

## 4. TELEVISION/SATELLITES

Our product has become **televised** racing. Our patrons are not watching horses; they are watching televised horses. Pari-mutuel racing as an entertainment package is finding the television component more and more important. Satellite is generally how it is transmitted to off-track patrons.

In 2003, simulcasting accounted for 87.1 percent of North American handle, according to The Jockey Club statistics.

Television no longer is an accommodation to racetrack patrons who do not wish to stand on the apron or go find seats overlooking the track.

Television is the medium utilized to present our sport to the public and is an integral part of the experience. Satellite television provides the capacity to deliver high quality pictures to authorized viewers.

The proliferation of multi-card simulcast operations has made the presentation a formidable challenge. It is made even more difficult in many cases because the physical facilities in which the televised product is being presented were not constructed for that purpose.

Die-hard fans will endure poor quality television production or overcome difficulties in seeing and hearing the races of their desire, but a "you can figure it out" philosophy will not build business.

If a track considers simulcasting and home wagering as its future, the televised presentation of racing should be a top priority.

### *Encryption Devices/Decoders*

Decoders are devices used by a Guest site to unscramble a Host's video signal. The primary types used are called Integrated Receiver Decoders (IRD). Currently the pari-mutuel industry uses IRDs manufactured by Scientific-Atlanta, General Instruments, and Wegener Communications.

### **Why Decoders Are Used**

Decoders have become standard in simulcasting for several reasons:

- They offer security for Host track's video signal.
- Host tracks can control transmission of their video signal to selected guest sites.

### **Checklist for Decoders**

To insure no interruption of simulcasting occurs due to a decoder problem:

- Host: Ship decoders with sufficient lead time for equipment and signal testing.
- Guest: Have decoder installed in time for testing.
- Host and Guest: Test signal import at least one hour in advance.

- Line up backup signal through another track or racing shows (i.e. ESPN)
- Set up a phone patch to host track for back up to audio signal.
- Keep a spare decoder.
- Make sure your piggyback arrangements don't leave you without another decoder option.

## **The Costs of Multiple Decoders**

Decoder costs are a significant part of the expense of simulcasting. Typically, a different one is required for each track's signal being taken. This expense can be reduced by doing the following:

- Host Tracks can sign longer term contracts with the suppliers of encoders, uplinks, transponder time, and decoders to reduce and/or keep costs more consistent for the guest sites.
- Standardize the encryption process, allowing more signals using fewer decoders.
- Piggyback whenever possible.

## ***Encrypted versus Unencrypted (“In-The-Clear”) Video Transmission***

Whether to encrypt the video signal varies from site to site. Most video signals of full card events are encrypted for control and security reasons.

Unencrypted video signals typically are used for single events and as a backup, in case of encryption and/or decoder problems. They are also used to alleviate the cost and shipping of decoders. However, constant vigilance is your only safeguard against unauthorized use of your signal by other vendors or wagering outlets.

## ***Compressed Video***

Compressed video can ease the cost factor and bandwidth limitations of satellites. Simply stated, compressed video technology enables a Host to send its video signal to part of a satellite transponder, allowing several signals to use the same transponder simultaneously. Currently, it is possible to segment a transponder to allow anywhere from one (1) to eight (8) separate signals to be sent at the same time.

By using this technique, there is a saving in transponder service fees but an added cost for the equipment needed to compress the signal.

The current demand for transponder space, in fact, has made the use of compressed video often mandatory for satellite access. The use of compressed video, however, is not the same as an encrypted signal. Compressed video can be either encrypted or unencrypted. If your compressed video signal is not encrypted, then it can be received by anyone with a compatible IRD.

## *Dissemination of Satellite Coordinates*

Guest tracks need to know how to tune in your signal. Let them know, well in advance, how to receive your signal. Provide the following information:

- Which satellite
- Location in the sky
- Which transponder
- Digital Tuning information:      Center frequency  
   Symbol rate  
   FEC rate (forward error correction)

Satellite time should be secured by Host sites well in advance of the racing season in order to place the signal on the same satellite and transponder for the duration of the race meeting.

Satellite coordinates can be disseminated on a monthly or seasonal basis, depending upon how far in advance the time is contracted.

Satellite coordinates should be given to the following: Simulcast Coordinator, TV Dept., Media Relations, Uplink, and Production Companies.

Satellite coordinates that change daily should be disseminated weekly and incorporated into the daily change information chain. If you need directional information for your dish, go to [www.satcodx.com](http://www.satcodx.com).

## *Internet Telecasts*

Most races are now telecast over the internet as a service to bettors. This service, however, can cost you customers as it can enhance rival betting services, both pari-mutuel and non-pari-mutuel. Care, control, and vigilance should be exercised to ensure internet telecasts provide the intended business benefits.

## *Television Monitors*

As stated previously, television is the only means of contact between patrons and simulcast events. The proper use of TV monitors greatly impacts simulcasting. Key issues to be considered are:

### **A. Proper Designation of TV Monitors For Simulcasting**

Consistency in the designation of TV monitors for simulcasting events eliminates confusion among patrons, which obviously is favorable to handle.

Single events can be incorporated into the telecast of the live race card or can be shown on specific monitors dedicated for such events.

Monitors dedicated to simulcasts should clearly designate what tracks are being featured. This signage is particularly vital to customer service when more than one simulcast card is being presented.

Incoming signals should be shown in all areas of the plant, including dining areas. In dining areas with table TVs, specific channels should be dedicated to simulcast events.

If specific areas cannot be dedicated to simulcast events, TV monitors may have to be paired or banked to give coverage of various signals without audio.

## **B. Audio**

Proper audio is a problem at most facilities, but every effort should be made to provide the best possible to patrons. The following suggestions should be considered:

- Amplify the audio of a signal when the race is actually being run.
- Use a local announcer where possible to provide coordination and consistency.
- Host tracks should drop all ancillary audio such as announcements for lost keys etc.
- Provide headphones in specified locations.

At sites where adequate audio is not possible in normal viewing areas, special locations and/or rooms must be dedicated to audio and video of simulcast events.

## ***Quality of Television Product***

The effective use of television to present the simulcast product, including the dissemination of race information, is often overlooked by Host and Guest sites. The product needs to be both informative and attractive to bettors if it is to benefit the simulcast operation. The Host and Guest share in the responsibility to provide the best product possible.

## **Host Responsibilities**

The Host track provides the basic video feed of the event. This includes:

- Pre-race coverage, paddock, post parade, local handicapping spots.
- Minutes to post.
- Race coverage, replays, different angles, photo finishes.
- Changes before the race.
- Graphic of results and payoffs.
- Continuous graphic presentation of scratches and changes.

The Host is most important in "simulcasting only" facilities, where no live racing is being presented. Often the Guest has no means of announcing or producing graphic updates and changes, leaving the bettors at the mercy of the video feeds being received. The Host should provide continuous graphics of the track name, race number, and updated wagering information.

## Guest Responsibilities

The Guest is most responsible when single events are being simulcast to augment and support a live race card. In this case, the Guest must take the video feed and use its own TV department to enhance and incorporate it into the rest of the card.

As discussed earlier, the Guest track's main responsibility is the effective use of its TV monitors to show the simulcast product to the bettors.

## Graphics

In many instances, physical circumstances result in either inadequate or a total lack of audio. Host and Guest sites should recognize the prevalence of this condition and make heavy use of graphics and scrolls.



### POLICY ADVOCATED BY NTRA SIMULCAST TASK FORCE

#### VIDEO SEQUENCE

Simulcast patrons have asked for consistency between racetracks with regard to the information that is delivered via the closed circuit television signal. For example, race changes should be displayed at a specific number of minutes to post at all tracks, so patrons can plan their viewing habits so as not to miss this key piece of information.

This schedule (based on a 24-minute cycle between races) has been developed to allow flexibility for the tracks to set minutes to post between races and to supplement wagering information with other elements such as advertising, replay, etc.

For the purposes of this schedule, Odds Cycle is defined and WPS and exacta probables; Full Odds Cycle is defined as Odds Cycle information, plus Daily Double and Pick X probables when necessary.

- Note: It is recommended that once the horses step onto the racetrack for the post parade, the

MIN TO POST	VIDEO	DURATION
18	Full Odds Cycle	2 minutes
15	Changes	30-45 seconds
11	Odds Cycle	1 minute
10	Race Conditions/.Shoes	30 seconds
8	Odds Cycle	2 minutes
3	Full Odds Cycle	2 1/2 minutes

horses should appear on closed-circuit feeds continuously through the running of the race.

## ***Emergency Procedures***

**Loss of Video/Technical Problems:** Have the TV department ready with canned graphics available to display in place of blank screens -- "Please Stand By - Technical Difficulties."

**Sun outages:** Predictably, every spring and fall the sun gets directly behind each satellite. Each host site will experience this at a different time. Check the sun outage times for your site and schedule back-up or altered programming for the 10-15 minute outage periods on the two or three days when it will occur. Check [www.satcodx.com](http://www.satcodx.com) for predictions for your exact site. Schedule your races to avoid high probability times or secure time on a back-up satellite.

## ***Saddle Towel Colors***



### **HTA Colors**

The HTA was the first to adopt a colorized towel scheme. The colors below are used by the harness racing industry:

<b>NUMBER</b>	<b>TOWEL COLOR</b>
1	Red
2	Blue
3	White
4	Green
5	Black
6	Yellow
7	Pink
8	Grey
9	Purple
10	Blue/Red *
11	Light Blue

\* Colors are placed diagonally, half blue and half red.



## POLICY ADVOCATED BY NTRA SIMULCAST TASK FORCE

### SADDLE TOWELS

The single most important issue coming out of discussions with simulcast patrons was their frustration with the inability to accurately follow horses while watching the closed circuit video signal. The situation is compounded by the fact that at most simulcast sites the audio calls of the races are seldom, if ever, heard through the public address systems.

Simulcast patrons were nearly unanimous in their appreciation of the Thoroughbred Racing Associations' (TRA) adoption of a standardized color scheme for saddle towels. Most indicated that the colored saddle towel is their primary way of tracing horses during a race.

In developing a simulcast standard for saddle towels, the Simulcast Task Force looked at the various color schemes available for all breeds of racing, the number of tracks representing the various breeds and the wagering handle generated. It was determined that it was in the best interest of NTRA member tracks to base the color scheme on the original plan developed by the TRA, so as not to confuse the majority of patrons by introducing a new set of colors.

While the TRA color scheme has remained intact, the Simulcast Task Force has made some minor changes to better serve the simulcast patron. Various shades of colors have been altered slightly to improve visibility, particularly on closed circuit television systems.

NUMBER	TOWEL COLOR	NUMBER COLOR
1	RED	WHITE
2	WHITE	BLACK
3	BLUE	WHITE
4	YELLOW	BLACK
5	GREEN	WHITE
6	BLACK	YELLOW
7	ORANGE	BLACK
8	PINK	BLACK
9	TURQUOISE	BLACK
10	PURPLE	WHITE
11	GRAY	RED
12	LIME GREEN	BLACK
13	BROWN	WHITE
14	MAROON	YELLOW
15	TAN	BLACK
16	LIGHT BLUE	ORANGE
17	NAVY	WHITE
18	DARK GREEN	YELLOW
19	MOONSLAVE (DENIM)	RED
20	FUCHSIA	YELLOW

There are many tracks which provide special saddle towels for stakes events, with horse, sponsor, or race names on the towel. For those towels, the Simulcast Task Force has established 12 inches as the preferred size for numbering. Stakes towels should also use the standard color scheme as opposed to one uniform color.