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A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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By Charles Fitzhugh Talman,  
Authority on Meteorology.

WEATHER NEWS FOR AVIATORS

No modern development of practical meteorology is more remarkable than the system of weather reports for the information of air pilots distributed by teletype along the commercial airways of the United States. R.S. Coe and S. Patterson write of it in the Bell Telephone Quarterly:

"Changes in weather conditions must be sudden indeed, to catch a transport pilot unaware. Before ever he leaves the airport at the start of a run, he examines last-minute weather reports from trained observers at points all along his route. Out of the teletype they come, clicking off on the tape the time, the point of origin and then a detailed systematic report, in standardized terms, of weather and wind, visibility and height of 'ceiling' (as aviators call the lower side of the clouds). It is precise, exact, and conveys to the departing flyer full information as to present weather conditions all along his route. If he thinks them too unfavorable, he delays his start.

"As these reports come in, the tape is cut off and pasted on a bulletin board, giving a complete picture of weather conditions. The picture changes as fast as the weather changes. Recently a further step has been taken; weather maps can be kept up-to-the-minute by teletypewriter. For this purpose, a machine is used that types with special characters on a page instead of a tape. A weather map is inserted in the sending and receiving instruments and a typist puts on it the symbols that indicate weather conditions at the points on the map on which he types them. They are reproduced exactly at all receiving stations on the circuit. A clerk draws in by hand the lines connecting points of equal barometric pressure, technically known as isobars. Such maps, transmitted at three-hour intervals in sections and pasted together, present a graphic picture of the information verbally typed on the tape. Both come over the wires."

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21st and Constitution Ave.  
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