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A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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WHERE TORNADOES OCCUR

It is difficult to establish the facts of tornado distribution. At first thought one might think that people ought to be able to tell when a tornado occurs. And, of course, there is no doubt when the funnel cloud is seen. But if the funnel cloud forms at night or in an uninhabited region it may not be seen. Such tornadoes can still be recognized by the nature of the wreckage. If buildings have been exploded or trees blown down in criss-cross fashion, or in opposite directions on the two sides of the path of destruction, then one may be practically certain that a real twister passed by. If, however, these phenomena cannot be shown to have occurred, or if the person reporting the storm does not notice evidences of whirling winds the report will merely be one of a severe local storm. There is a wide difference between the acuteness of observers, or their willingness to admit that a tornado has occurred. Some states, therefore, appear to have many more tornadoes in comparison with others than is really the case. The reporting of tornadoes in Kansas is excellent, perhaps somewhat to the detriment of the reputation of that state.

The principal tornado regions are the central and northern portions of the Gulf and southern Atlantic states, the lower Missouri Valley, the central Ohio Valley, and the upper Mississippi Valley. Plains and broad flat valleys afford the best facilities for tornado development, while mountainous and hilly country impedes winds and tends to break up a systematic whirl. In 1934, Kansas, with 17 storms was the state reporting the greatest number of tornadoes. Georgia had 12, and Alabama, 11. April, May, and June were the worst months.

(Tomorrow: Tornado Insurance)

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