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A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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WHEN A HURRICANE THREATENS

The numerous West India cyclones and hurricanes of recent weeks make it timely to say a word about the reactions of the public in a region threatened by one of these storms to the warnings and bulletins that report its progress. When the coming of a hurricane is announced the crowds around the local Weather Bureau office and the bulletin boards look like those that gather during the so-called "world series" baseball games.

A few years ago a hurricane on the Gulf of Mexico was reported to be approaching the coast of Texas. The telephone company in a certain coast city stated that during the 24 hours after the first storm warning was issued more than 100,000 connections made through its exchange were requests for weather information. It was necessary to assign seven extra operators to handle the calls.

Warnings are given effective distribution throughout a threatened region by telephone, telegraph and radio, while motor-cycles and automobiles are pressed into service to carry the news to communities not accessible by these means of communication. In cities and towns the police and fire departments aid in spreading the news.

In a case recently reported by the Weather Bureau a storm-signal displayman, realizing that a small summer colony of 90 frail houses was in the path of an approaching storm, and finding that the wire service had gone out of commission, hoisted a hurricane flag over his motor-cycle and did a "Paul Revere ride" to the spot. The inhabitants, warned in time, got out of harm's way before 88 of the 90 houses were annihilated by the hurricane. All were saved except two old colored people who refused to heed the warning.

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