

A Science Service Feature

Released on receipt
but intended for use
June 23, 1926

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

Mailed June 16, 1926

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FORECASTING STATIC AND FADING

The Weather Bureau has been repeatedly asked to make forecasts of the favorableness of conditions for radio reception. Though some statements can be made at times, the Bureau does not at present deem such forecasts regularly practicable. In the first place, although weather is undoubtedly a factor in the production of static, it is not the only element involved, and perhaps not the principal consideration in all cases. The weather factor in fading is still less understood. Statistical investigations based on personal impressions have been made by Prof. Van Cleef, of Ohio, and are now being conducted at Rochester, N.Y. Precise measurements of the intensity of signals in relation to the weather-map situation have been made by Prof. Jensen, of the University of Nebraska. As the results do not agree very closely, further studies are required.

It appears that conditions are worst for popular radio reception when thunderstorms are in the neighborhood. The effect in the radio is analogous to listening to a fine concert to the accompaniment of numerous members of the audience loudly coughing and clearing their throats every few seconds. Reception is generally best when both broadcasting station and receiving set are in the same area of high pressure. Good reception may take place with transmission from a high pressure area into an adjoining low or vice-versa, but not from one high across a low to another high. Fading is likely to cause more trouble at night than by day, perhaps, in part, because the atmosphere is less well mixed when the sun is not shining.

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