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A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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FIRES MAKE FIRE WEATHER

Much has been heard in recent years about "fire weather" as affecting the prevalence of forest fires, and the conditions that give rise to it, but the fact is often overlooked that a forest fire is itself the most active agency in producing such weather in its vicinity. Once a fire gets well under way it creates its own local weather, without much regard to atmospheric conditions elsewhere. The heat causes a rapid rise of air and a strong indraft, which not only helps the fire to spread but also tends to dry the forest litter. The heat of the fire also has a powerful drying effect.

Tests made at some distance in front of an advancing forest fire in the open showed that the added draft and the heat caused by the flames was responsible for a difference of 10 degrees in temperature and one of 15 to 20 per cent. in relative humidity. A recent study of a going fire in a cut-over area showed that at the edge of this area in advance of the fire the relative humidity was 12 per cent., as compared with 35 per cent. in the adjoining forest.

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