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A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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HAIL, THEN COOLER

It is sometimes said that hailstorms cause a cold snap. The fall of ice is supposed to cool the air and ground. In very heavy hailstorms, when the ground is covered with hail, this might well be true. Hail several inches deep, however, is a rare occurrence, though drifts two or three feet deep have been known. The ice itself that falls in most hailstorms is not sufficient to cause more than a temporary dent in the summer temperature curve. It is true, nevertheless, that cooler weather frequently follows hailstorms, and other violent thunderstorms. Such storms are often associated with "wind-shift lines" in an area of low pressure.

Two kinds of very different directions and temperatures are likely to make trouble when they meet. If a cold northerly wind overruns or crowds into a warm southerly wind, conditions are right for a storm. Along the border-line hail forms in the cold current above and falls down into the warm air below. As the wind shift line passes by, the warm wind is replaced by the clear westerly or northerly one and a cool period results.

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