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Another Distinctive Community By The Irvine Group

Satellite dishes soon to be extinct?

Some video experts believe that satellite dishes, which have become a major part of the American landscape, are doomed to become extinct.

They predict that Direct Broadcast Systems (DBS), such as the new DirecTV, will replace the big, concave antennas which capture signals from satellites orbiting in space. DirecTV is expected to be introduced by Hughes Communications in 1994.

The Hughes system, which will deliver over 100 channels of

digital TV, operates with a small, 18-inch dish which picks up signals transmitted from a new high-powered satellite.

However, don't hold your breath waiting for the big dishes to vanish, says the current issue of Video Magazine. In other countries where direct broadcast systems have been introduced, they have not replaced the older satellite receivers.

One reason for this is that much more programming is becoming available over the older satellite dishes. The satellite in-

dustry has finally solved the signal-theft problem.

This allows more programming to be put on the satellite without fear of having offerings pilfered. Last fall, a new scrambling system from General Instrument was put into service which cut channel poaching from about 30 percent to virtually zero.

Another reason for the continuing popularity of the big dishes is that the manufacturers of dish receiver units have come up with new features which

should keep their products in American backyards and on its rooftops for some time to come. For example, R.L. Drake is manufacturing a receiver which lets different family members program individual lists of favorite channels which pop up in separate onscreen windows. Drake's receivers all offer on-screen menus in English and Spanish.

In addition, Toshiba's latest receivers allow viewers to order pay-per-view events without picking up the phone.

Itch-less insulation developed

(AP) — Owens-Corning unveiled what it called user-friendly insulation that will not itch or irritate handlers like other standard fiber glass insulation can.

The product, known as PINKPLUS, is traditional insulation encased in pink polyethylene, helping it slide into attics and crawlspaces with greater ease than typical insulation. It will cost about 20 percent more.

With about 3 million attics needing insulation annually, Strauss estimated the potential retail market for PINKPLUS at \$5 billion.

The wrapped insulation will not puncture easily and does not tear easily. It is also not combustible and will not settle with age or absorb moisture.

Housing starts hit highest mark in 1993

Housing starts rose 2.4 percent in May to the highest level in five months, the government said last week. Construction increased in the South and Midwest, but slipped in the Northeast and West.

Builders laid foundations for 1.24 million new homes and apartments at a seasonally adjusted annual rate, according to the Commerce Department report. That was up from 1.22 million in April and the highest since a 1.29 million rate last December.

Many analysts had predicted in advance of the report that starts would total about 1.26 million in May.

Housing activity — starts and sales — had slackened from January through March in large part because of unusually harsh weather.

But builders began digging out of the winter slump in April, when starts jumped a revised 8.1 percent. The department originally estimated April starts rose 6.7 percent.

But for the first five months of 1993, starts were down 0.8 percent from the same period a year earlier.

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