

A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ? Mailed September 28, 1929

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HAIL IN THE UNITED STATES

A hailstorm usually affects a relatively small area of the earth's surface--generally part of a much larger area covered by a thunderstorm. Hence in a country as big as the United States many hailstorms fail to be recorded, despite the fact that thousands of persons take note of any that occur in their vicinity. The U.S. Weather Bureau collects reports of such storms from something like 5,000 observers and obtains many additional reports from press despatches, which are carefully checked up at the various "section centers", where climatological data are assembled.

Each year the Bureau publishes in its annual report two charts; one showing the locations of all moderately heavy hailstorms that were reported during the previous year within the period of principal crop growth--April 1 - Sept. 30 -- and the other showing for the same period the locations of decidedly destructive hailstorms. The location of each storm is shown by a dot.

Recently the Bureau has averaged the data of damaging hailstorms for the 12-year period 1916-1927. The results are published in the Yearbook of the Department of Agriculture for 1928 in the form of a chart. In this chart the country is divided into equal sections 100 miles square (area 10,000 square miles), and figures show the average annual frequency of damaging hailstorms within each of these sections.

The largest figures, showing from two to between four and five storms a year, are found in an irregular belt that included Kansas, Iowa and parts of Indiana, Ohio and southern Michigan, while in much of the Southwest the average annual frequency is recorded as zero, though there are only minor areas in which no damaging hailstorm was observed during the entire twelve years.

Of course the occurrence of four or five severe hailstorms a year within an area of 10,000 square miles does not imply anything like the same frequency at a single locality within that area. There is no place in the United States at which the average interval between damaging hailstorms does not amount to several years.

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