics maker's device, which costs $130, can be set up within 25 feet of your tablet or smartphone — on a windowsill, for example, if you're in a building. It works over Wi-Fi and lets consumers watch major broadcast networks like ABC, NBC, Fox, CBS, PBS, Telemundo and Ion using the Dyle Mobile TV app. The app is downloadable for free from Apple's App Store or Android's Google.

The networks and TV stations that are available differ in each of the 38 markets where Dyle operates, such as New York and Los Angeles, so you should check www.dyle.tv [1] before buying. Not every TV station sends out the kind of TV signals that can be captured by mobile antennas. For now, these signals allow for images that have a relatively fuzzy resolution of 416 by 240 pixels, although work is being done to boost the quality.

Unfortunately, watching TV this way blocks you from surfing the Web or pulling down fresh emails at the same. But a planned future software update is meant to make that possible.

The gizmo weighs less than 2 ounces and lasts four hours without being plugged in via its USB charger. The company says it fits in your pocket. It has a retractable antenna that extends to 6 inches and works even while in a moving vehicle.

Such devices are geared toward consumers who either don't want to pay for TV or want to get around the blackouts that are common in fee disputes between content owners and pay TV distributors.

Salil Dalvi, co-general manager of the Mobile Content Venture, which operates Dyle, said the technology could also be used by pay TV channel operators that want to reach mobile viewers who are worried about exceeding their monthly data limits.

The Mobile Content Venture is a joint venture of 12 major TV station owners as well as broadcast networks Fox, Ion and NBC.

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