

A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ? Mailed March 15, 1935

TERMS RELATING TO "FRONTS"

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Authority on Meteorology

Now that warm fronts, cold fronts, air-masses and the like are often mentioned in the newspapers, the average citizen ought to understand the meaning of the more important terms pertaining to "frontology." Here a few handy definitions from the current number of the Meteorological Magazine:

The dividing surfaces between large masses of air are called "frontal surfaces." These masses are usually moving and consequently the frontal surfaces are also moving.

The line in which a frontal surface dividing different masses cuts the ground is called a "front."

A "warm front" is a front where the warm mass is replacing the cold mass at ground level. The front is therefore moving forward in the direction from warm air to cold air.

A "cold front" is a front where the cold mass is replacing the warm mass at ground level. The front is therefore moving in the direction from cold air to warm air.

There are also "stationary fronts" where warm air and cold air are both moving parallel to the front, so that the front itself does not move.

If a cold front and a warm front coalesce the result is an "occlusion" (or "shutting up" of the cyclone). The frontal surfaces in that case do not meet at ground level, but they do meet above the ground. The warm air is above them, the cold air below them.

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