

NOAA WEATHER RADIO

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NOAA Weather Radio is a service of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) of the United States Department of Commerce. As the “Voice of the National Weather Service”, it provides continuous broadcasts of the latest weather information directly from National Weather Services offices. Taped weather messages are repeated every four to six minutes and are routinely revised every one to three hours, or more frequently if needed. Most of the stations operate 24 hours daily.

During severe weather, National Weather Service forecasters can interrupt the routine weather broadcasts and substitute special warning messages. The forecasters can also activate specially designed warning receivers. Such receivers either sound an alarm indicating an emergency exists, alerting the listener to turn the receiver up to an audible volume or when operated in a muted mode, are automatically turned on so that the warning message is heard. “Warning alarm” receivers are especially valuable for schools, hospitals, public-safety agencies and new media offices.

Under a January 1975 White House policy statement, NOAA Weather Radio was designated the sole government operated radio system to provide direct warnings into private homes for both natural disasters and nuclear attack. This will supplement warnings by sirens and by commercial radio and TV.

The broadcasts are tailored to weather information needs of people within the receiving area. For example, stations along the sea coasts and Great Lakes provide weather information for boaters, fishers and others engaged in marine activities, as well as general weather information.

NOAA Weather Radio broadcasts are made on one of seven high-band FM frequencies ranging from 162.40 to 162.55 megahertz (MHz). These frequencies are not found on the average home radio now in use. However, a number of radio manufactures offer special weather radios which operate on these frequencies, with or without the emergency warning alarm. Also, there are now many radios on the market, which offer standard AM/FM frequencies plus the so-called “weather band” as an added feature.

NOAA Weather Radio broadcasts can usually be heard as far as 40 miles from the antenna site, sometimes more. The effective range depends on many factors, particularly the height of the broadcasting antenna, terrain, quality of the receiver and type of receiving antenna. As a general rule, listeners close to or perhaps beyond the 40-mile range should have a good quality receiver system if they expect reliable

reception. Also an outside antenna may be required in these fringe areas. If practical, a receiver should be tried at its place of intended use before making a final purchase.

The National Weather Service operates about 380 stations. Approximately 90% of the nation's population is within listening range of a NOAA Weather Radio broadcast. A similar network of about 15 stations using the same frequencies broadcasts continuous weather information across much of southern Canada.