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A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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A FICTITIOUS TORNADO

On June 29, 1929, the town of Somerville, N. J., was the scene of an imaginary disaster, when a demonstration of tornado relief measures was staged by the Red Cross and the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. In accordance with a prearranged plan the town was theoretically struck by a tornado and an appeal for aid was sent out by radio as follows:

"Somerville, Somerset County, New Jersey, simulating disaster for purpose of relief demonstration by Edward M. McKey Post 925 Veterans Foreign Wars in cooperation with Somerville Chapter American Red Cross reports town hit by tornado and requests immediate relief."

This message was received and acknowledged by the V. F. W. post at Newark, 38 miles away, and the machinery of relief was immediately put in action. An Army Air Corps plane, equipped with radio, flew to the scene of the "disaster" and zigzagged over the town to ascertain the extent of the damage. Information on the latter point was supplied from the ground by signals made with strips of white muslin staked out by Boy Scouts, using a Red Cross code designed for such occasions. Report was sent by radio to Newark, where another plane, carrying an advance group of relief workers was started on its way and a large motor train carrying workers and supplies headed for Somerville at a speed of 50 miles an hour. The motor train was conducted through each town on the route by local motorcycle policemen. The rest of the show was carried out with an abundance of realistic detail.

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