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## NOAA reports potential coverage risk for U.S. weather data

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According to a report from the Department of Commerce's Inspector General, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) weather satellites could be vulnerable for the next 29 months due to construction delays.

The Geostationary Operational Environmental Satellite-R (GOES-R) was scheduled to replace the GOES 15 satellite in October 2016, but late delivery of components during construction pushed back the launch date to March 2016. Once the satellite has launched, NOAA requires it to orbit for twelve months before becoming operational to ensure all instrumentation works correctly. In the interim, the GOES program will have only aging satellites to function as backups in case something goes wrong. NOAA's current fleet of weather satellites consists of two weather-monitoring satellites and two backup satellites. In 2012 backup satellites were used to ensure continuity of data when one of the primary satellites malfunctioned.

The report criticizes the cost of the GOES program, saying that not including experienced engineers on the project resulted in increased costs and delays.

Sources: E&E News, NOAA

Updated: July 6, 2015

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