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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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MEASURING RAINFALL

Atmospheric precipitation -- familiarly called "rainfall" -- is much more extensively measured than any other element of weather, for there are, throughout the world, a great number of places at which this is the only feature of the weather that is regularly observed. Rainfall is measured in depth of water that would lie on the ground if none of what fell ran off, soaked into the earth or evaporated. Where English units are employed the fall is measured to the nearest hundredth of an inch; where the metric system prevails, it is measured in millimeters. An amount too small to be measured is recorded as a "trace." A shower of average intensity lasting for several hours will yield an inch or two of rain, while a heavy downpour may yield from one to several inches within an hour. An inch of rain is equivalent to 113 tons of water per acre, or 72,320 tons per square mile; the ton here mentioned being the "short ton" of 2,000 pounds.

Snow is sometimes measured as such; but if the records of snowfall are to be combined with those of rainfall for the purpose of determining total precipitation, the snow must be melted before measurement or its water equivalent must be obtained in some other way.

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