



Snohomish County
County Executive's Office
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NEWS RELEASE – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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County announces grant to enhance flood warning system

“Advanced early warning and simultaneous satellite broadcasting of flood information to emergency response agencies will serve to minimize loss of life and property during future floods,” says Snohomish County Executive Aaron Reardon.

Snohomish County has been awarded a \$63,990 grant from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (“NOAA”) to improve its Automated Flood Warning System (“AFWS”).

The grant will improve the County’s ability to predict with greater speed and reliability, the potential for a flood to occur, thereby giving individuals and their families more time to reach safety.

The grant will fund the purchase of equipment to upgrade seven existing river gauges on the Stillaguamish, Snohomish and Skykomish rivers, and install one new river gauge on the Pilchuck River. The upgrades will add satellite transmitters to each site, enabling the National Weather Service, Corps of Engineers and other federal, state and local agencies involved in flood emergencies to directly receive data from the gauges.

NOAA’s National Weather Service awarded seven grants nationwide to improve local flood warning systems in order to help reduce the loss of life, property damage and disruption of commerce resulting from floods. NOAA awarded a total of \$383,883 in funds for the 2006 round of competitive grants. The competitive grants were applied for and will be administered by the Surface Water Management (“SWM”) division of the County’s Public Works Department.

The County currently uses radio transmitters to receive information from the gauges. The NOAA grant will help avoid blackouts to the system and integrate Snohomish County gauges into the national network.

In addition to enhancement of the river gauges, a new snow pack station will also be funded by the grant. The snow pack gauge will be installed in the northern half of the County in order to improve the regional coverage and monitor the snow pack levels that can be critical in determining the size of flood that may occur in a “rain on snow” event.

SWM is currently installing satellite receivers at the County campus in order to directly receive both the data from the County gauges that will be upgraded under this grant and the existing United States Geological Survey and Department of Ecology gauges already using the satellite system.

The County has been operating an AFWS since 1993 in order to reduce the risk to life and property by providing better flood warning and monitoring throughout the County. The new gauges are scheduled to be installed by October 2007 – in time for the flood season.

Real-time river level data and other river flooding information is available at <http://www.floods.surfacewater.info>.

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