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Colorado State University consortium partners with city to install tornado radar near Dallas/Fort Worth

FORT COLLINS - A Texas city is the latest entity to install a short-range weather radar developed by Colorado State University and its partners at the [Collaborative Adaptive Sensing of the Atmosphere](#).

The radar lifted into place today in Midlothian is the third unit added in the tornado-prone Dallas/Fort Worth area as part of a collaboration between CASA and the North Central Texas Council of Governments.

More CASA radars will be installed over the next year.

“Our ultimate goal is to have 16 to 20 of these radars covering our 16-county region so we can detect and forecast severe weather earlier,” said Amanda Everly, who is helping to coordinate the project for the Texas council.

Midlothian is the first city to install a CASA unit - the other two are located on the campuses of University of Texas-Arlington and the University of North Texas.

The CASA partners began deploying their radars to the Dallas/ Fort Worth area after testing them in a rural area of Oklahoma.

“Our tests in Oklahoma were successful and we wanted to prove the network of radars could work in urban areas as well,” said CSU professor V. “Chandra” Chandrasekar, who also serves as a CASA deputy director and leads the development of the center’s radars.

Several companies donated services, materials and equipment to cover the installation costs of the Midlothian project. The radar unit was provided by Ridgeline Instruments, which licensed the technology from CSU. Texas-based Orbital Systems provided the pedestal for the radar.

Brenda Phillips, CASA’s deputy director, said the Midlothian project is a good example of how public-private partnerships can work and called it a win-win.

“The city gets a state-of-the-art radar and we have access to the data it collects so we can continue our research,” she said.

Everly said other cities in the Dallas/Fort Worth area are clamoring for the radars because the units spot tornadoes earlier than other systems. The CASA radars also provide updates every minute rather than every 5 minutes like other technologies.

Forecasters have long relied on high-powered, long-range systems to scan the skies and report severe weather. These radars, however, have limited ability to collect data from the lower regions of the atmosphere where most weather forms.

CASA’s short-range radars are set up as a network and overlap so there are no gaps in coverage. Their shorter scanning range also enables the units to better monitor the lower atmosphere and identify where and when a tornado might touch down.

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“Local emergency managers saw the results from CASA’s Oklahoma tests and were impressed,” Everly said. “These really are the next generation of radars. We believe they have the potential to help us save lives.”

Funded by a National Science Foundation grant, CASA is a research consortium involving CSU, the University of Massachusetts and the University of Oklahoma.

