

A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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AUTUMN GALES

The strong winds of autumn are aspects of general storms rather than of local ones, as is the case with most of the violent squalls of summer. These general storms reach the eastern part of our continent either directly from the tropics or through the West from the Pacific Ocean. A few form on the continent itself. The tropical storms bring blows which, though straight at any place at any particular time, are really great rotary winds. The gales of these storms are most severe on or near the coast, and are rarely felt more than 100 miles inland.

The general storm of higher latitudes is not so readily weakened over the land, and its winds may be of gale force over very large areas. These extra-tropical lows are usually not so intense in any small zone as are the tropical ones, but their strong winds usually cover a much larger area. Nevertheless, within the windy area the blows are much stronger over the Great Lakes and along the Atlantic seaboard than they are over the land generally. Time and again shore and coast cities report gales, while inland ones merely have strong winds. And when inland stations do have gales, then the winds over the water become exceedingly violent. The relative lack of friction over water certainly allows the air to go faster for a given pull than it can over land. The winds of plains, like the Great Plains, are notable for their strength relative to the winds of rougher, wooded country.

Whatever the location of the station, autumn is a period of increasing windiness as the atmosphere gathers strong wintertime movement and its large-scale turbulence.

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