NOAA Weather Radio

NOAA Weather Radio is a service of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). As the "Voice of the National Weather Service," it provides continuous broadcasts of the latest weather information directly from National Weather Services Offices. Recorded 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.

NOAA Weather Radio continues to gain use across the State of Texas. The Lower Colorado River Authority has added six transmitters along the Colorado River from near Junction to near Bay City. As always, NOAA Weather Radios operate seven days a week, 24-hours a day, with recorded weather messages repeated at four to six minute intervals. Messages are routinely revised every one to three hours, more frequently if needed. Broadcasts are specifically tailored to meet the weather information needs of the people within the receiving area (usually around 40 miles).

Many of the weather radios have an alert feature, which causes an alarm to activate and the radio to turn on when severe weather watches and warnings are issued. This notifies listeners about critical, and perhaps lifesaving, messages. It also provides quick notification and some extra safety time to schools, hospitals, nursing homes or businesses, that employees need to be made aware of approaching threats or take safety precautions. An excellent location for the radio would be at a desk or switchboard where the radio can be monitored during all operating hours.

However, since each NOAA Weather Radio serves an area of several counties, the alarm feature may activate frequently during very active severe weather. At times, people become annoyed with activation not related to the county they are in, and they may turn down the volume of the radio, or even turn off the alarm feature. Fortunately, a new feature is now available on the radios that can solve this problem.

The enhancement is called the "Specific Area Message Encoder," abbreviated "SAME." This allows listeners to program their radios to alarm only for the county or counties they are interested in. Without this "SAME"- equipped weather radio, the number of alarms could be cut by over 90 percent in many cases, with no loss of critical information.

NOAA Weather Radios can be found at nearly all electronics and department stores where radios are sold. Just ask the salesperson if they sell the NOAA Weather Radio. If you want to program the radio for your specific county ask if they sell "SAME" - equipped weather radios.