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A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

By Dr. Charles F. Brooks
of Clark University

WHY THE GALES

A big chimney comes crashing into your bedroom or maybe your roof sails off. Such pranks played by the winds of recent weeks especially in mid-November, give you a grievance against the weather. We expect trouble from tornadoes and tropical hurricanes, but why such gales with a plain ordinary storm?

High winds in fall always attract attention after the lighter breezes of summer. In autumn, conditions favor strong storms, because there are both great temperature contrasts and plenty of water vapor in the air. This October's temperatures were the lowest on record in much of the northern United States. Early November, too, was chilly. But the oceans were still warm, indeed they do not reach their maximum high temperature until late summer or early autumn. Cold land and warm water means great contrast, heavy condensation, and vigorous storms with strong winds and sudden changes.

(Tomorrow: Autumn Snows)
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