

A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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THE STRONGEST WINDS

The velocities of the strongest winds cannot be recorded autographically because the instruments are sure to break or blow away. In ^{the} recent Nassau, Florida and Cuban hurricanes the wind is reported to have reached a velocity of 130 or more miles an hour. Such a speed, though frightful, is not particularly uncommon for regions exposed to tropical cyclones. At Wilmington, N.C., 138 miles an hour was recorded before the anemometer blew away in a hurricane estimated to have reached 165 miles an hour. A velocity of 140 miles an hour was recorded at the mouth of the Mississippi during a hurricane in 1915. A record showing 127 miles an hour was made during a typhoon at Hongkong in 1923.

Even in the British Isles, where weather is not often violent, winds up to slightly over 100 miles per hour have been recorded. On Mt. Washington, velocities of 180 to 186 miles per hour were noted four times from 1876 to 1883. Even if we deduct 25 per cent. for the instrumental indications being in excess of linear velocities, the speed of air motion must have been prodigious.

But winds stronger than these occur, and their velocities can be estimated from the weight of objects whirled up or other damage done. In tornadoes, when furniture, cattle and vehicles are tossed about, and even steel bridges moved, wind velocities reach 200 to 400 miles per hour, or possibly more.

The outblowing winds from portions of Antarctica are the strongest enduring winds known. In this "home of the blizzard" the average velocity for a year was 50 miles an hour, and 24-hour averages of 90 or more miles an hour were experienced, while some gusts of this frigid blast "doubtless approached two hundred miles an hour."

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