

No. 406

A Science Service Feature

Aug. 29

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

By Dr. Charles F. Brooks
of Clark University.

VISIBILITY OF MOUNTAINS

Distant mountains are to be seen to best advantage for only brief periods. Even on the same clear day, their visibility changes markedly. Lowland haze or fog may cut off views till a few hours after sunrise, while daytime haze and perhaps mountain clouds restrict the visibility in the afternoon. Thus, the view of mountains from lowlands is usually at its best only in a few morning hours. Not only does daytime convection carry dust and moisture aloft, but local heating and convective currents destroy the optical uniformity of the air. The blurring effect of heated air over a very hot road is a familiar example on a small scale. The maximum haziness typically occurs in the late afternoon, when the sun shines obliquely through the dusty, humid, turbulent air.

If a "low" is approaching, clouds may improve the visibility by shutting off the illumination of the haze, though under those conditions the increase in humidity tends to make matters worse. Unusually rapid hazing up in the morning often precedes rain, while visibility improving during the day usually marks the advent, or new lease of life, of fine weather.

(Tomorrow: Growth of Rain Insurance)

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B and 21st Sts.,
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