

A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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DISTRIBUTION OF THUNDERSTORMS

Thunderstorms occur in every part of the United States, though on the immediate Pacific coast they are rare and seem to prefer the rainy winter season. For over 100 miles back from the coast, according to a map by W. H. Alexander, the number of thunderstorm days average less than 5 per year, although the figure reaches 20 in the Rockies. Many of these western thunderstorms are quite disappointing as crop sprinklers; too often the rain all evaporates before reaching the hot dusty ground, although the clouds may tower and lightning become severe enough to set forest fires.

Maine, Rhode Island, and eastern Massachusetts and New Hampshire all average less than 20 thunderstorm days per year. Inland and to the south the number increases, under more favorable conditions of heat and vapor, New York may expect around 30 days with thunder, Chicago, perhaps 40, St. Louis between 50 and 60, and New Orleans nearly 70.

Throughout the east Gulf states and in part of northern New Mexico thunderstorms are very frequent, occurring on over 60 days per year, while most of the west coast of the Florida peninsula averages 80 to 90 such days. There are some compensations, however, as these southern showers are mostly of a tropical character, local, or heat, thunderstorms, not so intense as the occasional "line" thunderstorms connected with the wind-shift lines of general storms in the northern and central states.

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