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UNH Weather Station Posts Up-to-the-Minute Data on Web Site

By [Michelle Gregoire](#)
UNH News Bureau

DURHAM, N.H. -- If you live or work in Durham and you like to know the wind direction before you set out on your daily run, you can find up-to-the-minute information at the UNH Weather Station web site www.weather.unh.edu. It's nothing fancy -- no clever graphic images or scrolling frames -- just real-time data for today and yesterday.

Barry Keim, state climatologist and associate professor of geography, maintains the site because he needs to know current weather conditions. Although Durham has had an official National Weather Service site for more than a century, Keim said, "The problem with that data is I can't get access to it until the next month. I had a need to get the data in real time."

He is frequently contacted by media for comments on storm conditions and climate trends. During the cold snap in January, he said, "I had a lot of calls for wind chill. That came in very handy."

About three years ago, Jill Schoof, a former professor of engineering technology, and one of her students, Stuart Kenly, built the weather station on the roof of Morse Hall. Kenly, who has since graduated, did much of the programming. "Without his expertise, I would have been a total loss on this project," said Keim.

The cost to construct the weather station came in under \$6,000. "Some of the instrumentation is relatively old," said Keim.

There is an anemometer, which measures wind speed; a weather vane, which indicates wind direction; and, of course, a thermometer. A mathematical formula is used to calculate and report the wind-chill factor.

There is also a heated precipitation gauge, which melts the snow it collects and records the amount as a "liquid

equivalent."

And, for those mysteries only a climatologist is likely to understand, the amount of "photosynthetically active radiation" is also recorded.

It has taken Keim about a year to work out the bugs in the reporting system. Now it is stable enough to post the data on the web. Still, it has limitations. "Right now it's just a real-time system," with no archived data except for that of the day before, he said.

How many people use the site? "Every now and then the system would crash, and that's how I know how many people have access to it." About half a dozen people would call him to let him know the data was not current.

"A lot of the people who really follow it closely are exercise enthusiasts," Keim said, citing a man who rides a bicycle to work and checks the wind direction and wind speed in order to estimate his time of arrival.

Although his little weather station is humble, it has attracted attention from far-away places. It is linked to the UNH home page and hits have been noted "from all over the country," Keim said.

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