



Breaking News

## WNBC To Air Fare From NYC TV

By P.J Bednarski -- Broadcasting & Cable

In what might be the first arrangement of its kind nationwide, New York City's "official" television channel, the government-owned NYC TV, will air a rotation of some of its most popular shows from 11 a.m. to noon on WNBC, and also on WNBC's digital channel.

The new block of programming will follow Martha Stewart's talk show in, which is moving to 10. The new schedule takes effect Sept. 4, the same day WNBC switches The Ellen Degeneres Show, which aired at 10 a.m., to 4 p.m. where she'll take on The Oprah Winfrey Show on New York's WABC.

Looked at one way, the idea seems like a cheap way for WNBC to program an hour of daytime programming. On the other hand, it's also a clever way to get local programming on the air without WNBC having to pay for it. And as it turns NYC TV shows are quite well done, and though inexpensive (budgets run from \$15,000-\$35,000 an hour) they've won 14 local Emmy Awards since 2003.

The programs that will show up on WNBC are: \$9.99, a series about how to enjoy New York City on the cheap; Blueprint NYC, about the history of interesting and significant architecture, Eat Out NY, highlighting city restaurants, New York 360, a lifestyle, entertainment and nightlife series and Cool in Your Code, which divvies up the city's interesting sites by area code—there are over 200 of them. New episodes of those shows will continue to air on NYC TV (but some new ones will premiere on WNBC).

"It's a shot were taking and we'll see what happens If it works really well, it's a nice problem to have," said Jay Ireland, president of NBC's owned stations division.

That because the NYC TV block will end in December, when NBC stations are going to begin running iVillage Live, a new daytime entry spun out of the Website for women. NBC Universal now owns the Website.

But for three months, NYC TV will get quite a pop. On an average evening, Arick Wierson, NYC TV general manager says, between 75,000-100,000 viewers watch NYC TV, which is UHF channel 25. WNBC's general manager, Frank Comerford thinks WNBC can increase that audience five-fold. He said when he first started talking with Wierson, the idea was only to program WNBC's digital channel called WNBC 4.4. "But when we saw we had a window in the morning, we were able to take the big challenge," Comerford said.

New York also operates four other channels for more ordinary City Council meetings and other official business that aren't part of this deal.

With the WNBC arrangement, the city will be in the position of selling four minutes of airtime per hour, with a like amount given over to WNBC. Wierson is not sure yet, but he believes the shows can fetch between \$500-\$750 per .30 second spot.

Wierson, who's run NYC TV for the last three years, has built it into a nearly self-sustaining business. It has a budget of \$4 million, he says, but only about 10% of that comes from the city. The rest come from underwriters and interstitials already on NYC. Wierson and his staff are now increasingly active selling packages to other programmers and plan to attend NATPE in 2007 to sell formats for some of the 22 series on its schedule. "We're unusual for a municipal channel because we really try to run like a business," Wierson says.

Mayor Michael Bloomberg, no stranger to the media business, lauded the deal. "Around the world NYC TV has become a model of how a city can leverage its media holdings and create content to promote its neighborhoods and attract businesses," said the mayor who attended the press conference to announce the deal. "In fact many of our programs are already being distributed nationally by other broadcasters, on cruise ships and on in-flight services."