

## **WKAR PUBLIC MEDIA • COMMUNICATIONS**

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Gary Blievernicht, WKAR Technical Services Manager, is available for interview and additional background information. Contact Julie Sochay to arrange.

PHOTO: The new WKAR-TV antenna atop the 1000-foot broadcast tower near Okemos. Credit: Amanda Pinckney/WKAR-MSU. High resolution image available on request.

### **WKAR-TV is first area station to make FCC-required move**

*Antenna TV Viewers Must Rescan  
WKAR is first Michigan station, first PBS station nationwide, to move to new frequency*

**EAST LANSING, MI; June 5, 2018** -- WKAR Public Media announced today that WKAR-TV is now broadcasting on a new frequency, as required by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). Viewers who receive television free, over the air using an antenna, need to rescan their TV tuners to continue watching the PBS-affiliated station from Michigan State University.

WKAR is the first station in Michigan, and the first public broadcasting station in the country, to begin broadcasting on their new assigned frequency. The station made the update Tuesday, May 29, at 7 a.m., broadcasting at low power to a reduced coverage area. The station went to full power, reaching its full coverage area as established by the FCC, on Friday, June 1, at 12:50 p.m.

WSYM and WLAJ will be making similar changes in phases over the next two years.

The frequency reassignments are part of the FCC's "repack" project to clear space in the broadcast spectrum for wireless broadband services and new digital TV technologies.

In 2016, the FCC offered TV stations across the country a chance to make potentially hundreds of millions of dollars by going off the air and giving up their TV license to the FCC Spectrum Auction.

Some stations in Michigan entered the auction, were sold, and are now off the air. WKAR at Michigan State University chose not to participate in the auction and will be staying on the air to continue serving Michigan's capital region.

For WKAR and nearly 1,000 stations across the country, staying on the air now means moving to new frequencies assigned by the FCC in the repack project.

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An estimated 15% of households in mid-Michigan receive television free, over the air, via antenna. Viewers in those households must rescan their TV tuners now to continue to receive WKAR, and will need to do so periodically over the next two years as other local stations move to new their new broadcast frequencies.

No new devices, equipment or services are needed to continue receiving the local stations. Antenna TV viewers must simply go into their tuner channel settings and rescan to locate stations after each makes their assigned change. After rescanning, WKAR TV will continue to appear at channels 23.1, 23.2, 23.3, and 23.4.

For WKAR to make the move, the station had to replace the main TV broadcast antenna, a 20-year-old transmitter, the transmission line to the antenna, and an auxiliary antenna.

It's a \$2 million project for WKAR, paid for almost entirely by the proceeds of the recent FCC Spectrum Auction.

Work at the station's broadcast tower began April 20. Since then, WKAR TV and 90.5 FM and 105.1 FM had been broadcasting at substantially reduced power as crews worked on the transmitter and antenna. In recent weeks, there were extended periods when the stations were off the air entirely for crew safety when working near high-energy components. FM broadcasts were affected by the work because the TV and FM broadcast antennas are on the same tower.

Weather concerns throughout the project caused delays well past the original project completion target date of May 1, creating frustration for viewers and listeners missing their favorite shows.

"We understand the frustration," said Susi Elkins, WKAR director of broadcasting and general manager. "We know how much our viewers and listeners value our unique programming. Our team and the tower crew did an amazing job working around the challenges presented by the weather delays, and doing everything possible to return WKAR to the air at full power, on our new frequency, without compromising crew safety."

"Crew safety is our top concern through a project like this," said Gary Blievernicht, WKAR technical services manager. The work is inherently dangerous, including the very critical steps of installing rigging equipment at the top of the 1,000-foot tower; removing the old antenna from its perch there; and then raising and installing the new antenna. Each antenna is about 40 feet high, and weighs nearly 2.5 tons.

"The work is done by a small, expert crew that specializes in tower work like this, involving climbing and rigging, and maneuvering very heavy objects at very great heights," said Blievernicht. "This work cannot be done in wind, rain or other adverse weather."

The WKAR project was completed with no safety incidents. Similar projects at other stations have not been so fortunate.

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On April 19, 2018, the television tower for KOZK Ozarks Public Television at Missouri State University collapsed during work to prepare for that station's frequency reassignment. A six-person crew was working on the tower at the time. One worker was killed and three injured.

On Sept. 27, 2017, three workers were killed when they fell from scaffolding atop a 1,040 foot transmitter tower serving two commercial TV stations in Miami Gardens, Florida. The work there was also being done as part of the FCC frequency reassignment.

See these related articles:

- <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation-now/2018/04/19/tv-tower-collapse-missouri-leaves-1-worker-dead-several-injured-officials-say/534752002/>
- <http://miami.cbslocal.com/2017/09/27/miami-gardens-tower-collapse/>
- <https://www.nbcmiami.com/news/local/OSHA-Cites-TV-Tower-Company-Whose-3-Employees-Were-Killed-in-Miami-Gardens-Scaffolding-Collapse-478088733.html>

To learn more about the FCC repack, visit the National Association of Broadcasters website at [tvanswers.org](http://tvanswers.org).

Updates and more info about the WKAR-TV project are at [wkar.org](http://wkar.org).

### **About WKAR Public Media**

WKAR Public Media is the Michigan capital region source for award-winning original television and radio, and the best from PBS and NPR. WKAR is part of Michigan State University College of Communication Arts & Sciences and includes WKAR TV, WKAR Radio, [wkar.org](http://wkar.org), WKAR Radio Reading Service, WKAR Family, and WKAR Ready to Learn.

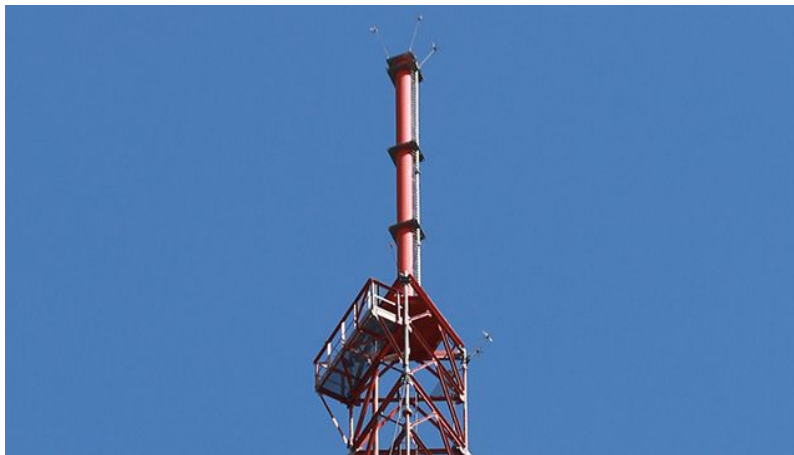


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