

A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ? Mailed April 14, 1933

By Charles Fitzhugh Talman,  
Authority on Meteorology.

BOLTS FROM THE BLUE

H.F. Gisborne, of the U.S. Forest Service, reports as follows:

"On July 2, 1927, Stanley Lukens, a forest ranger, was supervising the opening of the Gold Peak lookout on the Missoula National Forest. While Lukens and his assistant were setting up the fire-finder, they aimed the alidade of this instrument at various prominent topographic features to check the orientation of the map. As they were making one of these test observations toward a point southeast of Gold Peak, both men saw a flash of lightning strike the ground almost on their line of sight and about 15 miles from them. This flash was followed by four others within the next few minutes. The first one started a forest fire. The phenomenon was most peculiar because all of these strokes descended almost vertically, apparently out of a blue sky, the nearest clouds being about 15 and 25 miles, respectively, from the area struck."

A good many other cases of lightning from a clear sky have been reported. Usually, however, there is but one stroke, rather than a series of them, as in this case.

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