

House committee to evaluate RDU weather radar

By JOHN BAKHT
Staff Writer

A U.S. House of Representatives committee will hold a field hearing March 3 in Raleigh to examine the RDU weather radar system — a system that wasn't working when a tornado claimed four lives ripped through Raleigh in November.

The House Science, Space and

Technology Committee will assess the RDU radar system's ability to issue timely warnings, said Edith Wooten, press representative for Rep. Tim Valentine, D-N.C.

The system, though inoperative for eight days at the time of the November tornado, has been called into question by scientists who say it may not have been able to provide adequate warning even if it had been working.

The radar's ability to detect a tornado under circumstances similar to last year's is very doubtful, said

Robert Muller, RDU's chief meteorologist. He said that was because the tornado touched down in an area within RDU's "ground clutter" — a ground level area within about a 10-mile radius where signals tend to be cluttered by buildings and local business.

Charles Anderson, N.C. State professor of meteorology, agreed the RDU system wouldn't have been sufficient.

"The type of radar we have would not have seen that (tornado forming)," he said.

A tornado should be sighted before ground clutter becomes a factor, he said.

The House committee will also evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of the National Weather Service, which should have picked up the slack for the inoperative RDU system in November.

"RDU had no reason to believe anything was wrong because they had received no warning from (National Weather Service headquarters in) Kansas City," said Anderson, who will testify at the hearing. "It surprised

everyone. There was no watch issued and no warning issued."

The tornado claimed four lives and injured 157 others as it tore through nine North Carolina counties, damaging at least \$100 million in houses and businesses.

Next month's hearing will also look into what new technology can help prevent another disaster like the one

that hit Raleigh, but Anderson said he didn't think technology was the critical issue.

"The problem is not the technology. The problem is the infrastructure of the various agencies that work together to put out a warning," he said. "Had everyone been on his toes, they would have known (a tornado was forming)."

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Union Station a success

By JAMES COBLIN
Staff Writer

The Union Station, a new snack bar in the Student Union, has proved a popular addition to Carolina Dining Services since its Jan. 16 opening, said Bill Dux, Carolina Dining Services director.

"It has been well-received by students and the campus in general," Dux said.

Patrons of the facility seem pleased with the hours, production line and location, Dux said. These factors were important in determining success, he said.

The Union Station is not making a profit at the moment because initial purchases are still being made, but it definitely will in the future if business continues as it has in the past six weeks, Dux said.

The Union Station's business varies, but averages about 1,600 to 2,000 customers a day, Dux said.

Wednesday is the busiest day, but Tuesday and Thursday also bring in large crowds, said Gina Ferrington, a cashier at the Union Station.

There have only been minor changes in the Union Station since it opened, Dux said. A new ice machine needs to be purchased to handle the volume of purchases. Sales of baked goods have also been high. A new oven will be purchased to meet customer demand, he said.

"All of these changes are good because it shows the volume of sales," Dux said.

There are some problems with shoplifting, Ferrington said. People come in the side doors when the facility is crowded and leave without paying. "When there is a big crowd I can't get up and do anything," she said. "I have to just watch them walk out."

There are plans to install turnstiles to prevent shoplifting, Dux said. Losses from shoplifting seem to be no greater than those of other stores on campus, he said.

Union Station is doing well now, but Dux said he is concerned about business when the campus slows down at times like summer sessions. Competition from similar facilities around campus, like the Pit Stop, and volume of customers will determine whether the Union Station stays open during these times, he said.

"It would be nice to have a place open where students can still use their meal cards," Dux said.

Union Station employs more students than any other Carolina Dining Services operation on campus except for the catering division.

The store also brings more people into the Student Union, said Archie Copeland, Student Union director.

Soviets from page 1

Bondarenko said she never had doubts about the treatment the group would receive from Americans, and said she learned all about the country as a girl by reading American authors, especially Mark Twain.

The structures of UNC and Rostov State differ greatly because most Soviet universities are located within the cities, and each department is in a different district of the city, she said.

Most of the Soviet students speak broken English, but for those few who do not speak the language, there are many UNC graduate students who can translate, said Marjorie Qualey, chairwoman of the incoming committee of the exchange program.

"(The language barrier) is a small problem, but not an impossible obstacle," she said.

International studies professor Richard Ulin, the program faculty adviser, said the Soviet visit will not involve academic activity, but the formal and informal intellectual exchange between students and hosts will be intense.

Similar exchanges of students may eventually occur annually, and a sister university relationship between UNC and Rostov State is a goal for the future, he said.

"This is one small way in which we at the University and the town of Chapel Hill can make our contribution to bringing about a better world," Ulin said.

Chapel Hill Mayor Jonathan Howes addressed the group of Soviets and said the town of Chapel Hill would also strive to establish Chapel Hill and Rostov-on-Don as sister cities.

"We see your visit here as a step to securing that bond between our two communities," he said.

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