



Media release – Friday 27 March

MetService halts Otago Radar construction

MetService regrets to advise that the construction of the Otago Radar is suspended as a result of COVID-19 and the country going into lockdown.

MetService anticipated the radar to be operational by late May 2020 and with construction in full swing the project was running to schedule.

Kevin Alder, MetService's Manager for Meteorological Data Services says the delay was unavoidable.

"With the COVID-19 Alert Level 4 being put in place; we have made the difficult but necessary decision to stop the construction work immediately. As a result, the installation of the radar will be delayed by some months."

"The construction of the radar involves a large number of people and external services and equipment which was simply not possible to bring together while only essential services are permitted to operate during the lockdown period," says Alder.

The location and topography of the radar site (750 metres above sea level northwest of Dunedin), means it is not possible for onsite groundwork to proceed in the winter months which would further delay the commencement of the work.

"At this stage, we hope to have the radar operational later in the year."

"MetService acknowledge this is a significant setback for communities in the Otago region, but as we are all aware, these are totally unforeseen and unprecedented circumstances," says Alder.

The Otago radar is the largest capital project MetService is managing, and the organisation is committed to having the radar operable as soon as possible.

The current status of the project is:

- The radar's foundations are almost complete. The last concrete for the foundations was scheduled to be poured next week which has had to be cancelled.

- Offsite construction of the 12-metre tower is largely complete. The tower will be stored by the manufacturer until work can recommence. The tower then needs to be painted before being transported to Dunedin.
- The radar transmitter, antenna and radome have been delivered, and are in secure storage in Dunedin.
- Offsite manufacture of the radar outbuildings is mostly complete. Delivery of these facilities was anticipated in early April.

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Additional information:

MetService confirmed the location of Otago Radar at Lamb Hill, 25 kilometres northwest of Dunedin in July 2019. After which time, MetService worked closely with the landowner and Dunedin City Council to obtain the required consents for the project. Ground was broken in mid-February 2020 as construction of the Otago weather radar began.

The Otago radar is estimated to cost \$2.8 million and will be the tenth in MetService's national network. As New Zealand's single authoritative voice for severe weather, MetService's weather radar network plays an essential role in the delivery of its public-safety services. All New Zealand radar imagery is updated every 7.5 minutes on metservice.com and MetService apps.