

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF
COMMERCE
NEWS

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20230

NATIONAL
OCEANIC AND
ATMOSPHERIC
ADMINISTRATION

Contact: Tanja Fransen, WCM 406-228-2850
Marilyn Trainor, 801-524-5692 x 226

April 17, 2002
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NOAA HONORS MID-RIVERS TELEPHONE COOPERATIVE

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration will present a national Mark Trail NOAA Weather Radio Award to Mid-Rivers Telephone Cooperative at a ceremony in Washington, D.C., on April 17. Mid-Rivers is being honored for its help with placing NOAA Weather Radio transmitters in four more locations in eastern Montana.

Now in its sixth year, the awards program honors individuals and organizations that use or provide NOAA Weather Radio receivers and transmitters to save lives and protect property. Fifteen award recipients will be recognized nationally this year.

Beginning in the spring of 2001, Mid-Rivers General Manager Gerry Anderson, Rural Economic Development Representative Erin Lutts, and Engineering Manager John Lutter became involved in the program by **helping communities meet the matching funds required so that areas in rural Montana would be awarded four grants, worth nearly \$200,000**, offered by the U.S. Dept. Of Agriculture's Rural Utility Service to bring NOAA Weather Radio transmitters to rural communities. **Lutts and Lutter attended the ceremony in the nation's capital to receive the award for Mid-Rivers.**

According to Julie Adolphson, **Meteorologist in Charge** of the NWS Forecast Office in Glasgow, "Mid-Rivers donated tower space, equipment, and labor toward the grants for Baker, Broadus and Jordan, Montana. They also applied for the grant, and donated the tower space for a new site near Circle, Montana, where they are headquartered. These four new transmitters will help close one of the largest gaps in needed NOAA Weather Radio coverage across the United States."

According to Dick Melvin, Mid-Rivers Member Services manager, "Severe weather is a significant threat to the people served by our Cooperative. Thunderstorms over eastern Montana caused over \$3 million in damage last year, and winter storms have also had a significant impact. By donating our facilities, equipment, and labor, we are ensuring that our customers are getting the quickest warning information possible."

Adolphson said, "With severe weather always threatening, residents of this area can now stay on top of storm activity with a direct link to our forecasters. NOAA Weather Radio is known as 'The Voice of the National Weather Service,' and is a live 24-hour source of weather forecasts and warnings broadcast directly from National Weather Service offices in Glasgow. NOAA Weather Radio allows us to send weather statements and warnings straight from the forecaster to the public saving five to 10 minutes or more."

Three of the new transmitters are being installed late this Spring. The site at Baker is broadcasting already on a frequency of 162.550 MHz.

"The combination of improved severe weather detection and forecasting capabilities, and expansion of our Weather Radio network nationwide is a proven formula for saving lives, especially for people who live and work in rural locations," said Vickie Nadolski, director of the National Weather Service's Western Region in Salt Lake City. "We appreciate the initiative of the team at Mid-Rivers and welcome their partnership in helping the National Weather Service protect lives and property of the citizens in this area."

Through the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Rural Utility Service grant program, Mid-Rivers Telephone Cooperative, through their matching contributions of over \$50,000, was able to help make this project a reality for the four areas involved.

"This is a great success story for our community. We are very excited about what this expansion program means to eastern Montana and are extremely grateful to Mid-Rivers and the USDA," Tanja Fransen, NWS Warning Coordination Meteorologist. "This expansion significantly increases our ability to reach the community directly with vital warnings. When you don't have a radio or TV turned on, having a seven-band NOAA Weather Radio with an alarm helps you protect your family, yourself and your property."

The NOAA Weather Radio network has more than 650 stations, covering all 50 states, adjacent coastal waters, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and U.S. Pacific Territories.

Weather radios come in many sizes, with a variety of functions and costs. Some receivers automatically sound an alarm and turn themselves on if a severe weather warning is broadcast and can be programmed to warn for weather and civil emergencies in only your county. Most NOAA Weather Radio receivers are either battery-operated portables or AC-powered desktop models with battery backup. Some scanners, HAM radios, CB radios, short wave receivers, and AM/FM radios also are capable of receiving NOAA Weather Radio transmissions. Weather radios can be purchased at many electronics stores.

The Mark Trail awards are named for the nationally syndicated comic strip character which serves as the campaign symbol for the NOAA Weather Radio program. Since 1995, Jack Elrod, writer and illustrator of Mark Trail, and King Features Syndicate have been strong advocates for publicizing severe weather safety through the use of Weather Radios. In recent years, the strip's education message has included the fact that anyone listening to the NOAA Weather Radio has instant access to the same life saving weather reports and emergency information provided to meteorologists and emergency personnel.

"NOAA's National Weather Service is the primary source of weather data, forecasts and warnings for the United States and its territories," said Nadolski. "The National Weather Service operates the most advanced weather and flood warning and forecast system in the world.

Information about NOAA Weather Radio and the Mark Trail Award is available at:
<http://www.nws.noaa.gov/nwr>

###

