

UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT  
OF AGRICULTURE

# Radio Service

OFFICE OF  
INFORMATION

CHATS WITH THE WEATHER MAN.

RELEASE Friday, November 25, 1938.

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Speaking Time: 10 Minutes.

OPENING ANNOUNCEMENT: Now for another chat with the Weather Man. Your old friend, Ob. Server, has been to the United States Weather Bureau, has talked with the scientists there, and is now going to tell you a few things between the lines of our daily weather forecast.

---ooOoo---

You read the daily weather forecast at a glance. Or you hear it in a brief moment at the radio.

It is a short, simple statement of what we may expect in the way of weather.

It may just say "Fair and warmer" or "Slightly-colder" as the case may be. But Mr. I. R. Tannehill, of the Forecast Division of the United States Weather Bureau, says that even such simple statements are often misinterpreted, because a lot of people don't understand when it is to be.

Those are not mere vague generalities, as some seem to think. If the forecast says "colder" or "warmer," it refers to a very definite time of the day. "Colder" means for instance that the temperature tomorrow evening at 8 o'clock sharp, Eastern Standard Time, will be lower than at 8 o'clock tonight.

And you will probably read that in your paper or hear it by radio this afternoon, say. In other words, in making that prediction the forecaster really forecasts two temperatures; what it will be at 8 o'clock tonight and roughly what the difference will be between that temperature and the temperature at 8 o'clock tomorrow night.

Forecasts are made twice a day. The forecast which ordinarily appears in the afternoon papers is based on a map drawn from observations taken in the morning. The forecast in the morning papers is that made from the observations taken at 8 o'clock, Eastern Standard Time, the night before. The morning forecast is for 36 hours in advance. The night forecast is for 48 hours in advance.

I say "Eastern Standard Time" because that is the Washington time. The observations are taken at practically the same moment in all parts of the country; but, of course, when it is 8 o'clock Eastern Standard Time, it is just 7 o'clock Central Time; and so on across the country.

On the Pacific Coast that means observations are taken about 5 o'clock in the morning. They have been taken, and charted, and the forecast made, and issued before most folks in the far west are out of bed in the morning.

It takes less than two hours from the time observers in all parts of the country read the instruments at their local stations until the forecast is made and issued from each of the five district forecast centers for each and every one of the States in the Union. In the eastern part of the country, where the observation time is 8 o'clock, that makes it 9:30 to 10:00 o'clock before the morning forecast is issued.

When you consider what's done in that less than two hours, Mr. Tannehill reminds me, you realize that is considerable of a feat. Our weather men are fast workers.

Maybe you will sit down with your newspaper this evening in a comfortable heated room. You will probably throw a glance, as most people do, to the top of the sheet, just to see what the weather will be tomorrow. You most likely won't even think of how the information was collected on which that forecast is based.

I'll admit that until Mr. Tannehill told me about it, I didn't realize that to get one scrap of that information, our westernmost observer, on far-away St. Paul's island in the bleak Bering Sea, got up at 1 o'clock this morning to make his observations. Those records were flashed through Alaska by radio, and put on the telegraph lines at Seattle and sent to the forecast centers throughout the country.

Yes, observations are taken in Hawaii, too. But if you will get your map out, you will find that little island in the Bering Sea is even further west than Hawaii.

And while these messages were coming from balmy Hawaii and Alaska and beyond, observations made at all the other stations scattered throughout this country were also being filed and flashed by telegraph to the district centers. Similar information was also coming from Canada and Mexico.

Those records were entered on a map -- just like one of those weather maps you've all seen. That was done this very morning, and every other morning, at the five district forecast centers, at Washington, New Orleans, Chicago, Denver, and San Francisco.

Then at each of those centers, a forecaster stepped up to the map of charted weather reports. For a few moments, he focused his years of experience and weather knowledge, on that map. Then he made his forecast, which was flashed out over the entire territory by radio and telegraph. And you picked it up by radio or in the paper.

The Washington forecaster made the prediction for all the States bordering the Atlantic and the States of Tennessee, Kentucky, Ohio, and West Virginia as well. The Chicago forecaster made the prediction for the western Lake States, and the upper Mississippi Valley and the Great Plains area. The New Orleans forecaster took care of the Southern plains and Gulf States. The Denver man foretold the condition for the Rocky Mountain Region, while the San Francisco center forecast for the Pacific Coast States.

But you may have noticed that the forecast you heard or read was for your State alone. Mr. Tannehill tells me that now, although the forecasts are actually made at five district forecast centers, a separate forecast is made for each and every State.

In fact, in some of the large States, where conditions warrant it, two separate forecasts are made for different sections of the State. New York, Pennsylvania, and Texas have separate forecasts made for their eastern and western parts.

From what Mr. Tannehill tells me, the United States Weather Bureau is constantly working to get more and more observations from a wider and wider territory on which to make more and more accurate the weather forecasts issued twice a day, for each State in the Union. And just think that whole continent-wide collection of reports and distribution of forecasts is all done in about two hours time.

--ooOoo--

CLOSING ANNOUNCEMENT: Two weeks from today, our old Ob. Server will be back with another of his chats with the weather man. Station \_\_\_\_\_ presents this feature in cooperation with the United States Department of Agriculture.

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# **National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**

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