



Naval Air Station Whidbey Island

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NEWS

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Clearing the Air about the Navy's Electronic Warfare Range

I'd like to take this opportunity to dispel misconceptions about the Navy's planned Pacific Northwest Electronic Warfare (EW) Range.

The Navy intends to use electronic emitters to improve aircrew training for aviators from electronic warfare squadrons based at Naval Air Station (NAS) Whidbey Island. These emitters send a radar or communications signal that the aircraft will then detect and process. Training with the emitters will enable aircrews to detect and identify the kind of electronic signals they might encounter flying in hostile territory. The training will not involve weapons.

A fixed electronic emitter would be installed on Navy property at Pacific Beach and as many as three mobile emitter vans would set up occasionally in remote, unpopulated U.S. Forest Service lands in the Olympic, Okanogan and Roosevelt military operating areas.

The emitters, which are at least 14 feet above the ground, send directional electronic signals skyward, toward the Pacific Ocean. Set up this way, the mobile emitters pose no threat to people or animals on the ground. Risk to animals or humans would only occur if they are in the direct path of the signal, above the emitter and within 100 feet, for an extended period of time. As an added safety measure, the Navy requires that crews shut down the emitters if a person or animal is within 100 feet of these vans when the systems are in use.

The phrase "electromagnetic radiation" has been used to describe the emitters' output. Each mobile van will have two types of transmitters. The power output of one of those emitters is similar to microwave emitters that are used by some television or sporting event vans to broadcast signals to their parent stations. The other emitter is comparable to marine radar used on residential boats. These transmitters operate in frequencies similar to those used for satellite communications, some Wi-Fi devices, cordless phones, Bluetooth devices and weather radar systems.

This type of instrumented electronic warfare training is already conducted by NAS Whidbey Island aviators in a simulated manner. While the Navy uses simulators in many kinds of training, all simulators have limitations. Currently, electronic attack aircraft crews home-based at NAS

Whidbey Island must commute 400 miles to Mountain Home Air Force Base in Idaho to conduct this required, realistic training.

Conducting electronic warfare training near NAS Whidbey Island has long been a priority for the Navy. As specific information and technology for this aerial training became available, the Navy prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA), which included cooperation with several tribes and other government agencies in compliance the National Environmental Policy Act. The Navy completed an EA in August 2014, and issued a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI). See <http://go.usa.gov/kQ6e> for additional information. The Navy notified the public about the Environmental Assessment and received no public comments prior to the August 15 deadline.

To reiterate, training conducted on the Pacific Northwest Electronic Warfare Range will not harm people or animals.

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Commanding Officer
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