

Heavy Ice Covering KMXT Tower May Have Caused Outage

Tuesday, 08 January 2013

Brianna Gibbs/KMXT

Sometime before noon on Sunday local listeners started hearing the signal dropping out. The source of the problem was high atop Pillar Mountain at the site of KMXT's transmitter. Inclement weather and looming darkness prevented a trip to investigate the problem until early yesterday afternoon.

Around 1 p.m. yesterday KMXT's volunteer engineer, Joe Stevens, made the trek up the mountain with Willy Bethea, the operations and programming manager for the station. The two were aided by Nick Kesling of Island Trails Network, who volunteered his time and drove the duo up in a tracked vehicle.

Stevens said the microwave antenna that provides the studio to transmitter link was covered in ice, which may or may not have been the problem, but he switched the signal to the spare antenna, fixing the problem. Stevens said exactly what was causing the primary antenna to act up is still unknown. He said the icy tower made it too risky to climb up and actually inspect the antenna.

KMXT's signal to Saint Paul Island and the translators in the Kodiak Island villages remained unaffected by the faulty antenna, because those signals are sent straight from the station's studio on Borough Hill. Stevens said the same was true for online streaming, which feeds directly to the internet at the station. During the outage, internet listening on KMXT.org skyrocketed.