



# NATIONAL RADIO ASTRONOMY OBSERVATORY

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## PRESS RELEASE

At about 9:43 p.m., Tuesday, November 15, the 300-foot diameter radio telescope in Green Bank, West Virginia collapsed. It is a total loss. The telescope, built in 1962, was a facility of the National Radio Astronomy Observatory, operated for the National Science Foundation by Associated Universities, Inc. Fortunately no one was injured in the collapse.

The radio telescope was one of the most powerful in the world. It was the largest single telescope in the U.S. with the capability to survey the whole northern sky. Over the last 25 years more than 1000 astronomers and research students from U.S. universities used it to study quasars, galaxies, pulsars, stars, the sun, and planets. The most complete and detailed surveys of cosmic radio sources available to astronomers were made by the 300-foot telescope. The discovery, with the 300-foot, of the rapidly pulsating radio source in the Crab nebula, the remnant of the star which exploded to create the spectacular nebula, unlocked the puzzle of the pulsars. The loss of the 300-foot telescope leaves a major gap in the capability to probe deep space.

A study is underway to determine the cause of the collapse. Published stories (AP) have confused the design of the 300-foot telescope with the design of its sister instrument, the 140-foot radio telescope also located at Green Bank, WV, with the implication that one design was used for both telescopes and that that design was deficient for the larger telescope. This is false. The 300-foot and 140-foot radio telescopes are distinct instruments, of very different design and construction, and meant to serve different astronomical needs. The 140-foot telescope continues its operation uninterrupted as one of the premier research tools of radio astronomy.

The study team, appointed jointly by Associated Universities, Inc. and the National Science Foundation, consists of Mr. R. M. Matyas (Vice President emeritus, Cornell University), Mr. E. Cohen (Managing Partner, Ammann & Whitney Consulting Engineers), Dr. G. F. Mechlin (Vice President R&D, Westinghouse, ret.), Mr. R. Williams (House of Representatives Committee on Science, Space, and Technology), Dr. K. J. Johnston (Naval Research Laboratory), and Dr. L. Oster (National Science Foundation) participate as official observers. They hope to report their preliminary findings on the cause of the collapse in February.

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