

Hourly Reports for Safe Air Travel

Aviation

Hourly reports of weather along the airways are one of the needs of civil aeronautics. In this way the pilots may be immediately informed of any changes in weather conditions, Willis R. Gregg of the United States Weather Bureau recently told members of the American Meteorological Society.

"At the present time the established airways cover some 14,000 miles, with about half this distance lighted for night flying.

"Special weather service has been organized on all of these airways. This service includes upper air reports from about 50 stations at which pilot balloons are used in measuring upper winds, and reports of surface weather conditions from about 150 stations, located at critical points on the airways themselves. In general the reports are timed to fit the flight schedules, although there are now in operation two experimental services—San Francisco to Los Angeles and New York to Cleveland—in which the

reports are furnished at frequent, regular intervals, both day and night. Thus *all* flying on those airways is served, whether on regular schedule or not.

"The reports contain information concerning those weather elements that are of most concern to pilots, particularly visibility, ceiling (height of cloud base), fog and storminess. These reports are supplemented by short-range forecasts for the next one to five or six hours.

"So much for the present status. As to the future prospects, the plans that are being worked out for adoption as rapidly as facilities permit include the following:

"a. The extension of the twice-daily program of country-wide reports to a four-times-a-day program, thus making available general forecasts and bulletins at intervals of six hours instead of twelve hours, as at present.

"b. A supplementary system of three-hourly reports from small areas, 'secondary nets,' along the several

airways. The receipt of these by trained meteorologists at airport stations will make possible the safeguarding of fliers from disturbances that develop some distance off the airways and approach them from one side or the other.

"c. Hourly reports from numerous points on the airways themselves. These will keep the meteorologists and others constantly informed as to changes that may be occurring along the line of flight.

"d. A prompt and dependable system of communications is the 'backbone' of the service. At present the teletype, or typewriter-printer, is being favorably considered for the hourly reports. Probably the telegraph and telephone will answer for the less frequent reports. Radio must be included for communications between ground and plane and will supplement the others when they are out of commission."

Science News-Letter, January 12, 1929

Quake Predictions Gussed

Radiovision

Recent predictions of severe earthquakes in the Balkans and the Andes, beginning on December 27 and culminating on December 29, as announced by Rafael Bendandi, an Italian, failed completely, thus emphasizing anew that earthquake predictions at present are only guesses, says L. Don Leet, observer at the Harvard seismograph station.

"As usual, there was no sign of the predicted 'strong disturbances' in spite of the generous area of seismically active territory named," said Mr. Leet. "Such incidents, however, have been repeated from time to time during past years because Mr. Bendandi's many failures are ignored, and anything that can be construed as a successful forecast is given prominence.

"The 'prediction' of earthquakes for a definite hour, day, or even year, at the present stage of the science of seismology can be nothing but a guess. Certain guesses have greater probability than others, but they are guesses none the less.

"Bendandi's 'predictions,' moreover, cannot be regarded merely as unscientific but harmless fakes. They are reprehensible to a high degree when one considers the effect upon credulous people in the regions affected."

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SCIENCE NEWS-LETTER, The Weekly Summary of Current Science. Published by Science Service, Inc., the Institution for the Popularization of Science organized under the auspices of the National Academy of Sciences, the National Research Council and the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

Edited by Watson Davis.

Publication Office, 1918 Harford Ave., Baltimore, Md. Editorial and Executive Office, 21st and B Sts., N. W., Washington, D. C. Address all communications to Washington, D. C. Cable address: Scienservc, Washington.

Entered as second class matter October 1, 1926, at the postoffice at Baltimore, Md., under the act of March 3, 1879. Established in mimeographed form March 13, 1922. Title registered as trade-mark, U. S. Patent Office.

Subscription rate—\$5.00 a year postpaid. 15 cents a copy. Ten or more copies to same address, 5 cents a copy. Special reduced subscription rates are available to members of the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

Advertising rates furnished on application.

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