

A Science Service Feature

Released upon receipt  
but intended for use  
September 22, 1933

? WHY THE WEATHER ? Mailed September 15, 1933

EQUINOCTIAL STORMS

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The prevailing types of weather in the northeastern United States and southeastern Canada undergo a more or less striking change in the early autumn. In the warmer months most of the strong winds and hard rains come in the form of brief thunderstorms and squalls, which are either of local origin or are due only to the short-lived effects of lows passing far to the northward. In the colder half of the year come, instead of these brief disturbances, the more persistent spells of stormy weather that prevail along the immediate tracks of the lows.

The first big low of the autumn often arrives somewhere near the date of the equinox, bringing a couple of days or so of rainy weather, usually followed by strong northwesterly winds, and when it does it is sure to be called the "equinoctial storm." Some of the storms that get this name come across the continent from the west. Others start as tropical cyclones and travel up the Atlantic Coast, causing heavy rains wherever they pass though not always much wind. These storms from the tropics are, on an average, most frequent in September, and once in a few years one of them moves up the Atlantic seaboard as far as New England and the St. Lawrence valley within a week or so of the autumnal equinox, which in most years falls on September 23.

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