

No. 41

A Science Service Feature

June 28

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

Dr. Charles F. Brooks,
Secretary, American Meteorological Society
tells:

DISTANCE OF LIGHTNING

The distance of lightning from the observer may be quickly calculated by the lapse of time between the flash and the hearing of its accompanying clap of thunder. Light travels so rapidly that the flash registers on the eye almost instantaneously. Sound travels only about 1100 feet a second, or approximately a mile in five seconds. Therefore, counting the seconds elapsing between the flash and the thunder makes reckoning of distance easy. A second is easily counted by saying some such words as "One chimpanzee" moderately fast; a few experiments with a watch will give accurate rhythm. This method is used by many photographers in determining exposures.

Thunder may be heard a distance of 10 miles, rarely more than that excepting under most favorable conditions. Ten miles means a lapse of 50 seconds from the instant of the lightning flash.

(Tomorrow: Safety in a Thunderstorm.)

All rights reserved by Science Service

Science Service,
1115 Conn. Ave.,
Washington, D.C.