

A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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HOW MUCH DID IT SNOW?

You might think snow easier to measure than rain, but it isn't, if you want to be accurate. Rain doesn't drift and can be more readily caught and measured in a can or gauge. If the ground is bare, the depth of a snowfall may be roughly measured with a ruler in level open places. It is best to make several measurements and then take the average. With high winds, snow drifts so that it is hard to get a representative figure. Measurements should be made promptly before the snow has a chance to evaporate. An alert observer usually finds a larger snowfall than one who takes his ruler out only once a day.

When the ground is already covered with old snow, measurements become more difficult, although it is sometimes easy to determine the boundary between the new and old layers if the depth of the old is not known. An easy way, devised by Mr. R. E. Horton, a New York engineer, is to employ a "snow-board". A shingle or other board covered with white cheesecloth is laid upon the old snow surface flush with it. Then new snow, accumulating on top of the board, can be accurately measured. The white cloth on the snow-board is a necessary precaution. A dark surface would absorb more energy from the sun than a white surface, would become warmer and might melt some of the snow falling on it. A white painted board would do nearly as well as a cloth covered one, but the cloth is a poorer conductor than paint and thus would not favor so much melting when temperatures are above freezing.

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