

CHATS WITH THE WEATHER MAN

RELEASE Friday, July 8, 1932

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Speaking Time: 10 Minutes

ANNOUNCEMENT: And now for our chat with the weather man. The experts of the United States Weather Bureau have been telling our old friend, Ob. Server, how folks act where the weather sometimes rises to be a much livelier topic than ordinary.

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Mr. I. R. Tannehill, of the Weather Bureau, tells me that when a hurricane is coming toward our Southeastern and Gulf coasts the crowds around Weather Bureau offices and bulletin boards look like those during the World Series base-ball games, or the crowds getting the returns from a hotly-contested election.

Folks literally come to the Weather Bureau offices in the threatened area by thousands, Mr. Tannehill says, and the telephone calls run to a hundred thousand and oftentimes more. Many people keep maps on which they chart the path of storm as it comes on. As the hurricane gets nearer and nearer, the crowds about the bulletin boards get bigger and bigger.

Railroad and steamship and other business interests keep men at the Weather Bureau offices to keep them advised as to the progress and path of the on-coming hurricane.

You see, hurricanes are big, slow-moving storms. That fact, coupled with the fact that the Weather Bureau gets reports by radio from vessels at sea and from a number of stations scattered through the West Indies, makes it possible for the forecasters to issue warnings from two to ten days before the hurricane hits our coast. Thousands of lives and millions of dollars worth of property have been saved by those warnings. In fact, Mr. Tannehill says, the loss is now often greater at interior points than on the coast, because the people in the more exposed places have become hurricane-wise.

Knowing the hurricane is coming for days ahead, folks along the coast generally have plenty of time to get themselves and their goods and chattels to places of safety. Even when a hurricane appears suddenly and moves unusually fast for a hurricane, there are hours after the warning is received to protect property and seek a place of safety.

From Cape Hatteras along the South Atlantic and Gulf Coasts to Brownsville, Texas, the Weather Bureau maintains more than one hundred display stations. Those stations display regular storm warnings, as well as the com-

paratively rare hurricane signals. Two red flags with black centers flown one above the other is the hurricane signal by day, and three lanterns, one white between two red, hung one above the other, is the hurricane signal by night.

Mr. Tannehill was telling me of a little summer colony community of ninety frail frame houses in an exposed locality, which found itself in the path of a hurricane on comparatively short notice. As soon as he got the notice, the displayman stationed nearby raised the hurricane flag-signal over his motor-cycle and did a Paul Revere to that Colony.

The people in those frail houses responded promptly. They realized that under such circumstances the correct form of hurricane etiquette was expressed by Lady Macbeth, when she said, "Stand not upon the order of your going, but go at once." Eighty-eight of those ninety houses were completely destroyed by the hurricane. But the inhabitants had all been saved; all but two old colored people, who refused to heed the signal.

The sending of hurricane Paul Reveres by motor cycle and automobile into isolated communities is the plan followed in many cases. Warnings are also flashed to those in danger by telegraph, telephone, and radio. Newspapers publish the warning. Each Weather Bureau office maintains a list of those to be warned. In towns and cities, police and fire departments aid in spreading the news and, in many places, the chambers of commerce maintain standing committees to cooperate with the Weather Bureau in helping hurricane-proof their communities.

Steamship companies either keep boats in port, or go ahead but take advantage of the warnings broadcast by radio in directing their course, so as to minimize the danger.

Railroad companies often run special trains to carry folks and freight back from low sections to higher ground. That is especially necessary some places to avoid the so-called "tidal-wave" which Mr. Tannehill says is no tidal wave at all. The hurricane does pile up the waters of the ocean or the Gulf of Mexico in advance of its center, causing high tides in the bays, and inlets, and river mouths, and over the low coast country. But that rise of water is seldom sudden and overwhelming wall of water such as we usually think of as a tidal wave. The rise of water is usually gradual at first. It gets to mounting faster as the center of storm gets nearer, but there is always plenty of time for the inhabitants to move to higher ground if they heed the warning. In some small communities, trains carry practically every inhabitant away from his home to higher ground.

Other precautions taken are the boarding up of windows to keep out the wind; hustling merchandise in stores on low ground to the rooms above; removing objects from the tops of buildings when it looks as if they might be blown off and hurt somebody in the street below. When the storm gets violent the electric light is cut off to prevent electrocution by bare electric wires.

Another very important thing, folks along the southern coast country have learned and that is to build more sturdy houses, with stronger frames of heavier timber. Few houses built to withstand a hundred mile an hour wind are damaged by the average hurricane.

Livestock often presents a very troublesome problem, in a hurricane. Sometimes the damage is heavy. Mr. Tannehill mentioned one case on the coast, where the habit of cattle of running with the wind led to the loss of a herd of several hundred head. The wind changed suddenly and started blowing out to sea, and the dumb, driven brutes waded right out into the bay and were drowned. Because of the prompt precautions now taken, based on the radio report and hurricane warning system of the Weather Bureau, people along our South Atlantic and Gulf Coasts now feel much greater security from the threats of tropical storms. Not only that, but Mr. Tannehill says, the people in the interior are now beginning to take more serious heed of the Weather Bureau's hurricane warnings.

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ANNOUNCEMENT: Another chat with the weather man this time two weeks from today. These chats come to you through the cooperation of Station _____ with the United States Department of Agriculture of which the United States Weather Bureau is a part.

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

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July 23, 2010