

Report of the Chief of the Weather Bureau

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE,
WEATHER BUREAU,
Washington, D. C.

September 3, 1929

SIR:

I have the honor to submit herewith a report of the operations of the Weather Bureau during the fiscal year ended June 30, 1929.

Respectfully,

C. F. Mawin

Chief of Bureau.

Hon. Arthur M. Hyde,
Secretary of Agriculture.

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National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Report of the Chief of the Weather Bureau

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Conforming to the abridged plan recently followed, this report will briefly discuss only a few leading features in which the activities of the bureau made more striking progress or expansion.

AERONAUTICAL METEOROLOGY

The public is well acquainted with the rapid and wide-spread practical use of aircraft for mail, freight, and passenger transportation, and even private flying, including military training and manoeuvres. The law charges the Weather Bureau with giving weather information and forecasts to pilots through cooperation with the Department of Commerce.

It is highly important that all aviation interests understand just how the air commerce act works out in practice. A great many cities, large and small, have already set about developing what we may now call local airports, either privately owned and operated, or under municipal control. New cities are being added to the lists almost daily. These localities need and expect adequate weather service, and it is the policy of the bureau to supply the same as far as possible. Its appropriations, however, are always made to put into operation a definite program of work laid out several months in advance and for airways and airports designated by the Department of Commerce as official. Manifestly, the bureau has no special funds that can be diverted to outside activities. The case is further complicated by the utilization in the same metropolitan area of two or more airports which, in the meteorological sense, are closely contiguous. One of these is often the official airport, and sometimes questions of rivalry and competition are factors with which the Weather Bureau must deal in its desire to render its service equally and impartially to all.

Its basic policy is to station at each official airport a sufficient staff of trained personnel to give continuous weather advices to all pilots during the entire 24 hours of each day if the flying schedules so require, and previous plans and appropriations have provided therefor.

In those cases where extra service, especially at contiguous unofficial airports and those in cities at which regular Weather Bureau stations are not maintained, is desired, it is obviously impossible, without funds, to supply any service except that issued through the regular public channels of the press and scheduled broadcasts.

The bureau is always glad, however, to give consideration to special situations, and occasionally some arrangements can be made to meet peculiar situations. The cooperation of the transport and aviation interests is earnestly solicited by the bureau to realize as full and complete utilization of those official airports and the facilities as they are maintained by the Government, rather than to plan for great multiplication of places where nearly identical information is desired. Both night and day flying are now becoming more general, and the need for 24-hour service greatly increases the number of trained personnel required, as well as the costs. From the very nature of the situation it is difficult to render service as rapidly and widely as aviation itself advances.

It is gratifying to mention that substantial increases in appropriations were made by the last Congress to put into effect plans for an extended program of night and day service over the transcontinental airway from New York to San Francisco and Los Angeles. Within a zone of nearly 300 miles transverse width, weather observations will be made at intervals of every three hours. Carrying out the details of this plan belongs to the next fiscal year and will then be reported.

WEATHER REPORTS AT SEA

Mention was made in the previous annual report of the concerted international movement to add a systematic network of ocean stations by means of selected ships traversing the high seas. The principal maritime nations are obligated under this informal understanding to enlist selected ships, each of its own registry, to make at least two set observations daily while at sea and report to designated coast stations by radio. Such reports are added to the lists of stations included in the daily intercontinental and international exchanges of weather reports, thus aiding to fill in to a certain extent the wide gaps which have heretofore prevailed in weather maps over ocean expanses.

Approximately 50 ships are now making daily reports when actually at sea on the North Atlantic Ocean, alone. A lesser number are cooperating on the Pacific. These do not include a special group of coastwise ships and others traversing the Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean Sea, which report only during the hurricane season from June to November.

To secure a satisfactory widespread distribution of sea reports, it is obvious many ships must be enlisted since many are constantly in port.

FROST AND FIRE - WEATHER WARNINGS

Among the older and well-established services of the bureau must be mentioned that of frost warnings in aid of the citrus and horticultural interests. Great economic savings by the artificial heating of orchards have now been completely demonstrated to be possible, and plans for extending this activity to certain new localities during the next season are being made.

A similar statement can be made concerning the economic value of the fire-weather warning service of the bureau. This has been particularly well organized over the northern and western portions of the States and awaits funds to extend equal service to the south and east.

Following the national awakening to the economic challenge involved in the great floods of the Mississippi River, and the inauguration of great flood relief and protection work, the Weather Bureau, which is charged by law with the issue of flood warnings and the gaging and reporting of rivers, is planning a careful survey of its river and flood work and the refinement, as far as possible, of its forecasting system.