

Mont, where there is a smoke jumping school, the Missoula Smokejumper Center, is going up soon. These laboratories will have wind tunnels, controlled temperature and humidity rooms, electric ovens and other facilities for physical and chemical research.

Scientists hope to identify the separate fuel types in which fires perform in characteristic ways. They also hope to learn what natural laws affect fire in the woods and why fire responds in certain ways to weather. The flammability of different types of vegetation under various atmospheric conditions will receive considerable attention in the new laboratories.

As one of their main projects, researchers at the Macon laboratory, headed by K. W. McNasser, chief of fire research at the Southeastern Forest Experiment Station, will study what makes some fires "blow up" without warning. With information on this, foresters could predict fire behavior and plan their control strategy better.

Controlled Burning

With all the work toward forest fire prevention and control continuing there remains some evidence to support the theory that a little controlled burning may be good.

In primitive times, lightning fires were free to burn. Also, Prof. H. H. Biswell of the University of California recently pointed out, the Indian sometimes used fire as a tool for shaping his landscape, hunting game and driving away the enemy. As a result, the pine forests in the Sierra Nevada, for example, were open and park-like. The modern policy of fire suppression results in a gradual build up of fuel on the forest floor and a constant danger of destructive wildfire, the California ecologist believes.

Today, however, with man's carelessness one of the chief factors in causing forest fires, we probably have a long way to go before we can plan on using extensive controlled burning to help prevent fires. Fire is not yet, and not always, the useful tool it should be. It still holds secrets for scientists to learn.

Science News Letter, November 1, 1958

METEOROLOGY

Lowest Temperature Found Above South Pole

► A TEMPERATURE OF 135.4 degrees below zero Fahrenheit, believed to be a world's record low at any height anywhere, was recorded 13 miles high in the air above the South Pole on July 16, the U.S. Weather Bureau has reported.

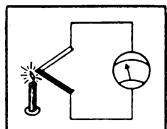
The record low is about three degrees below the previous low, which was also established by a balloon-carried instrument in the Antarctic stratosphere.

The world's lowest temperature for a ground station is claimed by Russians in Antarctica, who recorded 124.1 degrees below zero Fahrenheit on Aug. 9 at Soviet-skaya, at a height of 12,000 feet above sea level.

Science News Letter, November 1, 1958

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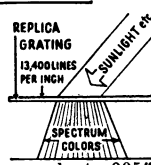
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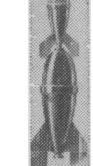
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