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PRESS RELEASE

Reinstallation of Doppler Weather Radar in St. Maarten

Last week, the reinstallation of the weather radar in St. Maarten was started on the summit of the St. Peters Hill when the companies Hart N.V. and Eric Contractors began dismantling the old platform. The final phase of this project is planned to be concluded early December, if the weather cooperates.

The WSR-74S weather radar was installed for the first time on the St. Peters Hill in 1987 on top of a tower built by the MDNAA (Country Netherlands Antilles) in very close cooperation and agreement with the Landsradio. Unfortunately during the passages of the hurricanes Luis and Georges, the radar equipment was destroyed. As a replacement, the U.S. Weather Bureau (NOAA) donated another (used) WSR-74S. During the past couple of years this radar has undergone an extensive upgrade procedure. This upgrading was done by technicians of the Royal Dutch Meteorological Institute (KNMI) in close cooperation with the technical staff of the Meteorological Service. After this procedure, the equipment was shipped back to St. Maarten a couple of months ago and it is now ready to be installed again on the existing tower. This radar will have the capabilities to locate precipitation and to detect motion of rain drops (Doppler effect). The outstanding cooperation with UTS (successor of Landsradio) facilitated in the preparation for the installation of this Doppler Weather Radar, which is of extreme interest to the citizens of particularly Sint Maarten Sint Eustatius and Saba.

When the dismantling of the old platform on top of the tower is finished after the first week, a new platform will be installed between November 11 and 18. Subsequently, a pedestal and antenna will be placed on top of the new platform. Between November 19 and 24, a new dome is scheduled to be placed on top of the radar. This dome will protect the radar antenna against the weather elements and also against corrosion caused by the presence of sea salt in the atmosphere. A company called ESSCO from the US will assemble and place this dome. At the same time, technicians of the KNMI and of the Meteorological Service will install other essential equipment related to the weather radar.

The Vaisala Company from the US will install and connect the software called IRIS. This software is necessary to control the radar operation and to also visualize the shower activity around St. Maarten on computer screens of both the forecasters of the Meteorological Service as of anybody acquiring this information through the Internet. This part should be completed at the end of this month.

Between December 1 and 5, the radar equipment will be started and tested and, if everything is successful, the St. Maarten weather radar will become operational soon thereafter.

Construction workers assembling the scaffolding on St. Peters Hill's summit

