Study: New radar system cut tornado deaths

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A study finds that the number of tornado casualties in the United States has fallen by half since a network of Doppler weather radar was installed 10 years ago.

The report was published in the June issue of Weather and Forecasting, the journal of the American Meteorological Society.

Kevin Simmons of Austin College in Sherman, Texas, and Daniel Sutter of the University of Oklahoma examined tornadoes reported in the contiguous United States between 1986 and 1999. They used the date that the WSR-88D radar was installed at each National Weather Service Forecast Office to divide the tornadoes into two sets.

The researchers found that after the radar was installed the number of tornado warnings doubled and the lead time increased from an average of 5.3 to 9.5 minutes.

Simmons and Sutter found that the number of fatalities and injuries after the radar was installed was 40 to 45 percent lower than expected.

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