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A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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LIGHTNING AND AIRCRAFT

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The British Meteorological Office has recently made a somewhat comprehensive study of the lightning hazard in aeronautics, and the results are quite reassuring. The general conclusion reached with respect to airplanes is that "on airplanes without radio aerials there is practically no danger to the personnel. The position, however, is much more serious if the machine has a trailing aerial. The most important thing therefore to be done when it is known that the plane is in a danger area or is about to enter a danger area is to withdraw the aerial."

Even though not actually struck, an airplane including metal parts not connected by conductors may collect charges able to give unpleasant though not dangerous shocks. Only ten cases have been reported in which British planes were struck by lightning, and in none of these was the plane wrecked.

As to airships, it is stated that in several cases they have been struck by lightning, the discharge passing through the hull and out again, but there is no properly authenticated case of a rigid airship having been destroyed by lightning.

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