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A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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THE WEATHERMAN IN COURT

Official meteorologists are often called as witnesses in lawsuits to give information about weather. This is an especially common procedure in Germany, while in the United States it was estimated some years ago that men in charge of local offices of the Weather Bureau throughout the country were, in the aggregate, summoned to court about 300 times a year. About one-tenth of these cases were in New York City. The weatherman usually takes with him official records relating to the weather of some particular day or other period. Certified copies of such records alone are often admitted as evidence, but in many cases the personal appearance of the meteorologist is desired in order that he may explain the meaning of the records and give expert information along the line of his profession.

The weather enters, of course, into a great variety of cases, both civil and criminal. There are also cases in which, although the weather has no bearing on the point at issue, weather records are produced in court for the purpose of discrediting the testimony of a witness. Thus a person may state under cross-examination that the weather at a certain time was clear and warm, when the records for the place and time in question prove it to have been rainy or snowy and cold. Careful lawyers generally go into such matters with their witnesses before placing them on the stand, because if it is shown that a single false statement has been made the entire testimony of the witness is invalidated.

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