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UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT  
OF AGRICULTURE

# Radio Service

OFFICE OF  
INFORMATION

OUTDOORS WITH THE SCIENTIST.

RELEASE: Tuesday, October 16, 1928

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

READING TIME: 10 minutes.

ANNOUNCEMENT: Here's the story of the great 200-million-dollar hurricane that swept over the West Indies and up along the southeast coast of the Atlantic last month. And the story of how the U. S. Weather Bureau followed that storm, got the jump on it with warnings by telegram, thus saving great loss in lives and property. Today's Weather Chat comes as this week's OUTDOORS WITH THE SCIENTIST radio feature, prepared by the U. S. Department of Agriculture for broadcast by Station \_\_\_\_\_.

---ooOoo---

All night--- the night before I went to talk with the Weather Man about hurricanes--- a drizzling rain fell and the wind whistled and the curtains rustled like ghosts at the windows. Awaking out of restless sleep, I would hear the rain on the roofs. It was very dark. The voice of the wind wasn't very sympathetic company that night.

In the morning it was cold and grey, but the streets glistened with rain. People were wearing slickers and galoshes. They kept the morning paper under their coats so it wouldn't get wet.

I bought a paper and glanced at the headlines. GALE DUE HERE BY NOON, one read in large black letters. And another, HURRICANE SWEEPING TO NORFOLK; CAPITAL AWAITS 45-MILE GALE.

Reading on down into the news stories, I learned that this destructive and dangerous storm--- a typical West Indies hurricane--- of September 11 to 20, had cut a path 1,000 miles long, taking toll of more than 1,000 lives in Porto Rico and Florida and doing 200 million dollars property damage in Porto Rico, Florida, Georgia, the Carolinas, and Virginia.

The cold, the wind, and the rain of the night before was the tail-end of that same storm that had swept up from the Cape Verde islands, off the west coast of Africa; roared over islands of the West Indies, destroying lives and homes and hopes; screamed up and up over the Caribbean sea and northward over Florida and parts of the east Atlantic coast-line. Believe me, I was glad that it was only the tail we had felt because that storm crossed the Atlantic with the speed of an ocean liner and when it hit land--- Zowie! Of course you folks have read a lot about it in the papers so it isn't necessary to

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tell you that the wind reached a speed of 150 miles an hour at times.

But when I reached the Weather Bureau office, I learned a lot of new things about this particular hurricane and about hurricanes in general. Mr. C. L. Mitchell, one of the forecasters in the Weather Bureau, was in and would talk to me. He told me that the weather men had been watching this storm for more than a week and had predicted where it would hit and when. It seems that hurricanes can't have any privacy any more--- the Weather Bureau watches them like a cat--- and I guess it's a good thing. But let Mr. Mitchell talk about it.

I led off with this question--- "Did the Weather Bureau know that this great storm was coming and what did the Weather Bureau do about it?"

Mr. Mitchell handed me copies of storm warnings that had been issued. I glanced at them and they were very definite. You'll hear them read to you later.

"These destructive tropical hurricanes don't reach the West Indies and the Gulf Coast of the United States without warning," he said. "The storm which has just swept across the Florida peninsula has been under the watchful eyes of the Weather Bureau forecasters since Monday, September 10. On the morning of that day, signs of an unusual storm to the southeast were received by radio from two vessels in the Atlantic, fully 600 miles east of the farthest outpost in the Lesser Antilles islands from which weather observations are regularly sent. As the hurricane traveled onward, more definite information became available from the various <sup>island</sup> stations in the Bahamas and West Indies which report regularly to the Weather Bureau in Washington--- as well as radio reports from ships in the Caribbean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean."

"you had the jump on the storm, then, Mr. Mitchell," I said.

"In a way, yes," he said. "That is, we knew it was coming some time before it hit us. At first, we issued advisory warnings and storm signals twice a day--- later on, oftener. Like many other tropical hurricanes, this particular hurricane probably originated near the Cape Verde Islands and had already traveled two-thirds of the way across the Atlantic when it was first reported. For several days, all indications showed it to be moving west or northwestward without great change of direction, but there wasn't any certainty that it would not, like most similar storms, recurve and move out northeastward into the Atlantic rather than strike the Florida coast. Nevertheless, we sent out notices and warnings, urging vessels at sea to proceed with greatest caution and advising all interests likely to be affected to prepare to take such protective measures as possible."

Well, it seems that this hurricane did not curve out to sea again. It hit Porto Rico and other parts of the West Indies with terrific force--- destroying property--- destroying lives--- destroying food crops. The story of the Weather Bureau warnings reads like an adventurous novel and here are some of the highlights as told by Mr. Mitchell himself.

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"Following the first radio report of a disturbance on Monday morning, September 10, came an evening report from another vessel 500 miles east of Bridgetown, Barbadoes, giving more definite information that a tropical cyclone was centered somewhere in its vicinity. On the morning of the eleventh, two more ships reported, fixing with still more accuracy the location of the center of the storm and its direction. At 10.21 a.m., September 11, the Weather Bureau sent this warning telegram to all stations along the Atlantic Coast from Boston, southward, including the Gulf Coast west to Galveston and to the Bahamas and West Indies generally---

"A tropical disturbance was centered at 8 p.m. Monday, about latitude 15 degrees north, longitude 50 degrees west (nearly 600 miles east of Barbadoes) and moving west or west north-westward."

"On the morning of September 12, the Weather Bureau advices indicated that the hurricane center was near the Island of Dominica in the Lesser Antilles, and that it was moving west or west northwestward at the rate of about 450 miles a day, attended by winds of hurricane force--- possibly 100 miles an hour or more--- near its center.

"Its center will pass some distance south of Porto Rico," the warning telegrams read, "probably south of Haiti. Great caution advised vessels in Eastern Caribbean Sea especially north of latitude 15 degrees for the next 36 hours."

"The hurricane didn't stop nor curve out to sea. It kept on coming and the Weather Bureau kept a watchful eye on its behaviour. By the morning of September 13, the disturbance was very definitely called a hurricane in all the telegrams. Its center was then a short distance south of the Virgin Islands. The Message read---

"This is a dangerous storm. Great caution advised vessels near its path."

"All messages," said Mr. Mitchell, "carried the approximate latitude and longitude of the storm center and all available information as to its direction."

The great storm swept on through the islands of the West Indies, doing huge damage. By this time it was felt that it might hit Florida but, as most hurricanes recurve to the northeast without touching the Florida coast, hurricane warnings are not actually displayed there until it seems quite certain that winds of hurricane force will actually be experienced. This storm, however, didn't recurve, but tore directly northwestward across Florida. The following emphatic warnings were issued at 10:00 a.m. on Sunday, September 16---

"Hoist hurricane warnings 10:30 a.m. Miami to Daytona, Florida. Northeast storm warnings displayed north of Daytona to Savannah and northwest storm warnings south of Miami to Key West to Punta Forda. No report this morning from Nassau. Indications are that

Hurricane center will reach the Florida coast near Jupiter early tonight. Emergency. Advise all interests. This hurricane is of wide extent and great severity. Every precaution should be taken against destructive winds and high tides on Florida east coast especially West Palm Beach to Daytona."

Other warnings, just as definite, were issued throughout Sunday and later. The storm hit Florida--- blew northward--- and finally died out, but not until it had done terrific damage to life and property. Had it not been for the Weather Bureau warnings, issued regularly all the time the storm was on and before it actually struck, the damage would have been much heavier, both in property and lives.

Mr. Mitchell explained to me that tropical storms, starting out as intensified disturbances with low barometer pressures at their center, sweep wildly along over the sea, holding form so long as they remain over water. As soon as they strike land, however, they immediately begin to spread out and dissipate, the high winds diminishing but rain continuing and the main dangers being transferred from cyclone destruction to damage by floods. Since this particular storm was discovered, it has traveled nearly 2,000 miles in 8 days, the Weather Man said, doing great damage to parts of the Virgin Islands, the Bahamas, Porto Rico, Florida, Georgia, and South Carolina. A hurricane a lot like this one swept over the West Indies in 1900, striking the Texas coast and destroying Galveston.

But, luckily, these storms no longer get by without warning. The Weather Bureau, equipped with careful instruments for measuring the elements, studies the comings and goings of the great, blustering winds as well as of a gentle rain. And warnings issued as the hurricanes come on, help people to protect their property and save their lives from the fury of the winds and the floods.

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ANNOUNCEMENT: Another OUTDOORS WITH THE SCIENTIST radio chat will be sent by Uncle Sam's Department of Agriculture through Station \_\_\_\_\_ next Tuesday.

# **National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**

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July 23, 2010