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Huge Metal Ears Catch Radio Signals Coming from the Sun

Bureau of Standards uses these 25-foot radiotelescopes to study ultra-short-wave radio "noise" from outer space. The reflectors automatically follow the sun across the sky. Incoming signals are picked up by curved wire mesh, focused onto a central antenna, and carried to a recording device.

Radio "broadcasts" from the sun are more powerful when sunspots are numerous. The Bureau forecasts disturbances of radio transmission resulting from sunspots, flare-ups of gas, and other activities on the sun. Such predictions permit radio transmitters to be switched to other frequencies to keep communications open.

These units, weighing about 12 tons apiece, are set up near Sterling, Virginia.

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