

OUTDOORS WITH THE SCIENTIST

Tuesday, February 5, 1929

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

SPEAKING TIME: 10 minutes.

ANNOUNCEMENT: Those daily weather forecasts that you read in the papers or on the bulletin board in the post office! Do you use them? You'd be surprised at the uses SOME folks make of weather forecasts and the weather forecasters. But, so that the suspense won't be painful, the Weather Man's going to tell you all about it today. His talk comes as this week's OUTDOORS WITH THE SCIENTIST radio talk, prepared by specialists in the United States Department of Agriculture for the radio audience of Station _____.

---ooOoo---

One day as I was working in my office, the telephone rang and a demure voice asked---

"Can you tell me what the weather will be on June 17?"

It was over 4 months before June 17 and I knew that I could not predict accurately at such long range. But the timid voice sounded so eager, so anxious. So putting 2 and 2 together, I decided it was a young girl planning the Big Event.

"Is it a wedding?" I asked, and the voice came back through the telephone, surprised...

"Why, how did you know?"

I could say nothing except that the traditional little bird told me. And then, knowing from experience that June was usually fair in that particular locality, I took a chance and promised her the fairest and brightest of June days.

"Oh, thank you SO much. Good-bye," said the voice.

Luckily, the young girl got her wish--- it WAS a beautiful day.

That's only 1 sample of the questions we weather men are asked. And, if you want to know how popular a weather man is, just listen to some of the other questions people ask him---

"Shall I wear my best dress down town today?"

"Shall I need an umbrella?"

"Will it be safe to take the baby out for an airing this afternoon?"

"Will my clothes dry nicely tomorrow?"

Such questions are all in the day's work of a weather man. The majority, however, deal mainly with the business interests of the community. Nevertheless, weather men are often asked to fix a date for a wedding far in advance, as I was. At Atlanta, Georgia, the observer generally recommends October 12 because it so happens that it hasn't rained there on October 12 for 25 years, but sooner or later someone is going to be disappointed.

As a weather man, I am personally grateful to the public for its trust and patronage. While some folks expect us to give them more than is humanly possible, the majority of the questions are timely and sensible and based on the work we are doing and the service the Weather Bureau aims to give the public. Answering questions, of course, is merely a detail in the day's work. The daily forecast and special warnings service of the Weather Bureau is the most widely known of all the Bureau's varied and vivid activities. These daily forecasts are widely distributed through many channels, including the newspapers, radio stations, telephone companies, and the Bureau's own system of weather maps, bulletins, forecast cards, whistle signals, and flag displays.

It would be impossible to tell you ALL the ways in which weather forecasts are used. But I'm going to take a few minutes to give you some of the more important uses to which these forecast advises are put. The forecasts and special warnings of the Weather Bureau--

Guide the shipping and pleasure craft of our lakes and coasts, and, by wireless, warn the sailor far out at sea of destructive storms coming his way.

Cause fruit growers to heat the apple orchards of Washington and Oregon--- the peach orchards of Colorado and Utah--- the orange groves of California and Florida--- to flood the cranberry marshes of Oregon, Wisconsin, Massachusetts, and New Jersey. The warnings guide gardeners in how to protect the truck crops that supply our larger cities, when frost danger threatens.

They tell growers the right time to harvest our tobacco, sugar, and grape crops, in advance of freezing temperature. They tell the orchardist when to spray his apple orchards for the prevention of scab and blotch. They protect our National Forests by putting the Ranger on his guard against the dangerous FIRE WINDS of the Western mountain slopes.

They govern the transportation of perishable fruits, vegetables, eggs, inks and other liquids, safely to market, and the unloading of these products under safe temperature conditions. They delay the unloading of livestock, or hasten the service of stock trains, when severe weather is threatened.

These weather forecasts have punch. They bring about the closing of greenhouses--- increase activity in community heating plants--- tell men when to protect fire plugs--- when to stop or resume concrete work--- and when to salt switches and rail intersections in advance of cold waves.

Up in the Northwest, warnings herald the coming of BELOW-ZERO weather, and the flour mills are opened up to freeze out the Mediterranean moth, an important and destructive pest.

Down in sunny California, the warnings govern the drying of the raisin crop in rainless periods. They announce fair weather for the opportune cutting, curing, and baling of alfalfa in all States where this wonderful hay is grown. They tell farmers the time to gather their crop of broom corn, thus giving the growers a chance to get the best quality crop and the highest prices.

Weather warnings set the working day of ice harvesters in our central and northern lakes--- assist in the collecting and boiling of the sap in the maple sugar sections of Vermont--- and have been known to decide the size of the fisherman's net for the next day's fishing.

They set the route of the doctor's patient to a distant point of comfort--- cause dentists to save dark days for plate work and the bright days for his appointments--- put the teacher on guard against days when students behave in mischievous ways--- and, in connection with judicious advertising, serve to increase the size of the shrewd minister's congregation.

Weather warnings are watched to determine the best time to shear sheep on the Western ranges. They warn stockmen when to hurry their stock, out on the range, to shelter before the blizzard, the NORTHER, or the heavy snow storm strikes. They daily guide millions of automobiles over our national highways and roads.

They play important parts in court actions. Take a case or 2, for illustration---

Some years ago, a man named Nick Marzen, a butcher, killed a man for his money. Then he hid the body of the murdered man in a barn. It was Winter. The State produced the weather records to show that the temperature during the period was often very low and cold enough to preserve the body from decomposition. Nick Marzen was found guilty and given a life sentence.

Another illustration---

Several years ago, a man sued the city of Chicago for damage to goods in his basement. He claimed that the street was defective and let the water from a heavy rainfall accumulate until it finally ran down into his basement. Records showed that for more than a week before the date of the alleged damage, there had been no rain or snow. Furthermore, the temperature had been far below zero. No water could have fallen on the street. Even if it had, it would have frozen quickly. The judge instructed the jury to give a verdict in favor of the city.

And a still more interesting case of how weather records serve in court actions---

Some years back, one Captain George Wellington Streeter, laid claim to property on the northside lake front of Chicago. The property is worth more than \$5,000,000. Well, the Captain declared that he was shipwrecked on a stormy July 10, 1886, and that his boat, the REUTAN, had been tossed up on a sandbar at the foot of Oak Street, Chicago. In time, the watery gap between the island of sand

and the mainland filled with sand. Later, it extended to the north and south. The Captain laid claim to all this land, and named it the DISTRICT OF LAKE MICHIGAN. He insisted that it was no part of Illinois, but a separate commonwealth under the jurisdiction of the United States. But, according to the weather records produced for that July day in 1886, there was no storm prevailing. The day was fine, with a gentle OFF-SHORE westerly wind. The Captain lost his case. He died just a few years ago.

In personal injury suits against streetcar or railroad companies, all sorts of questions are asked about the weather. The attorneys may want to show that rain was falling, or had fallen a short time before the accident, thus making the rail slippery and preventing the motorman or engineer from stopping his car or train soon enough to avoid collision or other accident. Or else that the streets were icy, and the plaintiff fell on the ice in the street after alighting from the car. Weather records are accurate for many days and years back. They are brought out for proof or evidence in many such cases.

A prominent lawyer recently said that during the past 20 years he had repeatedly used the evidence of the weather records and that they had been important factors in winning at least 50 cases for him.

Weather is an important factor in trials--- but it's equally important in nearly all life's activities. There's hardly a single act in the drama of life in which weather doesn't play a leading part.

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ANNOUNCEMENT: You have just heard the latest weather chat by one of Uncle Sam's weather observers. Another talk on weather will be broadcast by Station _____ in the near future. Watch for it.

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National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

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