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A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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THE BEAUFORT WIND SCALE

At well-equipped meteorological stations the force of the wind is measured with instruments, called anemometers, which show the speed of air movement in miles per hour or meters per second. A great number of weather observers throughout the world, who have no such instruments at their disposal, estimate the force of the wind from its observed effects, and record it on a scale of 13 points, ranging from 0, calm, up to 12, a hurricane. This scale was devised by Captain, afterwards Admiral Sir Francis Beaufort, in 1805, for use in the British Navy.

In its original form the Beaufort Scale defined the different degrees of force by indicating the speed a sailing-ship would make, or the amount of sail she could safely carry. The specifications have since been revised to adapt them to the rig of modern vessels, and the scale is used by sailors of all nationalities. Some years ago the British Meteorological Office drew up a set of specifications to adapt the scale for use on land. These have recently been adopted by the United States Weather Bureau. They run as follows:

0. Calm; smoke rises vertically.
1. Direction of wind shown by smoke drift but not by wind vanes.
2. Wind felt on face; leaves rustle; ordinary vane moved by wind.
3. Leaves and small twigs in constant motion; wind extends light flag.
4. Raises dust and loose paper; small branches are moved.
5. Small trees in leaf begin to sway; wavelets form on inland waters.
6. Large branches in motion; whistling heard in telegraph wires; umbrellas used with difficulty.
7. Whole trees in motion; inconvenience felt when walking against wind.
8. Breaks twigs of trees; generally impedes progress.
9. Slight structural damage occurs (chimney-pots and slates removed).
10. Seldom experienced inland, trees uprooted; considerable structural damage.
11. Very rarely experienced; accompanied by widespread damage.

No description is provided for No. 12, which is the full force of a hurricane.  
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