

CHATS WITH THE WEATHER MAN

Friday, January 20, 1933

(For Broadcast Use Only)

Reading Time: 10 Minutes

ANNOUNCEMENT: And here's our old friend the Weather Man. He comes to you every two weeks at this time with interesting facts about the weather. Today he tells you how ships on the ocean, and airplanes in the air, and trains on the land, and the wheels of industry start and stop at the words of the weather forecaster.

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I imagine nearly every one of you looked at your paper or listened to the radio today to get the weather forecast.

Some of you may follow the weather reports out of curiosity—others out of mere habit. But I expect a far greater number of you get the weather forecast for some particular reason.

Perhaps you want to know whether to take an umbrella or wear overshoes.

Or, you may be planning an automobile trip. You want to know what kind of weather you will have.

Again, you may have a furnace in your house. You watch the weather forecasts for reports of a cold snap. If a cold snap is headed your way, you may want to get more coal or oil.

You doubtless follow the weather forecasts for frost warnings so you can cover up your flowers, and shrubs, and plants before a freeze.

I might go on and on citing ways you use the daily weather forecasts.

But I still have not touched on one of the main uses of the forecasting service. I have said nothing about how the weather forecasters serve industry and business.

Bankers consult the weather forecasts before making certain types of loans. Railroads and trucking companies rely on weather forecasts in scheduling shipments of perishable fruits and vegetables and livestock. Air lines depend on weather forecasts in dispatching their planes. Fruit growers use the weather forecasts in managing their orchards.

I got a pretty good idea of just how the weather forecasts help those and other kinds of business and industry from E. H. Bowie who heads the Weather Bureau office at San Francisco.

Bowie told first of the forecasting work on the Great Lakes.

I gathered that the shipping business on the Great Lakes is, in a sense, really the father of the present forecasting service.

The Great Lakes are the scene of frequent and violent storms. Those storms used to take a heavy toll of life and shipping. They swooped down on the Lake boats without warning and sent the boats and their crews and cargoes to the bottom before they could make port. The shippers naturally wanted to find some way to prevent those losses---some way to warn their boat captains of approaching storms. So, the shippers asked Congress to set up some kind of weather forecasting system. Congress passed a bill in 1869 to set up a weather service in the Army Signal Corps. Congress later put the weather service under the Department of Agriculture.

The captain who puts out into the Great Lakes today sails with a knowledge of the kind of weather he is likely to meet. Flags flying at the Lake ports warn him of storms before he sails. Wireless and radio reports warn him of storms that brew after he gets out upon the Lakes. The vast network of weather stations keeps him in close touch with weather conditions over the entire Great Lake region.

But, of course, the Weather Bureau's service to shipping isn't confined just to the Great Lakes. The forecasters also wireless their warnings of storms and reports on weather conditions to ships on the Atlantic and Pacific, and on southern waters. When the ship captain hears of a storm bearing down upon him, or of a bad sea, he may delay sailing, or change his course, to protect his passengers and crew, and his cargo.

From your knowledge of the sea, and from the many stories you've heard and read, you can readily see how important the weather forecast is to the ship on the ocean.

You also can see the importance of weather forecasts to aviation.

Pilots roaring their way through the clouds must know what kind of weather lies ahead. Will they run into a thunder storm or a high wind. Or will they strike sleet or snow? If they hear of bad flying along their route, the pilots---especially pilots on the passenger lines---head for a landing field. ---Or, if they are already on the ground, they delay their take-off. They can't afford to risk the lives of their passengers.

The pilots have the benefit of the general forecasts such as you read in your paper and hear over the radio. But pilots on the established airways now also get special aviation forecasts.

A great many airports on the established airways have Weather Bureau stations. The forecasters at the airport stations take the general 12-hour forecasts from the central forecasters and, with frequent reports from stations on and near the airways, make 4-hour short-range forecasts; that is, forecasts for a short stretch of country along the airways. Dispatchers at the airports use those short-range forecasts in directing the movements of the 'planes and pilots consult them before departing.

But, in addition to their services to shipping and aviation, I wonder if you realize what an important part the forecasters play in directing one other big kind of transportation. I refer to the railroads.

Of course, a train speeding along its solid bed of wood, stone, and steel isn't bothered much by the ordinary wind or rain. Only an occasional

big snow or flood is likely to give it much trouble. But the railroads are interested year in and year out in forecasts on temperature and the amount of moisture in the air. They need that information to protect their millions and millions of dollars worth of freight from freezing and from heat and moisture damage.

For instance, the railroads use weather forecasts in scheduling shipments of hogs and other livestock.

You may think of hogs as tough, hardy creatures that can stand almost any thing. But they're not. They are especially susceptible to heat. If you ship a car of hogs during a hot, scorching spell of July or August, you may open up the car at the end of its journey to find half of the hogs dead. So, naturally, the railroads hold up shipments of hogs if they get warning of a severe heat wave.

The railroads are equally interested in warnings of freezes. If they get a forecast of a cold snap, they may run cars of fruit, and other perishables into roundhouses until the weather warms up again. And, if they get a warning of a long period of cold weather, they may refuse to take shipments of certain perishable products.

Well, we've talked about weather forecasting for the seas, and lakes, and airways, and railroads. But we've said nothing about rivers.

The weather men also keep an eye on the rivers---they have what they call a "River and Flood Service." River and flood reports are highly useful to the great fleet of steamboats and other boats that chug up and down our river with their barges of oil, and lumber, and other products. The captains of those boats must know how deep the water is, and how much current they will find, from point to point along the river.

But, perhaps an even more important job of the River and Flood Service is to warn folks along the river bottoms about floods and spring freshets. Folks in the valleys must have time to save their property and livestock from the swirling flood waters, and, also, to save themselves.

A little advance information about the rains often saves property and money in still other ways.

For instance, Bowie told how the weather forecaster saved a considerable sum of money a few years ago to the city of San Francisco.

San Francisco was threatened with a water famine. The Chamber of Commerce met with the city engineers to consider emergency measures they might use to bring water to the city if rains didn't replenish the reservoirs. But, of course the city didn't want to spend a lot of money to get water if they saw any prospects of rain in the near future.

When would the winter rains begin? That was the big question.

The Chamber of Commerce and engineers sought an answer to their question from the office of the Weather Bureau. The weather men studied their weather maps. They saw a condition developing over the northeast Pacific that promised rain. The rain would hit California within 48 hours. They advised the city to wait at least 10 days before it undertook any emergency measures.

Well, the rains came in the predicted time and the city saved its money.

Bowie related another story of how the treasurer of a company in St. Louis used the weather forecasts to plan his sales program. The company had business in nearly every state in the Union. This enterprising business man knew weather conditions in the various states would influence crops. The condition of crops, in turn, influenced the buying power of folks in those states. So, he visited the Weather Bureau office at least once a week to get the seasonal trends of the weather. He used the weather reports and forecasts in deciding how much goods of this and that kind to put in stores in the various states, and also in deciding how much credit he would extend in various sections.

Those are just a few of the ways business and industry use the weather reports you hear and read from day to day. I will tell you of other uses for weather information in later talks.

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ANNOUNCEMENT: And so we conclude today's Chat With the Weather Man. The Weather Man will bring you another story from the United States Weather Bureau at this same time two weeks from today.

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

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12200 Kiln Court
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