

CHAPTER 8

SURFACE RADAR REPORTING

8.1. General. Radar observations of tropical cyclones will be made at Department of Defense (DOD), National Weather Service (NWS), and Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Weather Surveillance Radar-1988 Doppler (WSR-88D) facilities. Participating radar sites are listed in Table 8-1.

8.2. The WSR-88D. The WSR-88D is a computerized radar data collection and processing system. The design and implementation of the WSR-88D was a joint effort of the DOD, NWS, and FAA, and the utilization of the radar continues to be governed by tri-agency agreement. The WSR-88D is an S-band (10-cm), coherent radar, with a nominal beam width of 1 degree. The maximum data ranges are 248 nm (reflectivity) and 124 nm (velocity), although velocity data out to 162 nm can be obtained from radars using “super-resolution.” Radar scanning strategies are selectable, using predetermined volume coverage patterns (VCPs). The VCP in use depends upon which weather phenomena are under surveillance. Once the radar data has been collected, it is processed automatically at the radar site by a suite of algorithms which provide graphical products for forecaster use. NHC, as an external user, obtains these products through a network connection. CPHC obtains products directly from four WSR-88Ds in Hawaii operated by the NWS Weather Forecast Office in Honolulu.

8.3. Procedures. As a tropical cyclone approaches, NHC uses the WSR-88D to perform radar center-fixing and to obtain other diagnostic information. Therefore, it is important to optimize WSR-88D performance for tropical cyclones and to allow other users, especially the NHC, access to radar products in the area of landfall. Most of the changes must be issued through the Master System Control Function (MSCF), Radar Product Generator (RPG) Human Computer Interface (HCI). To facilitate this process, NHC in cooperation with the Radar Operations Center (ROC) has developed an operations plan for use during tropical cyclone events. The current WSR-88D Tropical Cyclone Operations Plan is available as a sub-link to the National Hurricane Operations Plan on the OFCM web site at <http://www.ofcm.gov/homepage/text/pubs.htm>. It is also available via fax from the ROC Hotline (1-800-643-3363).

8.3.1. Radar Observation Requirements, WSR-88D. Chief among the requirements is the appropriate display of hurricane-force winds. Changes must be made at the radar site, guided by the WSR-88D Tropical Cyclone Operations Plan, in order to deal effectively with hurricane conditions. The physical characteristics of the tropical cyclone are best represented by use of the precipitation mode. Choice of VCP may significantly enhance (or degrade) collection of velocity data. (See WSR-88D Tropical Cyclone Operations Plan for further information.) Radar characteristics of hurricanes are given in Federal Meteorological Handbook Number 11 (FMH-11), Part B, Chapter 9. Further discussion of product usage appears in FMH-11, Part D, Unit Description and Operational Applications. A recommended product list appears in FMH-11 Part D, Application versus Product Table 4-3.

Table 8-1. Participating WSR-88D Radar Stations¹

NWS Radars <i>U.S. Gulf and Atlantic Coasts</i>	NWS Radars <i>U.S. Southwest</i>	FAA Radars	DOD Radars
Albany, NY	Los Angeles, CA	Molokai, HI	Andersen AFB, Guam
Atlanta, GA	Phoenix, AZ	Kohala, HI	Columbus AFB, MS
Binghamton, NY	San Diego, CA	San Juan, PR	Dover AFB, DE
Birmingham, AL	Santa Ana Mtns, CA	South Hawaii, HI	Eglin AFB, FL
Boston, MA	Tucson, AZ	South Kauai, HI	Fort Hood, TX
Brandon/Jackson, MS	Yuma, AZ		Fort Polk, LA
Brownsville, TX			Fort Rucker, AL
Caribou, ME			Maxwell AFB, AL
Charleston, SC			Moody AFB, GA
Columbia, SC			Robins AFB, GA
Corpus Christi, TX			
Ft. Worth, TX			
Greer, SC			
Houston, TX			
Huntsville/Hytop, AL			
Jacksonville, FL			
Key West, FL			
Lake Charles, LA			
Melbourne, FL			
Miami, FL			
Mobile, AL			
Morehead City, NC			
New Orleans/Baton Rouge, LA			
New York City, NY			
Philadelphia, PA			
Portland, ME			
Raleigh/Durham, NC			
Roanoke, VA			
San Antonio, TX			
Shreveport, LA			
State College, PA			
Sterling, VA			
Tallahassee, FL			
Tampa, FL			
Wakefield, VA			
Wilmington, NC			

¹The criterion for selection is that the radar site is located within approximately 124 nm (legacy maximum velocity range) of the coastline.

8.3.2. Central Region Report. The following fix definitions and criteria are used in reporting tropical cyclone radar observations:

- If the central region of a storm is defined by an identifiable circular, or nearly circular, wall cloud with an echo-free center, the fix (the geometric center) is reported as an "**EYE**".
- If the central region is recognizable, but not well-defined by a wall cloud (as in the case of a tropical storm), it is reported as a "**CENTER**."
- When the eye or center is only occasionally recognizable or some other central region uncertainty exists, the eye or center is reported as "**PSBL EYE**" or "**PSBL CENTER**."
- Remarks stating the degree of confidence will be included and will be classified as either "good," "fair," or "poor." If an eye is present, a "good" fix is reported when the eye is symmetrical--virtually surrounded by wall cloud; a "poor" fix is reported when the eye is asymmetrical--less than 50 percent surrounded by wall cloud; a "fair" fix is reported to express a degree of confidence between "good" and "poor." Note that a partial eyewall may be the result of excessive range from the radar, or represent the true structure of the system. Doppler velocities will, in general, increase confidence in the center position and, if available, should always be examined prior to establishing a fix.

8.3.3. Transmission of Radar Reports. When the tropical cyclone is within 200 nm of a WSR-88D, and the center fix is considered reliable, the appropriate tropical cyclone warning center (NHC or CPHC) may issue a tropical cyclone position estimate (AWIPS category TCE) between 2-hourly intermediate advisories. Note that although the issuance of this product depends upon the quality of the radar fix, other data sources such as aircraft reconnaissance may be blended with the radar estimate to obtain a position. Thus, a radar position based on particular radar may appear to disagree with the TCE position, but has in fact been taken into consideration.

- In the case of communications failure, and the event that NHC cannot obtain the necessary radar data, the local NWS Weather Forecast Office may be called upon to estimate the radar position and render qualitative assessment of the circulation.
- Other radar facilities not having weather transmission capability but wishing to provide information deemed important, should call the nearest NWS Weather Forecast Office or the NHC.

