

A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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By Charles Fitzhugh Talman,  
Authority on Meteorology

FLOOD HAZARDS IN THE MOUNTAINS

The most spectacular effects of torrential local rains, or so-called "cloudbursts", are seen in mountainous regions, where the falling water is concentrated in valleys and gulleys. The floods thus produced are rivaled in their sudden onset only by those due to the collapse of dams and reservoirs, and have been responsible for many disasters.

Ivan E. Houk has recently called attention to the fact that such floods are likely to sweep down on motorists touring over some of the most popular transcontinental highways, and that special caution should be exercised in selecting camp sites with reference to this hazard. He says:

"Old-time westerners never pitch their tents along the bottom of the canyons or along arroyos where the cloudburst floods can reach them while they sleep. Any one can tell you of some party that did and was swept away by flood waters during the night. However, despite the long known fact that such things do occur, people may be seen camping in dangerous locations along the mountain canyon highways almost any time during the summer months. In fact, the writer has seen tourist camps maintained along creek channels in places where the occurrence of a cloudburst flood during the night would drown the campers like rats in a trap."

Fatalities of this kind have occurred more than once. It is nearly always possible to find near a mountain road a camp site high enough above the bottoms of canyons to be safe from flood waters.

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SCIENCE SERVICE,  
21st and B Sts.,  
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