A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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TOO COLD TO SNOW?

It is never too cold to snow, although often the extreme dryness of very cold air makes heavy snowfall unlikely. When the temperature in the cloud where the snow is forming is near freezing, three times as much moisture is present as at zero Fahrenheit. In the Northeast the heaviest snowfalls come usually with northeasterly surface winds, with temperatures between 20 and 30 degrees Fahrenheit, underrunning the southerly winds higher up that are supplying most of the snow. This was the case in the great snowstorm of Jan. 30, 1925, when some stations in central New York received three feet of snow in but 18 hours. Northwest winds from the interior are typically both colder and drier and produce only snow flurries.

Prof. A. J. Henry, of the U.S. Weather Bureau, has summarized the greatest 24-hour snowfalls for different parts of the country. The northeast leads with 2 to 3 feet in one day; the lower Lake region stands second with 18-20 inches; while on the cold dry northern plains the heaviest fall in some places has not exceeded 9 inches.

It would be a mistake, however, to think that snow does not form at low temperatures. Two inches of snow has been known to fall, probably from a warm upper wind, when the thermometer stood as low as 24 degrees below zero Fahrenheit at the ground. The highest cirrus clouds, which are composed of snow crystals, form at levels where the temperatures average 65 degrees below zero Fahrenheit.

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