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A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

Dr. Charles F. Brooks,  
of Clark University,  
discusses:

THE WINTER NORTHEASTER

The heavy snows of North America usually come with a strong northeast wind. They are the equivalent for the winter of the rainy northeaster of the summer, and their total fall of snow usually depends not so much upon intensity of snowfall as upon its duration. Even a moderate rate of fall will pile up a goodly thickness of snow in 24 or 48 hours. A northeast storm with a snowfall of two inches per hour is worthy of honorable mention, unless it be of exceptionally short duration. But ordinarily the fall is not so rapid. Almost always there is plenty of warning of the approaching storm for, as a rule, it travels at moderate speed and sends its cirrus streamers hundreds of miles in advance.

The cause of the snowfall, whether on the Pacific Coast, the Plateau, the Central Plains, or the eastern states or provinces, is the elevation of moist air near the freezing point in such volumes that much moisture is precipitated. This is accomplished most readily when a southwesterly current meets an obstructing mass of colder and much denser air and has to rise over it.

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(Tomorrow: The Northeaster's Variations)

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