

HOW TO LISTEN TO BLUEGRASS COUNTRY DURING THE WAMU ANTENNA RENOVATION PROJECT

WAMU-FM, the host station to Bluegrass Country, is making improvements to its coverage area and the consistency of the FM broadcast signal. Renovations to the WAMU tower began in mid-October 2019, with a target completion date of mid-February 2020.

From January 6 through mid-February, technicians will renovate and install a new antenna on WAMU's 419-foot tower on American University's campus. When work is complete, WAMU's broadcast signal will reach approximately 400,000 more people, particularly in the suburbs of northern Virginia and parts of Maryland. Existing and new listeners experience better reception and less interference.

During the antenna installation period, WAMU will operate from its backup site in Arlington, Virginia. We anticipate continuing to serve the majority of our coverage area with a signal that is similar to what is received today. Audiences listening via smart speaker or online stream will be completely unaffected. We anticipate coverage to be similar to normal for those who listen to Bluegrass Country during their commute by car. In-home listening stands to be affected the most, as there could be some short-term impact primarily in pockets of the outermost edge of our core listening area. WAMU anticipates the signal received throughout the region to be substantially stronger than ever once this work is complete.

Frequently Asked Questions

How can I listen to Bluegrass Country while the preparation work and tower project is underway?

If you are listening indoors on an HD radio and you are experiencing signal interruptions, try moving the radio to be directly in front of a window and extend the antenna. If it is a model that plugs into a wall, then make sure the power cord is fully extended and not coiled up. The power cord often doubles as the antenna. If your radio is missing its antenna and you listen in the northwest DC area where our signal is usually strongest, your radio may have difficulty picking up our signal. Connect an antenna or consider adopting a new radio.

Other options to listen to Bluegrass Country:

- Stream Bluegrass Country live from bluegrasscountry.org using a computer or smartphone. Click on the "LISTEN" button.
- Stream Bluegrass Country using our free smartphone app, available for iPhones or Android phones.
- Listen using a smart speaker device, like Google Home or Amazon Alexa. With Amazon Alexa, say "Alexa, play Bluegrass Country Radio." On Google Home, say "OK Google, play Bluegrass Country."

Check the [How to Listen](#) section of the website for more information.

I can hear the station signal just fine. Why is WAMU doing this?

The ability for people in the Washington, DC area to hear WAMU and Bluegrass Country varies widely. Some listeners get a perfect signal, some experience static, and some people who should be able to hear the station get no signal at all. The new antenna will broadcast a clearer signal to current listeners, and it will allow our signal to reach 400,000 more people within our licensed broadcast area.

Why is WAMU doing the repair work now?

Technology, security and efficiency have improved over the years. The work at the tower will bring our signal into the 21st century and ensure reliable transmission of our broadcast. In addition, scheduling this project amid a record level of tower activity in the broadcast industry was incredibly complicated. Because of changes mandated by the FCC, thousands of broadcast towers across the nation are undergoing upgrades to accommodate the increasing appetite for wireless bandwidth to support smartphones and other new wireless devices. All tower companies and antenna manufacturers are working overtime to deliver on this demand, creating intense competition for resources. Due to the record level of tower activity in the industry, this was the only window in which WAMU was able to secure the resources necessary to complete this project.

When will the work start and when will it be completed?

Work has already begun on the tower. The existing WAMU antenna will be replaced in January 2020, which will be when we shift to our backup tower in Arlington for the duration of the project. We estimate completion in mid-February.

Will I hear a difference in the signal after the work is complete?

If you already had a great signal, probably not. But if you found the signal hard to find or fuzzy you will likely have a much better listening experience after the work is complete.

Where will you be transmitting from while this work is underway?

A broadcast tower in Arlington, Virginia.

What areas of the region will be impacted?

Listeners who stream or use smart speakers to access Bluegrass Country will not be affected. Because we will be broadcasting from a tower in Virginia instead of our tower in northwest DC, the change could impact pockets at the outermost edge of our core listening area and those who live closest to our tower on American University's campus whose radios may have been accustomed to receiving a very strong signal. Others living close to the backup tower in Arlington will actually experience improved reception. Again, we expect the experience for listeners in the DC region to be largely similar to our normal signal, with impact predominately isolated to pockets of our fringe signal area located outside of our core listening area.