

Weather Radio Broadcasts: Free from NOAA!



NOAA Weather Radio All Hazards transmitters broadcast on one of seven VHF frequencies from 162.400 MHz to 162.550 MHz. Your standard AM/FM radio will not pick up these frequencies! So - buy your own Weather Radio receiver. Select a Weather Radio receiver that automatically tunes to the strongest signal. This is most likely to be the Weather Radio transmitter closest to you, with weather reports for your area.

NOAA - the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration - is a U.S. Government agency. NOAA weather broadcasts are continuous, and updated as needed. There are no commercials or ads. Because a weather forecast is repeated, you can listen to it several times if you wish!

I've had AM/FM radios with a Weather Band. Even better is a stand-alone Weather Radio that plugs into 110 VAC and has battery backup for use during power outages. You can buy these radios at Radio Shack, Wal-Mart, etc. The NOAA website lists good radios (<www.nws.noaa.gov/nwr/nwrrcvr.htm>) and has information on other Hazard Alerts.

Most NOAA weather warnings cover specific counties or cities. If your Weather Radio has Specific Alert Message Encoding (SAME), you can program the radio for specific counties or cities. Weather Radios may receive Emergency Alert System (EAS) messages. EAS replaced the Emergency Broadcast System in 1996.

Some Weather Radios have the Public Alert or All Hazards logo. Since weather emergencies may occur when you're asleep, activating the Public Alert function will wake up your radio - and you! - before a warning message is broadcast. After being awakened at 2 a.m. for a storm warning for the Gulf of Mexico, I turned this function off. I turn it on if tornado conditions are likely. I turn it on if the power goes off. Some weather radios let you select the kind of weather and other emergencies about which you want to be notified.

The NOAA weather transmitters are low power. I have a cheap stand-alone Weather Radio that won't work inside my home and a more expensive one that does. My best receiver has a whip antenna. It also has an external antenna jack for a larger antenna. An antenna designed for analog VHF TV or FM radio should work.

When TV went digital in 2009, the analog TV band of multi-function receivers quit working. If you want to use the Weather Band on your TV, it must now be a digital TV.