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Weather Stations, Donated by UNH, Keep Watch for Fire Danger

By [Amy Seif](#)

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August 29, 2002

DURHAM, N.H. -- In cooperation with local groups, the University of New Hampshire has donated or upgraded seven Davis weather stations in Maine and New Hampshire, expanding the regional network of national weather service stations.

These stations serve dual purposes. While university scientists gather data for a regional air quality study, the stations are helping to alert local fire stations of high fire danger, teach children about the weather, and provide daily weather information for radio broadcast.

"There are hundreds of automated weather stations in the United States, but the ones in our region were too far apart to give us the level of detail we needed for our study," says Sam Miller, research scientist at UNH's Institute for the Study of Earth, Oceans, and Space. "Donating new stations to local groups has a good payoff. They get a weather station, and we get high quality data and people to monitor the station."

At Bonnie Eagle Middle School in Buxton, Maine, students in an Earth science class learn about the weather with their new station. On Mount Agamenticus in York, Maine, volunteer fire watchers use their weather station to check wind speed, humidity, and temperature -- important clues to forest fire danger.

Other recipients in Maine, the Kennebunk Fire Department and Sebago Lake State Park, are also keeping watch for fire danger in this time of drought. Listeners of UNH's radio station, WUNH, hear weather reports provided by another donated station.

Miller and his colleagues at UNH's Institute for the

Study of Earth, Oceans, and Space are trying to understand more about the sea breeze with these weather stations. The sea breeze, which can reach as far as 50 miles inland, has major impacts on pollution and relative humidity.

"The sea breeze is a complicated system that changes from place to place," says Miller. "When the New Hampshire seacoast experiences the sea breeze, ozone levels can be elevated in Portsmouth. In some parts of the world, the sea breeze provides the only moisture that plants ever get."

This high resolution study of the sea breeze is part of the Atmospheric Investigation, Regional Modeling, Analysis and Prediction (AIRMAP) project. AIRMAP, a multi-million dollar investigation funded by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, is exploring the relationship between weather and air quality in New England. For more information on AIRMAP, go to <http://airmap.unh.edu>.

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