

Doppler Weather Radar Goes Online in Grays Harbor

Local News

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Posted on : August 9, 2011 at 5:46 am

On Monday, U.S. Senator Maria Cantwell (D-WA) announced that Washington state's first coastal Doppler radar is now online for testing.

"With Washington state's first coastal Doppler radar now online for testing, we are on the final home stretch."

Western Washington's only other Doppler radar is located on Camano Island, but the radar's reach is largely blocked by the Olympic Mountains, causing large gaps in weather data of storms approaching the Washington coast. The new coastal radar will help close this data gap, enabling forecasters to better determine wind speed and rainfall of incoming storms to give more accurate and timely warnings to residents in harm's way and help prevent loss of life and billions of dollars in property damage. Senator Cantwell, former chair of the Senate Oceans, Atmosphere, Fisheries, and Coast Guard Subcommittee, has led the effort to improve weather forecasting in the Pacific Northwest. In 2007, she obtained funds to complete a [study](#), released in May 2009, which demonstrated the gap in Washington state's weather radar coverage. She secured full funding for this radar system through a \$2 million down payment in the 2009 omnibus appropriations bill, and \$7 million included in the 2010 Consolidated Appropriations Act. In June 2010, Cantwell [announced](#) that Washington state would be receiving its first coastal Doppler radar a year earlier than scheduled thanks to NOAA obtaining an existing radar from the Air Force that could be modified to operate with the most sophisticated technology available. NOAA identified an Air Force NEXRAD radar at Keesler Air Force Base in Mississippi that is no longer needed for military training. By updating an existing radar rather than purchasing a new system, Washington is getting radar coverage significantly faster and within budget. This radar will be one of the first in the nation using "dual polarization" in civilian weather forecasting. The dual polarization technology provides an in-depth look at weather systems, scanning vertically as well as horizontally, enabling the National Weather Service to better predict the type, intensity, and duration of precipitation. Most Doppler radars in use today provide only a horizontal view of storms and precipitation. The National Weather Service plans to eventually upgrade most of its weather radars to this capability. For more information on the status of the Doppler radar, [click here](#).