

A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ? Mailed October 26, 1932

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SNOWSHEDS

On mountain railroads, in both Europe and America, tunnels and snowsheds furnish a partial protection from the unstable snowfields. American lines crossing the Continental Divide have spent many millions of dollars on the construction and maintenance of snowsheds. On the Great Northern for ten miles down the western slope at the end of the Cascade Tunnel, 76 per cent. of this distance has been protected at a cost of nearly \$1,500,000. The sheds on this line have concrete retaining walls and a timber roof designed for a load of 1,500 pounds per square foot. The most extensive system of sheds, however, is that of the Southern Pacific between Blue Canyon and Truckee, at the crest of the Sierra. The snowfall in this district is hardly surpassed anywhere in the United States, amounting in some years to more than 65 feet. To cope with this extraordinary situation the railroad has built more than 30 miles of snowsheds in a distance of 41 miles. They contain 100,000,000 feet of lumber, and their protection against fire in summer is a big item of expense. Fire lookout stations are maintained and "fire trains," carrying tanks of water, are held in readiness to extinguish a blaze in its early stages. The fire danger has been further reduced by opening gaps at intervals in the line of sheds, which are closed during the season of snowfall by sections of "telescope" sheds, mounted on wheels running on tracks.

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