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May 8, 1931

A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ? Mailed May 1, 1931

By Charles Fitzhugh Talman,
Authority on Meteorology.

VERIFYING WEATHER FORECASTS

In most official meteorological establishments that issue weather forecasts a more or less systematic comparison is made of these announcements with the weather that actually occurs during the periods they cover. The degree of accuracy attained in each forecast is generally expressed in terms of percentage, and the process of rating is called "verifying." Methods of verification differ in different countries. The United States Weather Bureau, which verifies all forecasts made by its officials, including those made for the purpose of practice and not publication, verifies forecasts of "weather" separately from those of temperature. The latter attain consistently higher percentages than the former.

The rules by which forecasts are verified are necessarily arbitrary and the numerical results are not, perhaps, especially illuminating to the public, though these figures are useful to the forecasting institutions themselves as a means of gauging the performance of forecasters and stimulating competition among them. In Great Britain the verification of forecasts was discontinued during the world war and has never been resumed.

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21st and Constitution Ave.
Washington, D. C.