

New rain gauge, weather station aid during storms

By ADAM ARMOUR
Staff Writer

A new Fulton weather station and rain gauge will allow Fulton residents to track rainfall, wind strength and overall weather conditions with just a few clicks, handy information during these blustery days.

Members of the Northeast Mississippi Radio Amateurs (NEMRA) recently set up a rain gauge in Fulton as part of a complete weather station that will play multiply roles in the community.

Most prominently, the new weather station will allow any and everyone to easily track weather information specific to the city of Fulton, such as rainfall in inches, wind speeds in miles-per-hour, wind distribution and dew point. The information available ranges from 24 hours to 10 days ago and can be viewed by visiting the station's website at <http://www.findu.com/cgi-bin/wxpage.cgi?call=KE5LUX>.

According to Jeff Clingan, a member of NEMRA, the weather system will play a vital role in tracking weather for the Fulton area, which in turn helps keep its residents safer during storms.

"This system allows amateur radio operators to connect a radio and weather station to the internet," Clingan explained. "The data from these systems is compiled and sent to the National Weather Service at regular intervals.

"It will greatly benefit the amateur radio Skywarn spotter network by supplying local information such as barometric pressure, wind speed and direction as well as rainfall amounts without delay."

Located at the Itawamba County Emergency Management office on Access Road in Fulton, the new weather station serves as part of a network called Automatic Position Reporting System, or simply APRS. Clingan explained that the network allows for extremely accurate weather information in the Fulton area and will serve the community well during severe storms, when accurate weather information is vital.

"You get feedback from your data according to other stations in your area so you know if your station may have a problem and be reporting bad data," Clingan explained. "APRS also allows tracking of mobile stations by both radio signal and internet if they have APRS on board using a gps. This is handy in severe weather and allows a mobile APRS equipped vehicle to be seen on a computer screen. Operators can be given information about the weather to keep them out of harm's way but allow them to give eye witness feedback about the storm."

All of this will hopefully allow Fulton to be designated as a "Stormready Community" by the National Weather Service. This designation will provide a host of benefits for the area, including improved timeliness and effectiveness of hazardous weather warnings for the public.

"In this program they work with our local emergency manager to better prepare communities in the event of severe weather," Clingan explained. "One of the requirements of this program is a weather station."

Clingan added that Itawamba County Emergency Manager Shae Collum is currently working on Storm Ready Certification for the City of Fulton.

Adam Armour can be reached at 862-3141, by e-mailing adam.armour@itawamba360.com or by visiting his blog at itawamba360.com.

