

A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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RAIN DAMAGE IN DESERTS

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Heavy rains falling on dry land, especially where there is little or no vegetation to bind the soil together, cause marked erosive effects; particularly in hilly and mountainous regions, where the run-off is concentrated in valleys and ravines. Such rains are therefore very destructive to roads and other works of man.

In the arid regions of southern California the crops of entire ranches are sometimes washed away or buried under mud and sand in a single rainstorm. Much money has been spent to protect the railroads of this region from the floods that rush down from the mountains. Large drainage channels several thousand feet long have been constructed to lead the floods to specially protected culverts. The Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fé Railway has built large concrete walls at many places to protect its roadbed. Despite these protective works, sections of track are washed out every few months. The highways also suffer much damage.

"Strangely enough," says a recent writer, "in this land of little rain the monetary losses due to excessive rainfall probably exceed those due to all other climatic conditions."

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