

A Science Service Feature

Released on receipt
but intended for use
December 7, 1928

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

Mailed November 30, 1928

By Charles Fitzhugh Talman,
Authority on Meteorology

PREPARING FOR A STORM

Relief work in connection with a storm disaster is a familiar task of the American Red Cross, but such work does not usually begin until after the storm occurs. There was an exceptional case in Florida last September.

On Saturday the 15th the hurricane that had been wreaking its fury in the West Indies was off the Florida coast, but its future course was still uncertain. Believing his community threatened, H.W.Selby, chairman of the West Palm Beach chapter of the Red Cross, called his lieutenants together and drew up complete plans for relief measures. The problems of water, food, medical supplies, clothing and transportation were fully considered. Plans were made for an emergency hospitalization center, for canteen centers, for the transportation of refugees, supplies, etc.

In the Sunday morning papers Mr. Selby published bulletins announcing the location of the concentration centers agreed upon, the names of the committee heads selected and their duties and the other details that had been arranged. In the Miami hurricane of 1926 many lives were lost because, when the calm center known as "eye of the storm" arrived, people ventured out in the belief that the blow was over. Accordingly Mr. Selby warned everybody to remain in a place of safety during the brief lull in order to be ready for the second phase of the hurricane. A meeting of committee heads was held at 11 o'clock Sunday morning and final plans were worked out. Just before noon Mr. Selby called the mayors of Miami and Tampa and the Red Cross head at Jacksonville by long-distance telephone, asking them to start relief trains to West Palm Beach if no further word was received within 12 hours. The Jacksonville director was also asked to send word to national headquarters in Washington.

Five minutes after these conversations ended, all telephone and telegraph wires out of Palm Beach had gone down, and about 3 in the afternoon the city was struck by the full fury of the storm. Thanks to the precautions taken, the local population was fully prepared for the emergency, the machinery of relief was in full operation as soon as the storm passed, and ample supplies of all kinds were moving toward West Palm Beach from north and south the same night.

(All rights reserved by Science Service, Inc.)

SCIENCE SERVICE,
21st and B Sts.,
Washington, D.C.