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## Harrodsburg receives weather-monitoring station

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**An antenna pointed toward a cell tower is how the station transmits its information. (Ben Kleppinger photo)**



**HARRODSBURG** - Harrodsburg residents will soon be able to know which way the wind blows. They'll also know how fast the wind is blowing, how humid the air is, how much it has rained and how much solar radiation is hitting the ground.

The wealth of information comes from a new weather and climate monitoring station installed Tuesday in Anderson-Dean Community Park. The station provides current information that can be invaluable.

"Sometimes I call it fresh data, just like fresh rolls at the grocery store," said Kentucky Mesonet director Stuart Foster. The station will provide local empirical weather data, which will be available online for free.

The station is the 25th in Kentucky put up by Kentucky Mesonet, a statewide project being run out of Western Kentucky University. Kentucky Mesonet is part of WKU's efforts to build up an environmental monitoring infrastructure in Kentucky, according to the Kentucky Mesonet Web site.

Each of Kentucky Mesonet's solar-powered monitoring stations automatically monitors temperature, precipitation, humidity, solar radiation and wind speed and direction. Each station transmits its information every 15 minutes using a wireless modem that connects to a cell phone tower.

The information is transmitted to the National Weather Service and the Kentucky Climate Center at WKU, where it is made available for the public to view at [kymesonet.org](http://kymesonet.org).

The National Weather Service uses the data from Kentucky Mesonet's stations to make accurate forecasts, Foster said.

The stations help improve local weather forecasts and can aid in emergency response efforts,



**The circular unit with metal flaps surrounding it measures precipitation. The metal flaps prevent the wind from blowing extra precipitation in. (Ben Kleppinger photo)**

Foster said. And wind measurements can help people who need to do a controlled burn or want to spray pesticides on crops, he said.

Kentucky Mesonet is making the data it collects useful in the classroom as well. Foster said lesson plans are available for teachers who want to use live, local weather data in their classrooms.

Information from the Harrodsburg station is not yet available on the Web site, but Foster said he expects they will have it available sometime next week. Information from another station in northern Lincoln County already is viewable on the Web site.

Kentucky Mesonet's goal is to have approximately 100 stations across the state, according to a press release. Foster said Kentucky Mesonet hopes to have 40 to 50 stations up by the end of the year. The project, which started up in May 2007, was funded initially by a \$1.5 million federal earmark secured by Sen. Mitch McConnell.

Foster said the station in Harrodsburg cost approximately \$15,000, with local officials kicking in extra funds to pay for a security fence around the station. Mercer County Judge Executive John Trisler and Harrodsburg Mayor Lonnie Campbell were helpful in getting the station put in, Foster said.

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