A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ? Mailed June 21, 1927

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WEATHER BUREAU STATIONS

The United States Weather Bureau is a ubiquitous institution. No matter in what part of your country you live, you need not travel far to find one of the observation stations of this vast service.

First of all, there is the Central Office in Washington, with its numerous administrative and scientific branches, including a big library, instrument shops, a telegraph office, a printing office, and so on. Then there are 202 so-called "first-order" stations, manned by from one to a dozen full-time employees each. Besides taking and reporting meteorological observations, these stations serve as agencies for furnishing weather information of various kinds to the public. A few of them are the centers of forecast districts, from which weather predictions are issued for large groups of states. A majority of the others issue forecasts for their immediate localities. Five of the first-order stations, known as "aerological stations", devote their whole time to observing conditions in the upper air by means of kites and balloons. Thirty of the other first-order stations include daily observations of the upper air among other routine duties.

Next in importance come 1,918 subordinate stations having part-time paid employees. These are maintained in connection with the general and special forecast work of the bureau. About a thousand of them furnish reports used solely as a basis of river-stage predictions. More than 100 stations are maintained in the mountain regions of the west for measuring the snows that, in melting, supply water for irrigation and power production. There are 220 stations on ships, which send radio reports of the weather at sea. Lastly there are upwards of 4,500 unpaid "cooperative" observers on land, who supply the data from which climatic statistics are compiled, and some 1,400 unpaid marine observers who make observations at sea and send them in by mail at the end of each voyage.

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