

Emergency alert system in service from HCMC

By JAN HUMPHREYS

Henry County Medical Center has developed and installed an Emergency Weather Alert System which, ironically, went on line the same day as the tornado hit Clarksville.

"We are happy to be able to provide this important service which we feel is necessary for our employees, patients as well as the community," said Tom Gee, HCMC administrator.

The alert system is necessary because Henry County has always been in a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) weather radio dead spot. Watches and warnings are transmitted from the Jackson transmitter site, which is very difficult to receive locally with a common weather radio.

"Reception was so poor that the National Weather Service would not transmit Henry County information over this site," explained Darrell Wilson, HCMC's communications technician. Transmitters at Mayfield and Waverly could be received but did not transmit information concerning Henry County, he added.

Working along with National Weather Service and the Henry

County Emergency Management, HCMC engineered, purchased and installed the Weather Eagle system to have the capability to receive information from the Jackson site. This information is then rebroadcast locally for Henry Countians.

In turn, NWS in Memphis agreed to begin transmitting watches and warnings for Henry County through this site. Also, NWS in Paducah has agreed to transmit Henry County severe watches and warnings through the Mayfield transmitter site.

The Weather Eagle equipment will search for the best signal between the two sites and lock on it, Wilson explained.

"This system utilizes state of the art receiving equipment provided by Thunder Eagle Inc.," he said. "Because of Henry County's unique situation, Dan Gropper of Thunder Eagle was especially diligent in providing technical support."

"Tommy Duke, owner of Tommy's Two-Way Communication, was very beneficial to the project and supplied this equipment at his cost and supplied necessary test-

ing equipment for installation," Wilson said.

This system is designed to provide local access to the National Weather Services alert system for potentially threatening, severe weather or hazardous conditions. Watches and warnings are broadcast for Henry County by NOAA Weather Radio-NWS in Memphis.

This information is retransmitted locally by the use of radio transmitting equipment located at Henry County Medical Center. This equipment operates on the Paris-Henry County Rescue Squad's frequency of 155.220 MHz.

The general public may receive this alert information by use of common radio scanners or other types of auto alert receivers which are commercially available. Standard NOAA weather radios will not receive the transmission from the HCMC site, Wilson cautions.

While HCMC encourages the citizens of Henry County to utilize this resource, the hospital cannot be responsible for the reliability of this transmission.

Two distinctive types of alerts may be heard on this frequency. The



—HCMC photo by Jan Humphreys

Henry County Medical Center's communications technician Darrell Wilson shows administrator Thomas Gee the new emergency weather alert system which HCMC has developed as a service to its employees, patients and the community.

first is a "ding-dong" and then a synthesized voice saying the phrase, "Weather alert." This means that a watch or warning is being issued in the region but not exclusively for Henry County.

The other type of alert will be preceded by a long alert tone followed by live audio from the NWS. This will be for watches or warnings for Henry or Weakley counties only. The station also automatically iden-

tifies itself on a routine basis to verify operation.

Jan Humphreys is public relations coordinator for Henry County Medical Center.