

An aerial photograph of a tropical cyclone, showing a well-defined eye and spiral cloud bands over a dark blue ocean. The surrounding land is green and hilly.

# WEATHER AND CLIMATE

Britannica Illustrated Science Library



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# WEATHER AND CLIMATE



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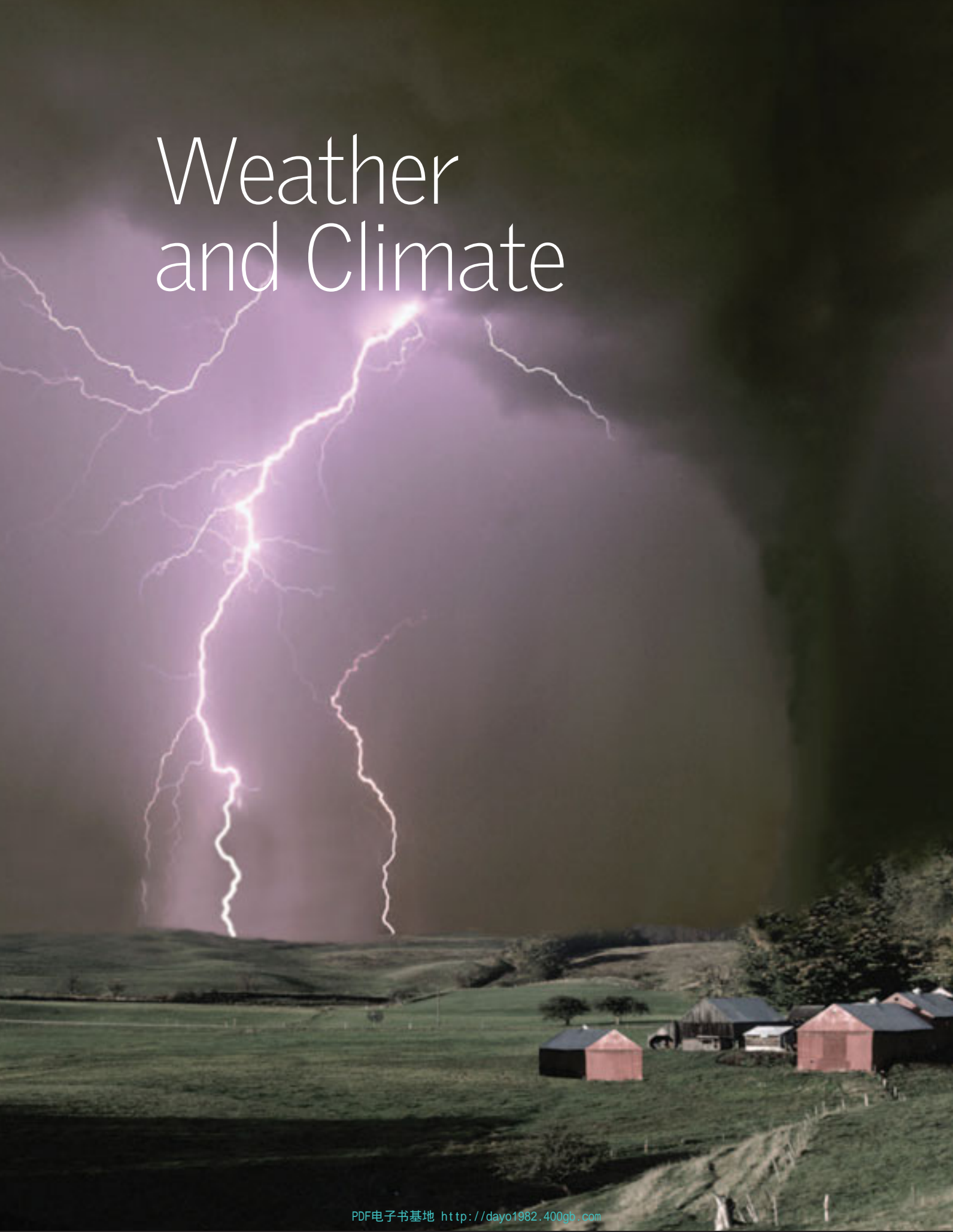
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# Weather and Climate



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Tornado during an electrical  
storm, in Oklahoma, 1973

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# A Sum of Factors

## STRONG WINDS AND TORRENTIAL RAINS

Between September 20 and  
September 25, 1998,  
Hurricane Georges lashed the  
Caribbean, leaving thousands  
of people homeless.

"The flutter of a butterfly's wings in Brazil can unleash a tornado in Florida." That was the conclusion arrived at in 1972 by Edward Lorenz after dedicating himself to the study of meteorology and trying to find a way of predicting meteorological phenomena that might put the lives of people at risk. In effect, the atmosphere is a system so complicated that many scientists define it as chaotic. Any forecast can rapidly deteriorate because of the wind, the appearance of a warm front, or an unexpected storm. Thus, the difference continues to grow geometrically, and the reality of the next day is not the one that was expected but entirely

different: when there should have been sunshine, there is rain; people who planned to go to the beach find they have to shut themselves up in the basement until the hurricane passes. All this uncertainty causes many people who live in areas that are besieged by hurricanes or tropical storms to live in fear of what might happen, because they feel very vulnerable to changes in weather. It is also true that natural phenomena, such as tornadoes, hurricanes, and cyclones, do not in themselves cause catastrophes. For example, a hurricane becomes a disaster and causes considerable damage, deaths, and economic losses only because it strikes a populated area or travels over farmland. Yet in society, the idea persists that natural phenomena equate to death and destruction. In fact, experience shows that we have to learn to live with these phenomena and plan ahead for what might happen when they occur. In this book, along with spectacular images, you will find useful information about the factors that determine weather and climate, and you will be able to understand why long-term forecasts are so complicated. What changes are expected if global warming continues to increase? Could the polar ice caps melt and raise sea levels? Could agricultural regions slowly become deserts? All this and much more are found in the pages of the book. We intend to arouse your curiosity about weather and climate, forces that affect everyone. ●



# Climatology

## SATELLITE IMAGE

In this image of the Earth, one clearly sees the movement of water and air, which causes, among other things, temperature variations.

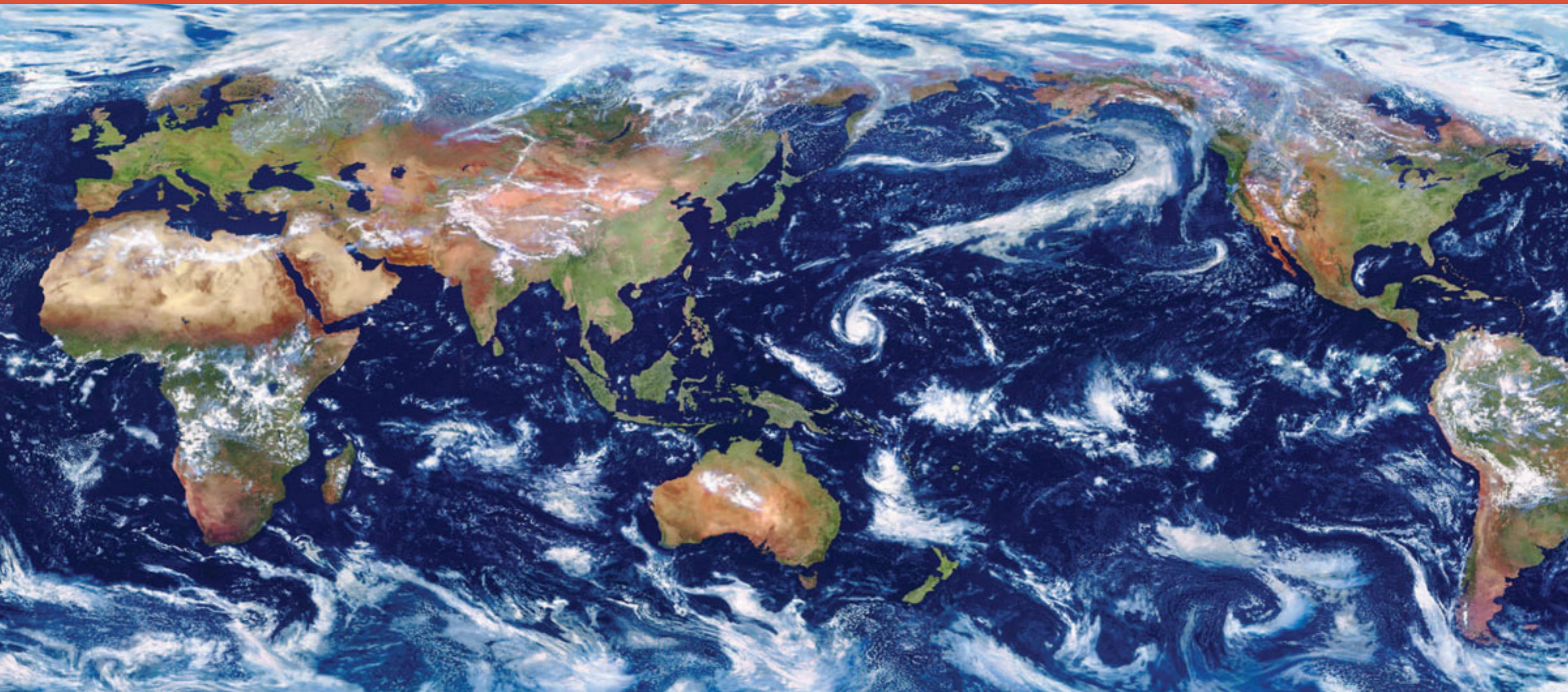
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The constantly moving atmosphere, the oceans, the continents, and the great masses of ice are the principal components of the

environment. All these constitute what is called the climatic system; they permanently interact with one another and transport water (as liquid or vapor), electromagnetic radiation, and heat.

Within this complex system, one of the fundamental variables is temperature, which experiences the most change and is the most noticeable. The wind is important because it carries heat and

moisture into the atmosphere. Water, with all its processes (evaporation, condensation, convection), also plays a fundamental role in Earth's climatic system. ●

# Global Equilibrium

The Sun's radiation delivers a large amount of energy, which propels the Earth's extraordinary mechanism called the climatic system. The components of this complex system are the atmosphere, hydrosphere, lithosphere, cryosphere, and biosphere. All these components are constantly interacting with one another via an interchange of materials and energy. Weather and climatic phenomena of the past—as well as of the present and the future—are the combined expression of Earth's climatic system. ●

## Atmosphere

Part of the energy received from the Sun is captured by the atmosphere. The other part is absorbed by the Earth or reflected in the form of heat. Greenhouse gases heat up the atmosphere by slowing the release of heat to space.

## Biosphere

Living beings (such as plants) influence weather and climate. They form the foundations of ecosystems, which use minerals, water, and other chemical compounds. They contribute materials to other subsystems.

## WINDS

The atmosphere is always in motion. Heat displaces masses of air, and this leads to the general circulation of the atmosphere.

## PRECIPITATION

Water condensing in the atmosphere forms droplets, and gravitational action causes them to fall on different parts of the Earth's surface.

## EVAPORATION

The surfaces of water bodies maintain the quantity of water vapor in the atmosphere within normal limits.

about 10%

ALBEDO OF THE TROPICAL FORESTS

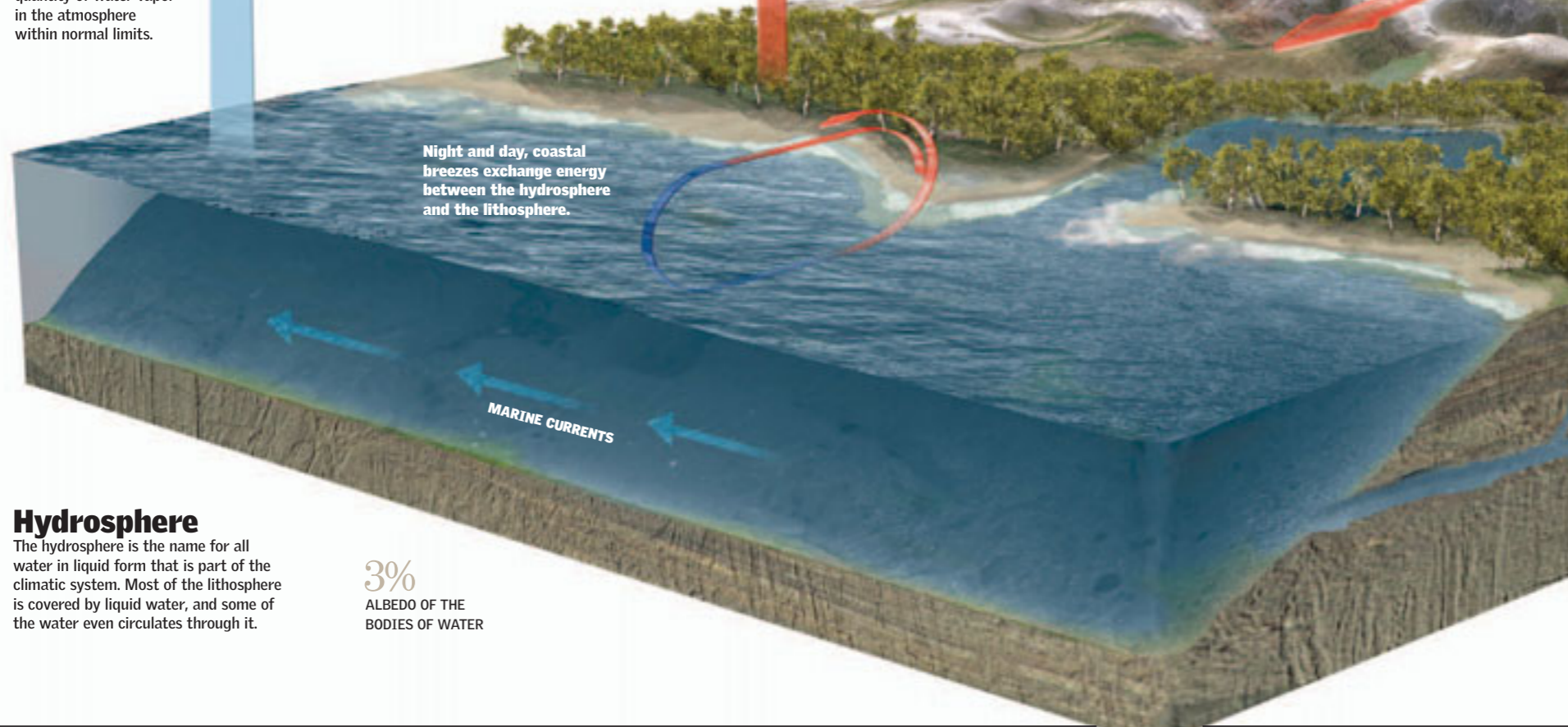


HEAT

HEAT



HUMAN ACTIVITY



Night and day, coastal breezes exchange energy between the hydrosphere and the lithosphere.

## Hydrosphere

The hydrosphere is the name for all water in liquid form that is part of the climatic system. Most of the lithosphere is covered by liquid water, and some of the water even circulates through it.

3%

ALBEDO OF THE BODIES OF WATER

## SOLAR RADIATION

About 50 percent of the solar energy reaches the surface of the Earth, and some of this energy is transferred directly to different layers of the atmosphere. Much of the available solar radiation leaves the air and circulates within the other subsystems. Some of this energy escapes to outer space.

## Sun

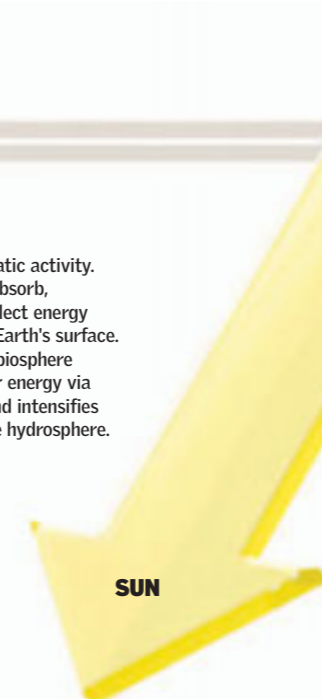
Essential for climatic activity. The subsystems absorb, exchange, and reflect energy that reaches the Earth's surface. For example, the biosphere incorporates solar energy via photosynthesis and intensifies the activity of the hydrosphere.

## ALBEDO

The percentage of solar radiation reflected by the climatic subsystems.

50%

THE ALBEDO OF LIGHT CLOUDS



SUN

## Cryosphere

Represents regions of the Earth covered by ice. Permafrost exists where the temperature of the soil or rocks is below zero. These regions reflect almost all the light they receive and play a role in the circulation of the ocean, regulating its temperature and salinity.

80% ALBEDO OF RECENTLY FALLEN SNOW

## Lithosphere

This is the uppermost solid layer of the Earth's surface. Its continual formation and destruction change the surface of the Earth and can have a large impact on weather and climate. For example, a mountain range can act as a geographic barrier to wind and moisture.

## SMOKE

Particles that escape into the atmosphere can retain their heat and act as condensation nuclei for precipitation.

## ASHES

Volcanic eruptions bring nutrients to the climatic system where the ashes fertilize the soil. Eruptions also block the rays of the Sun and thus reduce the amount of solar radiation received by the Earth's surface. This causes cooling of the atmosphere.

## RETURN TO THE SEA

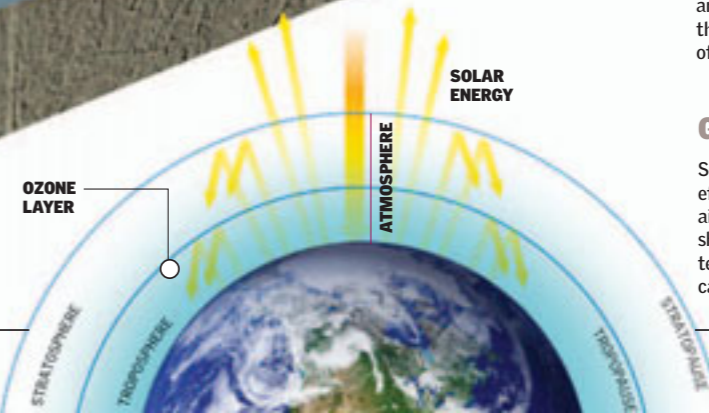
### UNDERGROUND CIRCULATION

The circulation of water is produced by gravity. Water from the hydrosphere infiltrates the lithosphere and circulates therein until it reaches the large water reservoirs of lakes, rivers, and oceans.

OZONE LAYER

ATMOSPHERE

SOLAR ENERGY



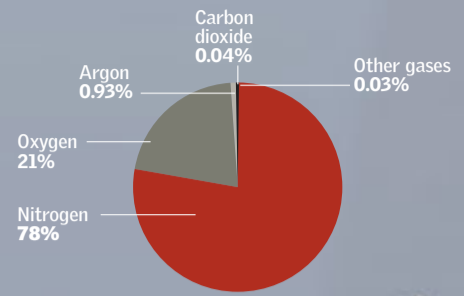
## GREENHOUSE EFFECT

Some gases in the atmosphere are very effective at retaining heat. The layer of air near the Earth's surface acts as a shield that establishes a range of temperatures on it, within which life can exist.

# Pure Air

The atmosphere is the mass of air that envelops the surface of the Earth. Its composition allows it to regulate the quantity and type of solar energy that reaches the surface of the Earth. The atmosphere, in turn, absorbs energy radiated by the crust of the Earth, the polar ice caps and the oceans, and other surfaces on the planet. Although nitrogen is its principal component, it also contains other gases, such as oxygen, carbon dioxide, ozone, and water vapor. These less abundant gases, along with microscopic particles in the air, have a great influence on the Earth's weather and climate. ●

## GASES IN THE AIR



### EXOSPHERE

This layer, which begins at an altitude of about 310 miles (500 km), is the upper limit of the atmosphere. Here material in plasma form escapes from the Earth, because the magnetic forces acting on them are greater than those of gravity.

### GREENHOUSE EFFECT

Produced by the absorption of infrared emissions by the greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. This natural phenomenon helps to keep the Earth's surface temperature stable.

59° F  
(15° C)

AVERAGE TEMPERATURE OF THE EARTH'S SURFACE

**DISTANT ORBITS**  
Polar meteorological satellites orbit in the exosphere.

### THERMOSPHERE

Found between an altitude of 55 and 300 miles (90-500 km). The O<sub>2</sub> and the N<sub>2</sub> absorb ultraviolet rays and reach temperatures greater than 1,800° F (1,000° C). These temperatures keep the density of gases in this layer very low.

**Auroras**  
Created in the upper layers of the atmosphere when the solar wind generates electrically charged particles

6% of solar radiation is reflected by the atmosphere.

**Military satellites**  
Air friction shortens their useful life.

**Rocket probes**  
Used for scientific studies of the higher regions of the atmosphere

19% of solar radiation is absorbed by the gases in the atmosphere.

**Meteors**  
become superheated by friction with the molecules of the gas in the atmosphere. Particles that skip across the atmosphere are called shooting stars.

### MESOSPHERE

Located between an altitude of 30 to 55 miles (50-90 km), it absorbs very little energy yet emits a large amount of it. This absorption deficit causes the temperatures to decrease from 60° F to -130° F (20° C to -90° C) in the upper boundary of the mesopause.

**Cosmic rays**  
Come from the Sun and other radiation sources in outer space. When they collide with the molecules of gas in the atmosphere, they produce a rain of particles.

**Noctilucent clouds**  
The only clouds that exist above the troposphere. They are the objects of intense study.

20% of solar radiation is reflected by the clouds.

**Forecasts**  
Weather balloons are used to make weather forecasts. They record the conditions of the stratosphere.

### STRATOSPHERE

Extends from an altitude of 6 miles to 30 miles (10-50 km). The band from 12 to 19 miles (20-30 km) has a high concentration of ozone, which absorbs ultraviolet radiation. A thermal inversion is produced in this layer that is expressed as an abrupt temperature increase beginning at an altitude of 12 miles (20 km).

**Tropical storm clouds**

**Safe flights**  
The absence of meteorological changes in this region makes it safer for commercial flights.

**The Ozone Layer**  
stops most of the Sun's ultraviolet rays.

### TROPOSPHERE

Starts at sea level and goes to an altitude of six miles (10 km). It provides conditions suitable for life to exist. It contains 75 percent of the gases in the atmosphere. Meteorological conditions, such as the formation of clouds and precipitation, depend on its dynamics. It is also the layer that contains pollution generated by human activities.

51% of solar radiation is absorbed by the Earth's surface.

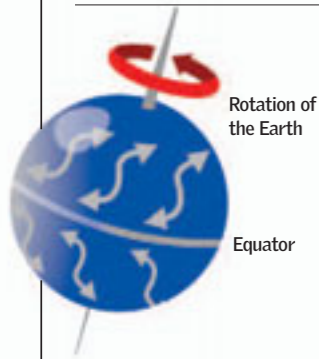
4% of solar radiation is reflected by the oceans and the ground.

**High mountains**  
Any mountains higher than 5 miles (8 km) above sea level. The decrease of oxygen with altitude makes it difficult to breathe above 2.5 miles (4 km).

**Cirrus**

# Atmospheric Dynamics

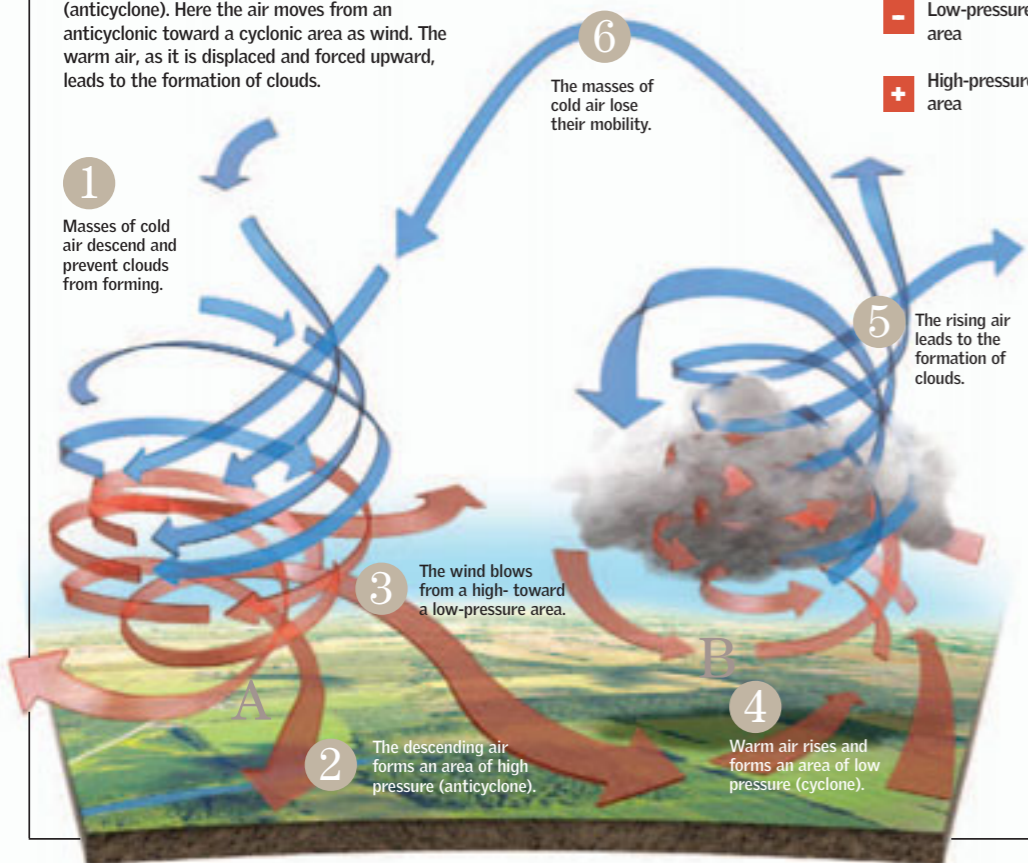
The atmosphere is a dynamic system. Temperature changes and the Earth's motion are responsible for horizontal and vertical air displacement. Here the air of the atmosphere circulates between the poles and the Equator in horizontal bands within different latitudes. Moreover, the characteristics of the Earth's surface alter the path of the moving air, causing zones of differing air densities. The relations that arise among these processes influence the climatic conditions of our planet. ●



**CORIOLIS FORCE**  
The Coriolis effect is an apparent deflection of the path of an object that moves within a rotating coordinate system. The Coriolis effect appears to deflect the trajectory of the winds that move over the surface of the Earth, because the Earth moves beneath the winds. This apparent deflection is to the right in the Northern Hemisphere and to the left in the Southern Hemisphere. The effect is only noticeable on a large scale because of the rotational velocity of the Earth.

## High and Low Pressure

Warm air rises and causes a low-pressure area (cyclone) to form beneath it. As the air cools and descends, it forms a high-pressure area (anticyclone). Here the air moves from an anticyclonic toward a cyclonic area as wind. The warm air, as it is displaced and forced upward, leads to the formation of clouds.



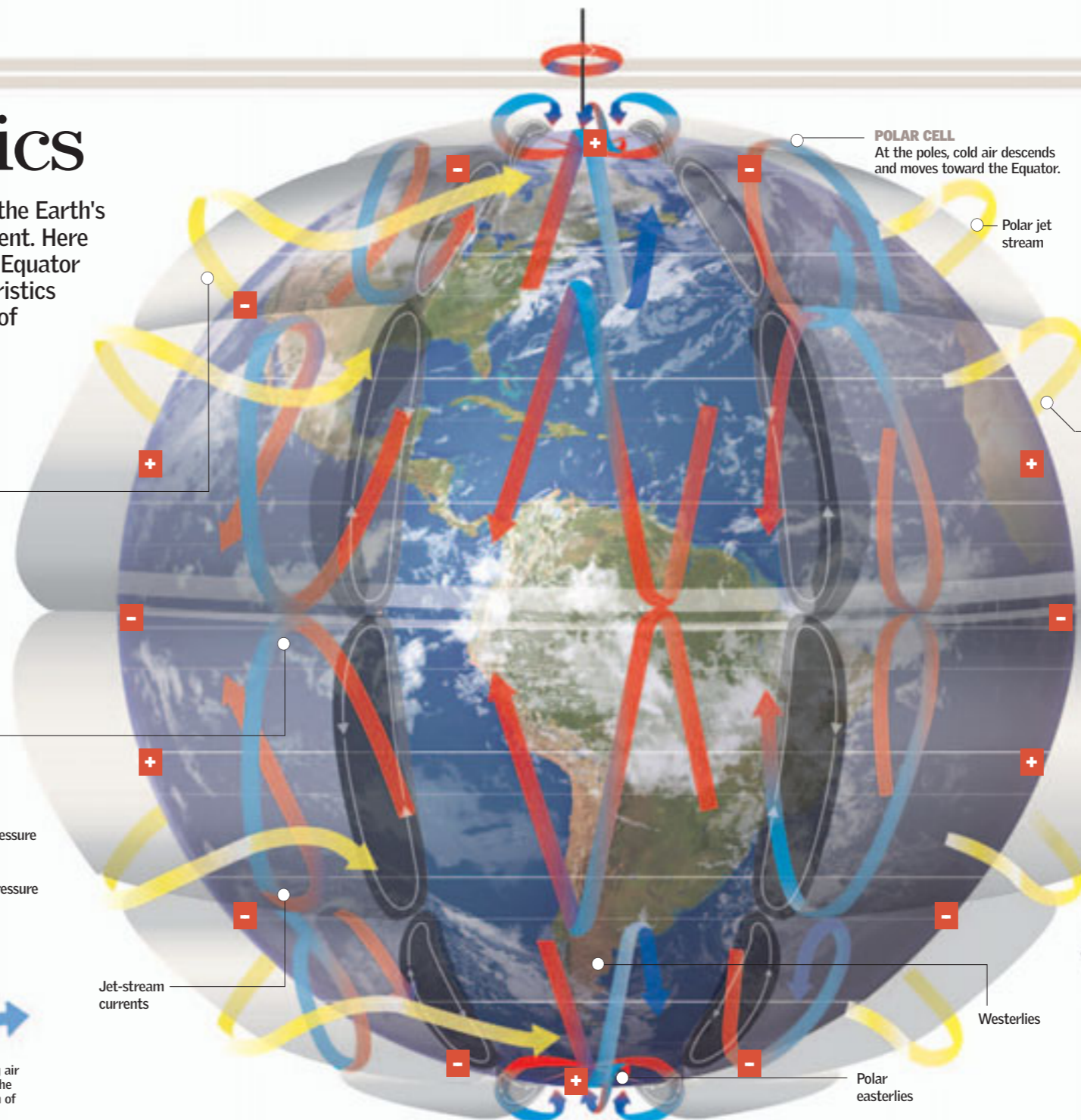
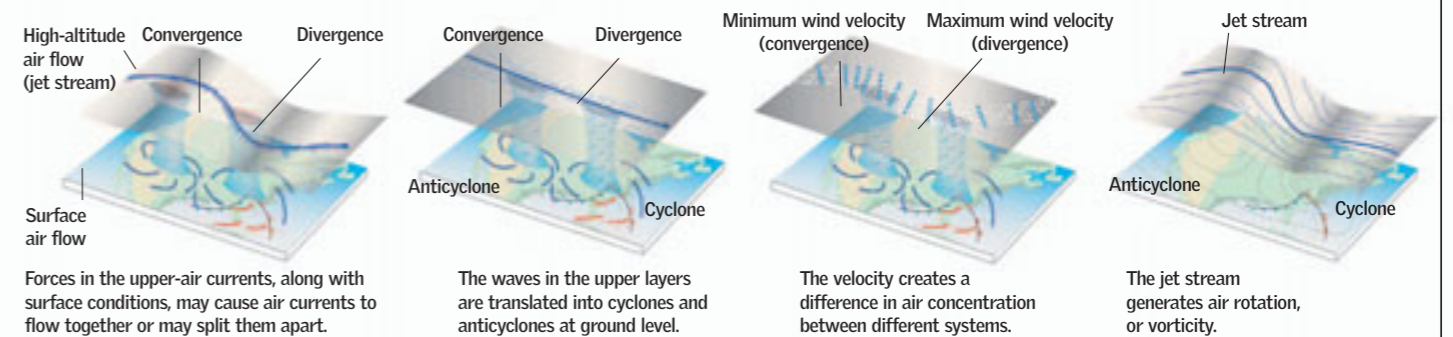
**FERREL CELL**  
A part of the air in the Hadley cells follows its course toward the poles to a latitude of 60° N and 60° S.  
Intertropical Convergence Zone (ITCZ)

**TRADE WINDS**  
These winds blow toward the Equator.

- Low-pressure area
- + High-pressure area

## Changes in Circulation

Irregularities in the topography of the surface, abrupt changes in temperature, and the influence of ocean currents can alter the general circulation of the atmosphere. These circumstances can generate waves in the air currents that are, in general, linked to the cyclonic zones. It is in these zones that storms originate, and they are therefore studied with great interest. However, the anticyclone and the cyclone systems must be studied together because cyclones are fed by currents of air coming from anticyclones.

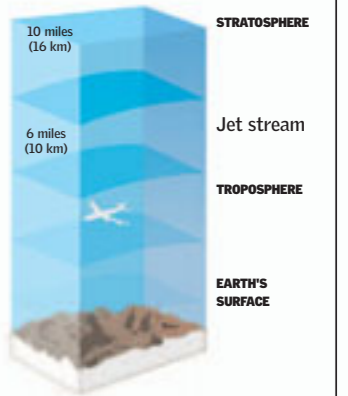


**POLAR CELL**  
At the poles, cold air descends and moves toward the Equator.

**JET STREAM**

|          |                                        |
|----------|----------------------------------------|
| Velocity | 55 to 250 miles per hour (90-400 km/h) |
| Length   | 1,000 to 3,000 miles (1,610-4,850 km)  |
| Width    | 1 to 3 miles (1.6-4.8 km)              |

Discovered in the 19th century through the use of kites. Airplanes can shorten their flying time by hitching a ride on them. Their paths are observed to help predict the weather.

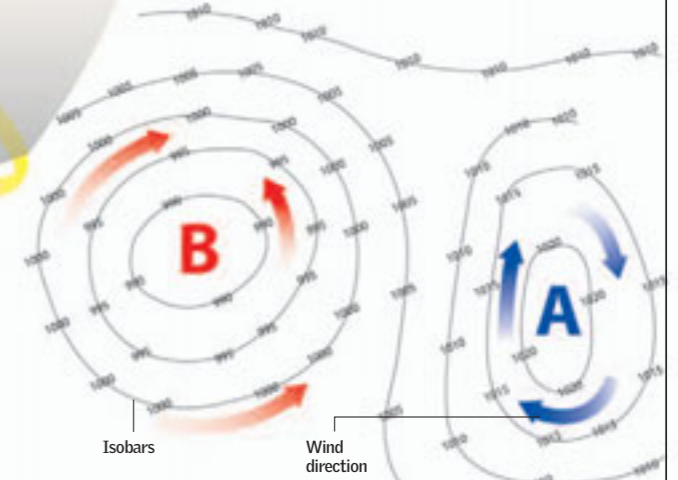


Subtropical jet stream

**HADLEY CELL**  
Warm air ascends in the equatorial region and moves toward the middle latitudes, in which the Sun's average angle of incidence is lower than in the tropics.

Equator

**WEATHER SYSTEMS ANALYSIS**  
The continuous lines are isobars (in this case, in the Southern Hemisphere), imaginary lines that connect points of equal pressure. They show depressions—centers of low pressure relative to the surroundings—and an anticyclone, a center of high pressure.

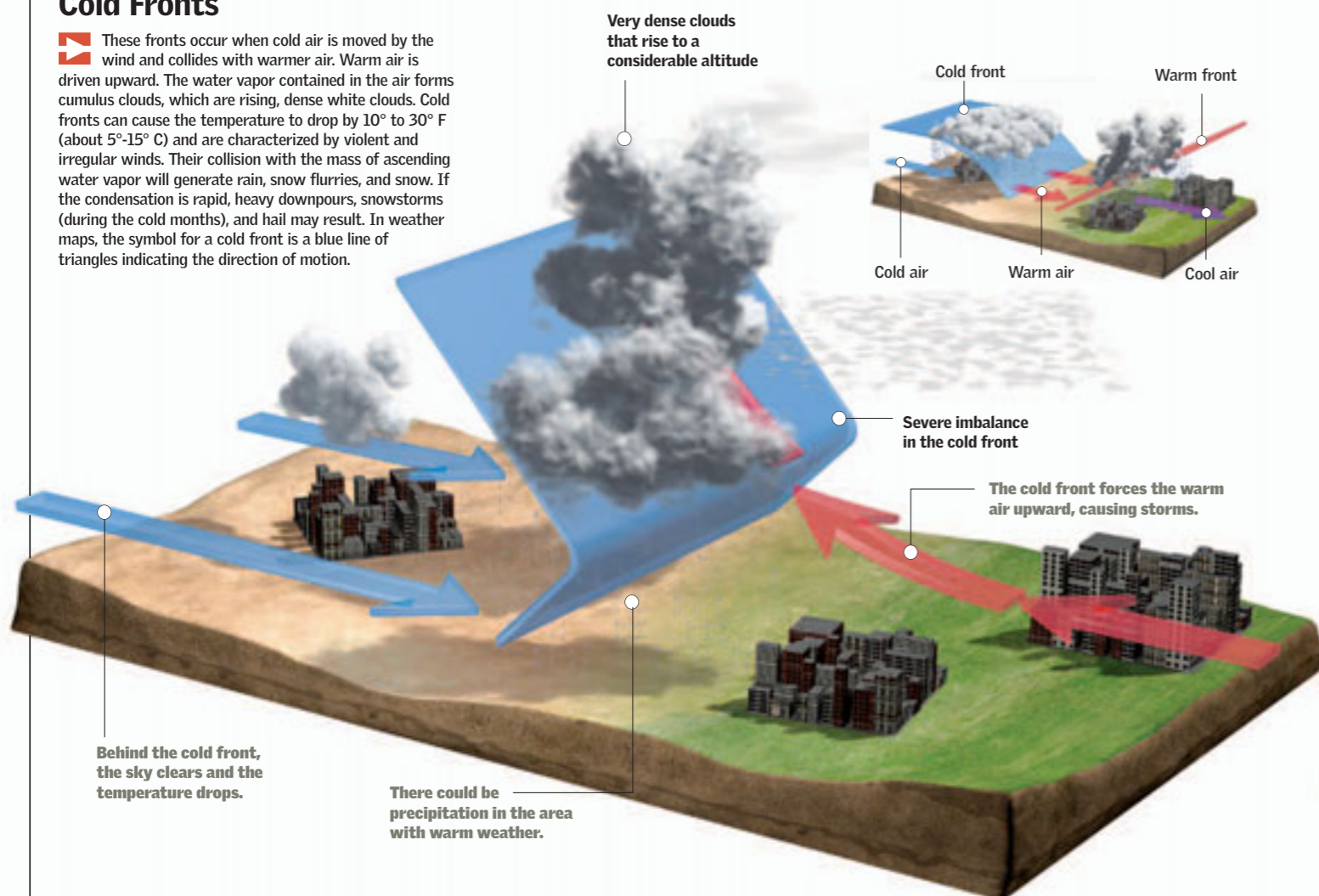


# Collision

When two air masses with different temperatures and moisture content collide, they cause atmospheric disturbances. When the warm air rises, its cooling causes water vapor to condense and the formation of clouds and precipitation. A mass of warm and light air is always forced upward, while the colder and heavier air acts like a wedge. This cold-air wedge undercuts the warmer air mass and forces it to rise more rapidly. This effect can cause variable, sometimes stormy, weather. ●

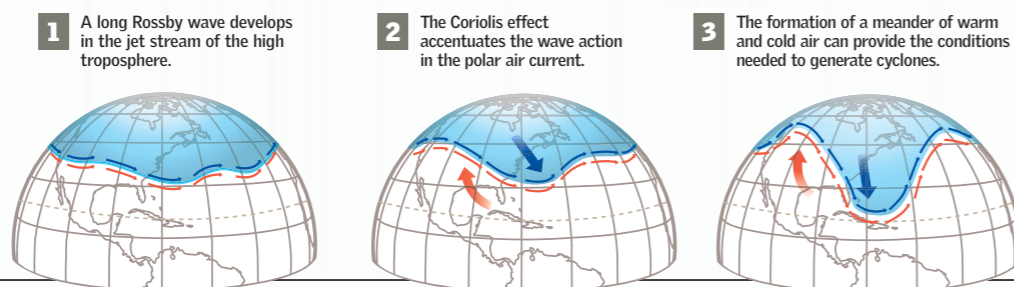
## Cold Fronts

These fronts occur when cold air is moved by the wind and collides with warmer air. Warm air is driven upward. The water vapor contained in the air forms cumulus clouds, which are rising, dense white clouds. Cold fronts can cause the temperature to drop by 10° to 30° F (about 5°-15° C) and are characterized by violent and irregular winds. Their collision with the mass of ascending water vapor will generate rain, snow flurries, and snow. If the condensation is rapid, heavy downpours, snowstorms (during the cold months), and hail may result. In weather maps, the symbol for a cold front is a blue line of triangles indicating the direction of motion.



## Rossby Waves

Large horizontal atmospheric waves that are associated with the polar-front jet stream. They may appear as large undulations in the path of the jet stream. The dynamics of the climatic system are affected by these waves because they promote the exchange of energy between the low and high latitudes and can even cause cyclones to form.



## Entire Continents

Fronts stretch over large geographic areas. In this case, a cold front causes storm perturbations in western Europe. But to the east, a warm front, extending over a wide area of Poland, brings light rain. These fronts can gain or lose force as they move over the Earth's surface depending on the global pressure system.

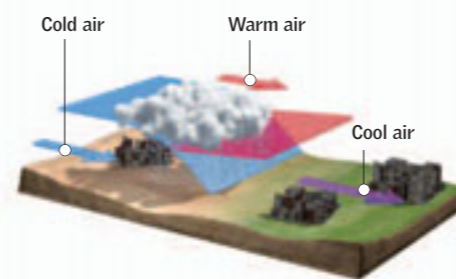


125 miles (200 km)

A warm front can be 125 miles (200 km) long. A cold front usually covers about 60 miles (100 km). In both cases, the altitude is roughly 0.6 mile (1 km).

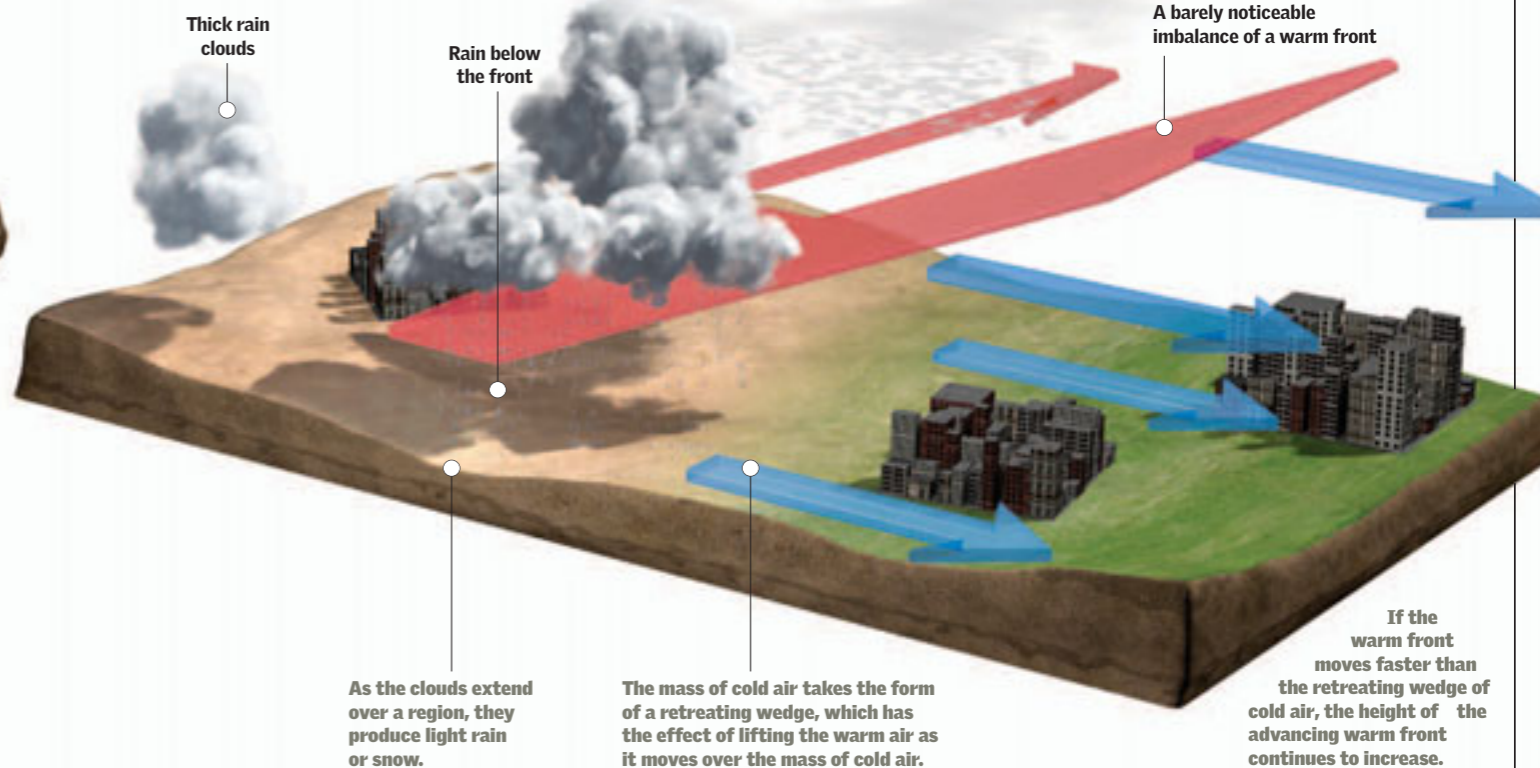
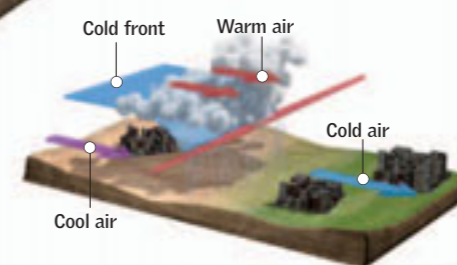
## STATIONARY FRONTS

These fronts occur when there is no forward motion of warm or cold air—that is, both masses of air are stationary. This type of condition can last many days and produces only altocumulus clouds. The temperature also remains stable, and there is no wind except for some flow of air parallel to the line of the front. There could be some light precipitation.



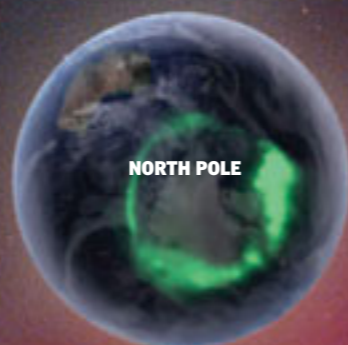
## OCCCLUDED FRONTS

When the cold air replaces the cool air at the surface, with a warm air mass above, a cold occlusion is formed. A warm occlusion occurs when the cool air rises above the cold air. These fronts are associated with rain or snow, cumulus clouds, slight temperature fluctuations, and light winds.



# Colors in the Sky

A natural spectacle of incomparable beauty, the auroras are produced around the magnetic poles of the Earth by the activity of the Sun. Solar wind acts on the magnetosphere, which is a part of the exosphere. In general, the greater the solar wind, the more prominent the aurora. Auroras consist of luminous patches and columns of various colors. Depending on whether they appear in the north or south, they are called aurora borealis or aurora australis. The aurora borealis can be seen in Alaska, Canada, and the Scandinavian countries. ●



A satellite image of the aurora borealis

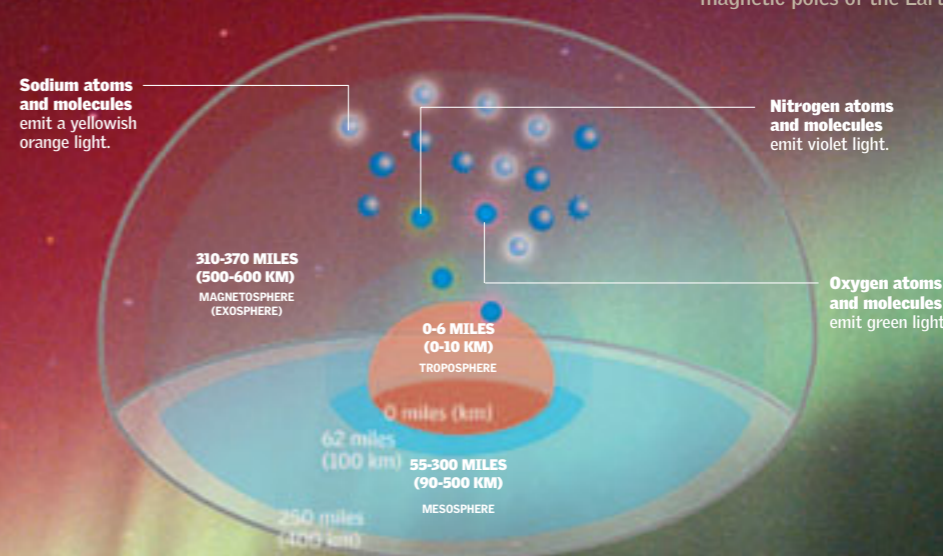
## How They Are Produced

The auroras are the result of the shock produced as ions coming from the Sun make contact with the magnetic field of the Earth. They appear in different colors

depending on the altitude at which they are produced. Moreover, they demonstrate the function of the magnetosphere, which protects the planet against solar winds.

# 620 miles (1,000 km)

is how long an aurora can be. From space it will look like a circle around one of the magnetic poles of the Earth.



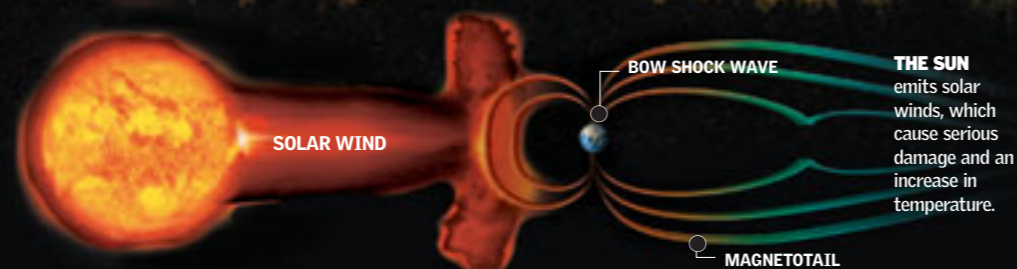
**1 ELECTRONS COLLIDE WITH MOLECULES**  
The oxygen and nitrogen molecules receive the impact of the particles from the Sun. This occurs in the magnetosphere (exosphere).

**2 THEY BECOME EXCITED**  
After the shock, the atoms receive a significant additional energetic charge that will be released in the form of photons (light).

**3 THEY GENERATE LIGHT**  
Depending on the altitude and the velocity where the shock is produced, the aurora displays different colors. Among the possibilities are violet, green, orange, and yellow.

## Solar Winds

The Sun emits radiation, continuously and in all directions. This radiation occurs as a flow of charged particles or plasma, which consists mainly of electrons and protons. The plasma particles are guided by the magnetic field of the Sun and form the solar wind, which travels through space at some 275 miles per second (450 km/s). Particles from the solar wind arrive at the Earth within four or five days.



# 10-20 minutes

duration of the phenomenon

The amount of light emitted oscillates between 1 and 10 million megawatts, equivalent to the energy produced by 1,000 to 10,000 large electric power plants.

# Surface Factors

**VIETNAM, DECEMBER 1991**  
The intense monsoon rains caused severe flooding in vast regions of Cambodia, Vietnam, Laos, and Thailand.

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**THE EFFECTS OF EL NIÑO 34-35**



**A**mong meteorological phenomena, rain plays a very important role in the life of humans. Its scarcity causes serious problems, such as

droughts, lack of food, and an increase in infant mortality. It is clear that an excess of water, caused by overabundant rain or the effects of gigantic waves, is also cause for alarm and concern. In

Southwest Asia, there are frequent typhoons and torrential rains during which millions of people lose their houses and must be relocated to more secure areas; however, they still run the

risk of catching contagious diseases such as malaria. The warm current of El Niño also affects the lives and the economy of millions of people. ●

# Living Water

The water in the oceans, rivers, clouds, and rain is in constant motion. Surface water evaporates, water in the clouds precipitates, and this precipitation runs along and seeps into the Earth. Nonetheless, the total amount of water on the planet does not change. The circulation and conservation of water is driven by the hydrologic, or water, cycle. This cycle begins with evaporation of water from the Earth's surface. The water vapor humidifies as the air rises. The water vapor in the air cools and condenses onto solid particles as microdroplets. The microdroplets combine to form clouds. When the droplets become large enough, they begin to fall back to Earth, and, depending on the temperature of the atmosphere, they return to the ground as rain, snow, or hail.

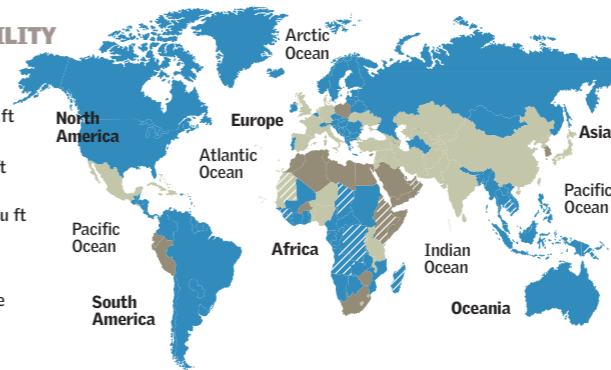
## WATER AVAILABILITY

(cubic feet [cu m] per capita/year)

- Less than 60,000 cu ft (1,700 cu m)
- 60,000-175,000 cu ft (1,700-5,000 cu m)
- More than 175,000 cu ft (5,000 cu m)

### Access to potable water

- ☑ Less than 50% of the population

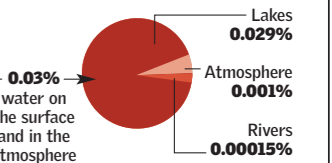
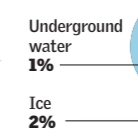


## WHERE IT IS FOUND

A small percentage is freshwater; most of it is salt water.



### FRESHWATER



**1. EVAPORATION**  
Thanks to the effects of the Sun, ocean water is warmed and fills the air with water vapor. Evaporation from humid soil and vegetation increases humidity. The result is the formation of clouds.

**TRANSPIRATION**  
Perspiration is a natural process that regulates body temperature. When the body temperature rises, the sweat glands are stimulated, causing perspiration.



CONTRIBUTION OF LIVING BEINGS, ESPECIALLY PLANTS, TO THE WATER IN THE ATMOSPHERE

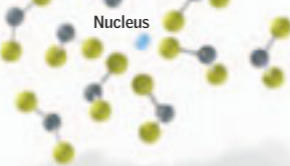
**10%**

THE HUMAN BODY IS 65% WATER.

**2. CONDENSATION**  
In order for water vapor to condense and form clouds, the air must contain condensation nuclei, which allow the molecules of water to form microdroplets. For condensation to occur, the water must be cooled.

### FORMATION OF DROPLETS

The molecules of water vapor decrease their mobility and begin to collect on solid particles suspended in the air.



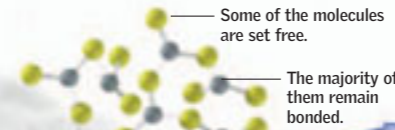
**3. PRECIPITATION**  
The wind carries the clouds toward the continent. When the humid air cools, it condenses and falls as rain, snow, or hail.

**72 cubic miles**

OF WATER FALL EACH DAY IN THE FORM OF PRECIPITATION.

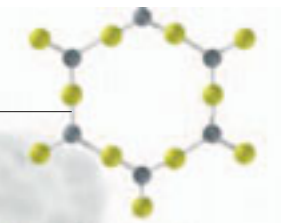
### LIQUID STATE

A rise in temperature increases the kinetic energy of the molecules, which breaks the hydrogen bonds.



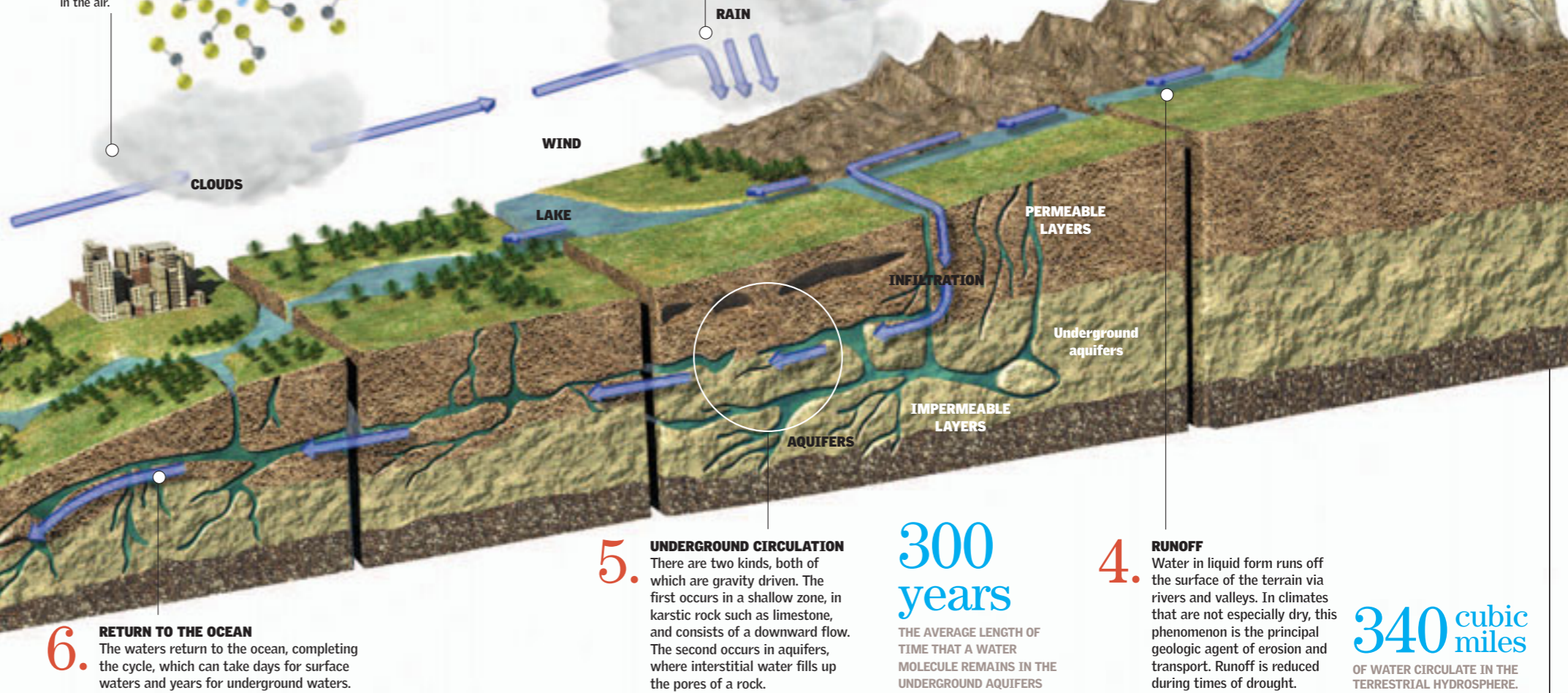
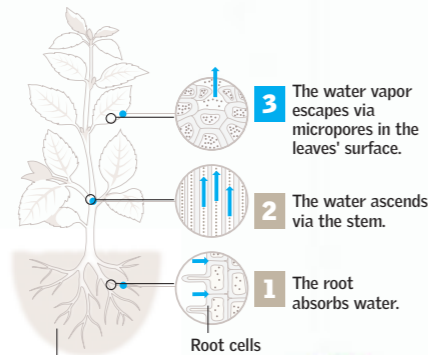
### SOLID STATE

The molecules have very little mobility because of the great number of bonds they establish with hydrogen atoms. They form snow crystals.



**GASEOUS STATE**  
The rays of the Sun increase the motion of atmospheric gases. The combination of heat and wind transforms liquid water into water vapor.

All the molecules of water are freed.



**5. UNDERGROUND CIRCULATION**  
There are two kinds, both of which are gravity driven. The first occurs in a shallow zone, in karstic rock such as limestone, and consists of a downward flow. The second occurs in aquifers, where interstitial water fills up the pores of a rock.

**300 years**

THE AVERAGE LENGTH OF TIME THAT A WATER MOLECULE REMAINS IN THE UNDERGROUND AQUIFERS

**4. RUNOFF**  
Water in liquid form runs off the surface of the terrain via rivers and valleys. In climates that are not especially dry, this phenomenon is the principal geologic agent of erosion and transport. Runoff is reduced during times of drought.

**340 cubic miles**  
OF WATER CIRCULATE IN THE TERRESTRIAL HYDROSPHERE.

**6. RETURN TO THE OCEAN**  
The waters return to the ocean, completing the cycle, which can take days for surface waters and years for underground waters.

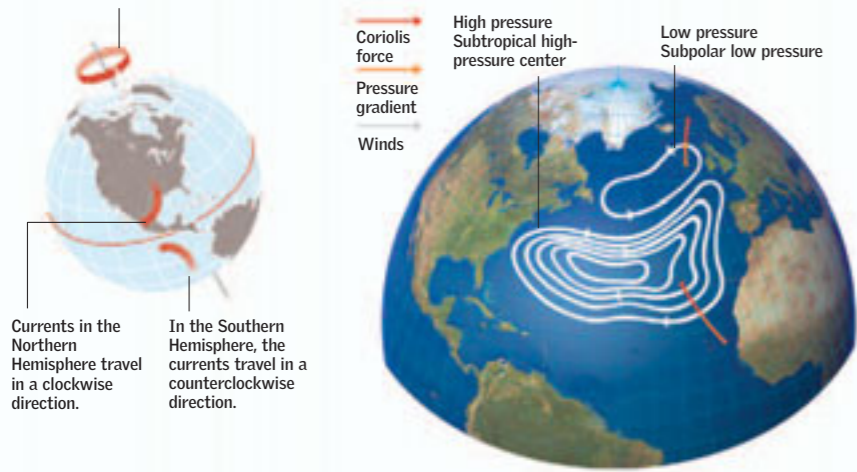
# Ocean Currents

Ocean water moves as waves, tides, and currents. There are two types of currents: surface and deep. The surface currents, caused by the wind, are great rivers in the ocean. They can be some 50 miles (80 km) wide. They have a profound effect on the world climate because the water warms up near the Equator, and currents transfer this heat to higher latitudes. Deep currents are caused by differences in water density.

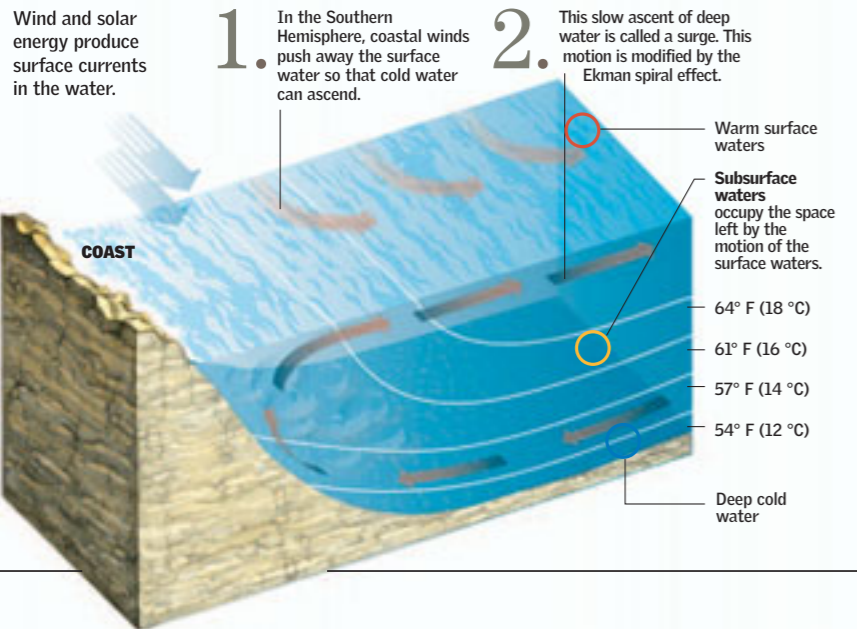
## THE INFLUENCE OF THE WINDS

**TIDES AND THE CORIOLIS EFFECT**  
The Coriolis effect, which influences the direction of the winds, drives the displacement of marine currents.

**GEOSTROPHIC BALANCE**  
The deflection caused by the Coriolis effect on the currents is compensated for by pressure gradients between cyclonic and anticyclonic systems. This effect is called geostrophic balance.



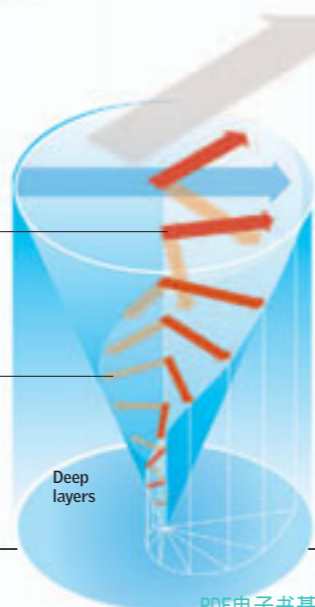
## HOW CURRENTS ARE FORMED



**EKMAN SPIRAL**  
explains why the surface currents and deep currents are opposite in direction.

Wind energy is transferred to the water in friction layers. Thus, the velocity of the surface water increases more than that of the deep water.

The Coriolis effect causes the direction of the currents to deviate. The surface currents travel in the opposite direction of the deep currents.



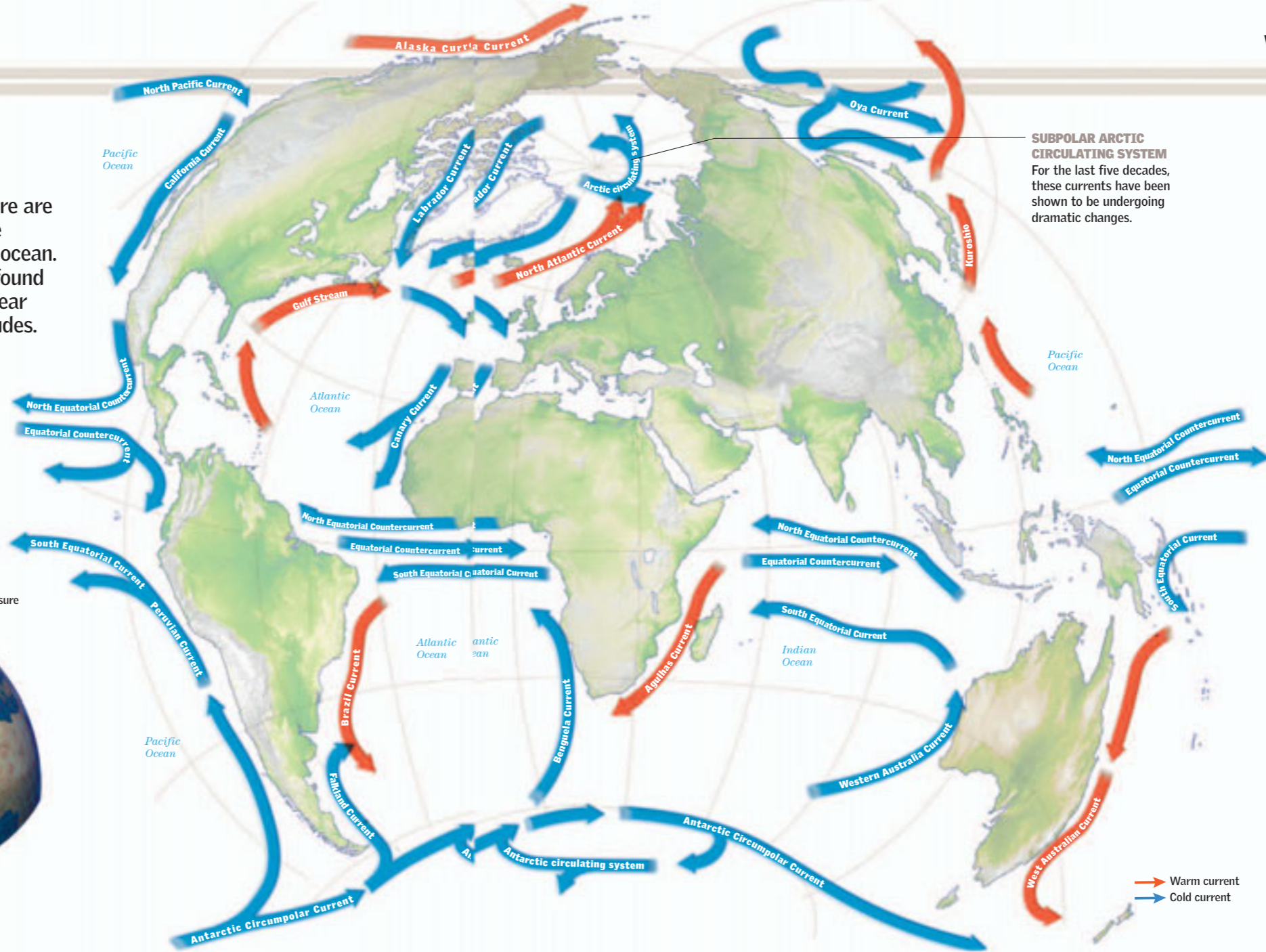
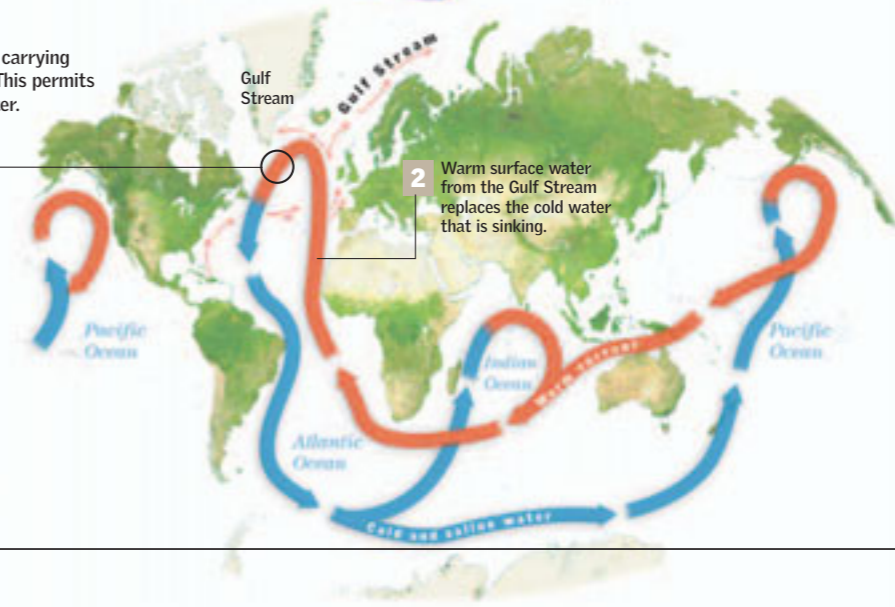
## DEEP CURRENTS

have a vital function of carrying oxygen to deep water. This permits life to exist in deep water.

1 Near Greenland, the North Atlantic water sinks, and the colder and more saline water is pushed southward.

2 Warm surface water from the Gulf Stream replaces the cold water that is sinking.

Ocean conveyor belt  
Warm Cold

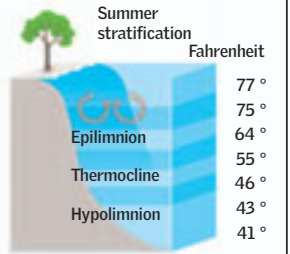


**SUBPOLAR ARCTIC CIRCULATING SYSTEM**  
For the last five decades, these currents have been shown to be undergoing dramatic changes.

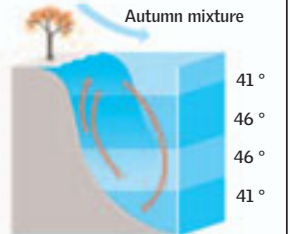
## THE FOUR SEASONS OF A LAKE

Because of the physical properties of water, lakes and lagoons have a special seasonal circulation that ensures the survival of living creatures.

**SUMMER**  
Stable summer temperatures prevent vertical circulation in the body of water of the lagoon.



**AUTUMN**  
Temperature decrease and temperature variations generate a mixing of the surface and deep waters.



**WINTER**  
When the water reaches 39° F (4° C), its density increases. That is how strata of solid water on the surface and liquid water underneath are created.



**SPRING**  
The characteristics of water once again initiate vertical circulation in the lake. Spring temperatures lead to this circulation.



# An Obstacle Course

The mountains are geographical features with a great influence on climate. Winds laden with moisture collide with these vertical obstacles and have to rise up their slopes to pass over them. During the ascent, the air discharges water in the form of precipitation on the windward sides, which are humid and have dense vegetation. The air that reaches the leeward slopes is dry, and the vegetation usually consists of sparse grazing land. ●

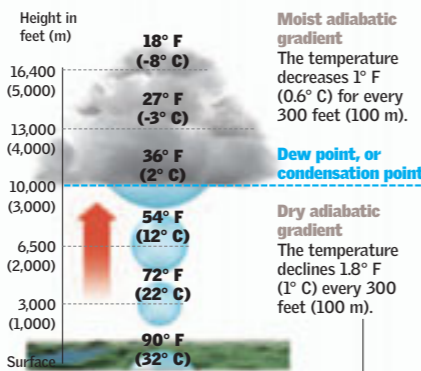
## The Effect of the Andes Mountains

### 1. HUMID WINDS

In the mountains, the predominant winds are moisture-laden and blow in the direction of the coastal mountains.

### 2. ASCENT AND CONDENSATION

Condensation occurs when a mass of air cools until it reaches the saturation point (relative humidity 100 percent). The dew point rises when the air becomes saturated as it cools and the pressure is held constant.



### 3. PRECIPITATION

A natural barrier forces the air to ascend and cool. The result is cloud formation and precipitation.

#### IN THE CLOUD

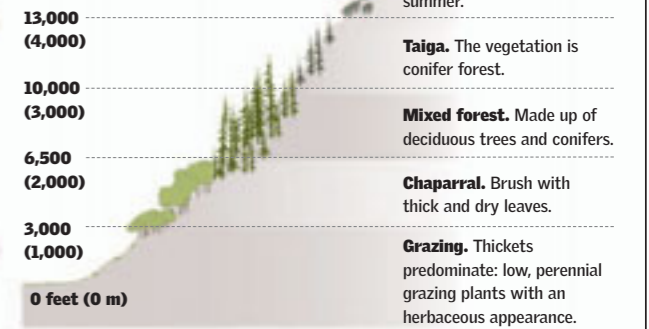
| Temperature (in °F / °C) | Composition            |
|--------------------------|------------------------|
| -40 to -4 (-40 to -20)   | Ice crystals           |
| -4 to 14 (-20 to -10)    | Supercooled water      |
| 14 to 32 (-10 to 0)      | Microdroplets of water |
| Greater than 32 (0)      | Drops of water         |

### MAJOR MOUNTAIN RANGES

| Mountain        | Elevation             |
|-----------------|-----------------------|
| Everest         | 29,035 feet (8,850 m) |
| Aconcagua       | 22,834 feet (6,960 m) |
| Dhaulagiri      | 26,795 feet (8,167 m) |
| Makalu          | 27,766 feet (8,463 m) |
| Nanga Parbat    | 26,660 feet (8,126 m) |
| Kanchenjunga    | 28,169 feet (8,586 m) |
| Ojos del Salado | 22,614 feet (6,893 m) |
| Kilimanjaro     | 19,340 feet (5,895 m) |



### VEGETATION



### SNOW

Drops of super-cooled water combine to form ice crystals.

The crystals grow in size.

While they are falling, they combine with other crystals.

### RAIN

The microdroplets increase in size and fall because of gravity.

When they fall, these drops collide with smaller ones.

Successive collisions increase the size of the drops.

### 4. DESCENDING WIND

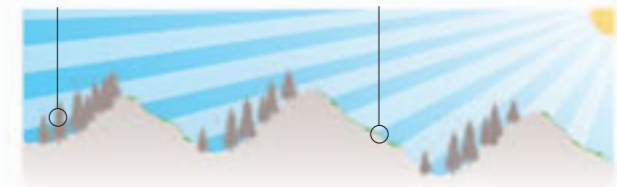
A natural barrier forces the air to descend and warm up.

#### Western slopes

receive most of the moisture, which leads to the growth of pine and other trees of coastal mountain ranges.

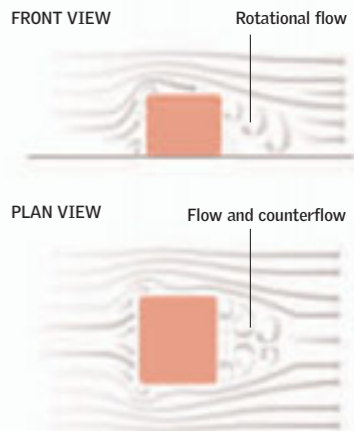
#### Eastern slopes

The rays of the Sun fall directly upon these areas, making them more arid. There is little or no vegetation.



### HOW OBSTACLES WORK

Obstacles, such as buildings, trees, and rock formations, decrease the velocity of the wind significantly and often create turbulence around them.

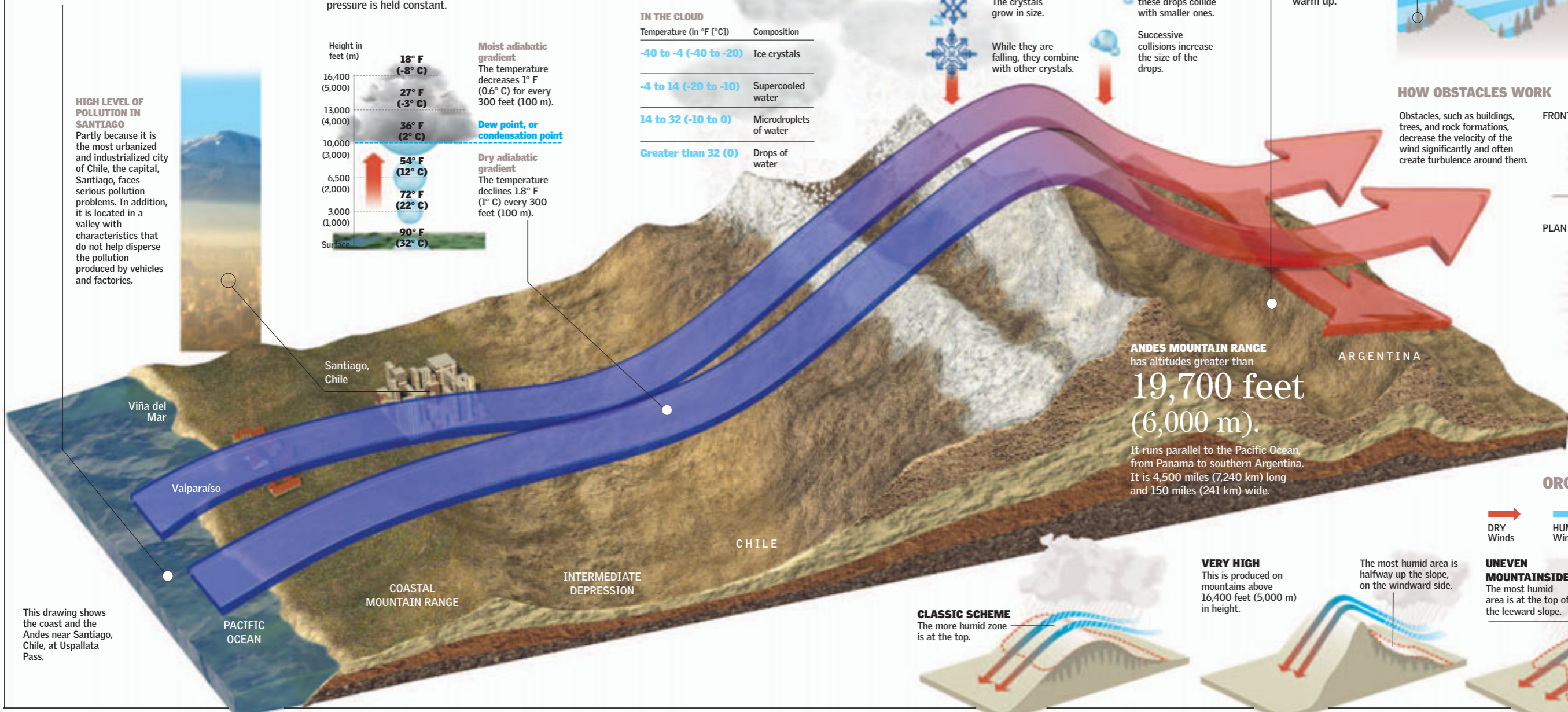


**ANDES MOUNTAIN RANGE** has altitudes greater than **19,700 feet (6,000 m)**.

It runs parallel to the Pacific Ocean, from Panama to southern Argentina. It is 4,500 miles (7,240 km) long and 150 miles (241 km) wide.

#### HIGH LEVEL OF POLLUTION IN SANTIAGO

Partly because it is the most urbanized and industrialized city of Chile, the capital, Santiago, faces serious pollution problems. In addition, it is located in a valley with characteristics that do not help disperse the pollution produced by vehicles and factories.



This drawing shows the coast and the Andes near Santiago, Chile, at Uspallata Pass.

### TYPES OF OROGRAPHICAL EFFECTS

→ DRY Winds  
 → HUMIDS Winds  
 - - - Area affected by precipitation

#### CLASSIC SCHEME

The more humid zone is at the top.

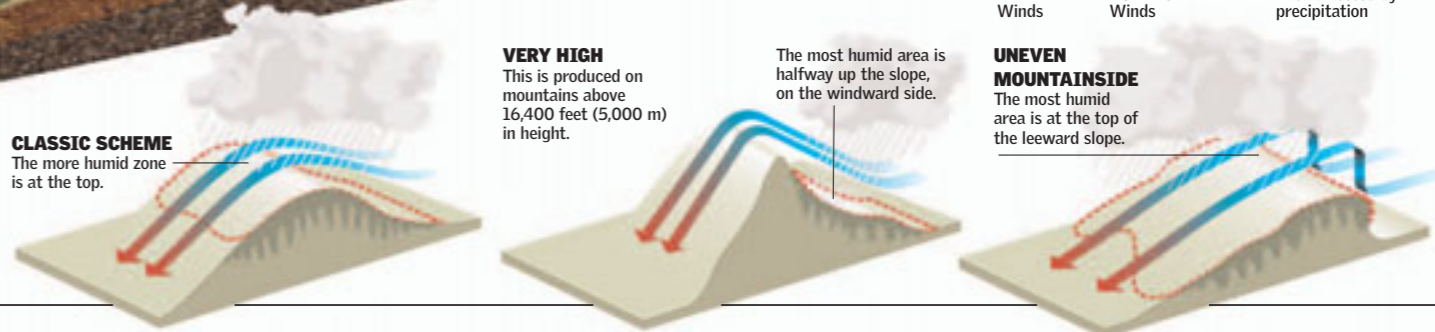
#### VERY HIGH

This is produced on mountains above 16,400 feet (5,000 m) in height.

The most humid area is halfway up the slope, on the windward side.

#### UNEVEN MOUNTAINSIDE

The most humid area is at the top of the leeward slope.



# The Land and the Ocean

Temperature distribution and, above all, temperature differences very much depend on the distribution of land and water surface. Differences in specific heat moderate the temperatures of regions close to great masses of water. Water absorbs heat and releases it more slowly than the land does, which is why a body of water can heat or cool the environment. Its influence is unmistakable. Moreover, these differences between the land and the sea are the cause of the coastal winds. In clear weather, the land heats up during the day, which causes the air to rise rapidly and form a low-pressure zone. This zone draws marine breezes.

## MOUNTAIN WINDS

### Chinook WINDS

These winds are dry and warm, sometimes quite hot, occurring in various places of the world. In the western United States, they are called chinooks and are capable of making snow disappear within minutes.

Humid winds are lifted over the slopes, creating clouds and precipitation on the windward side. These are called anabatic winds.

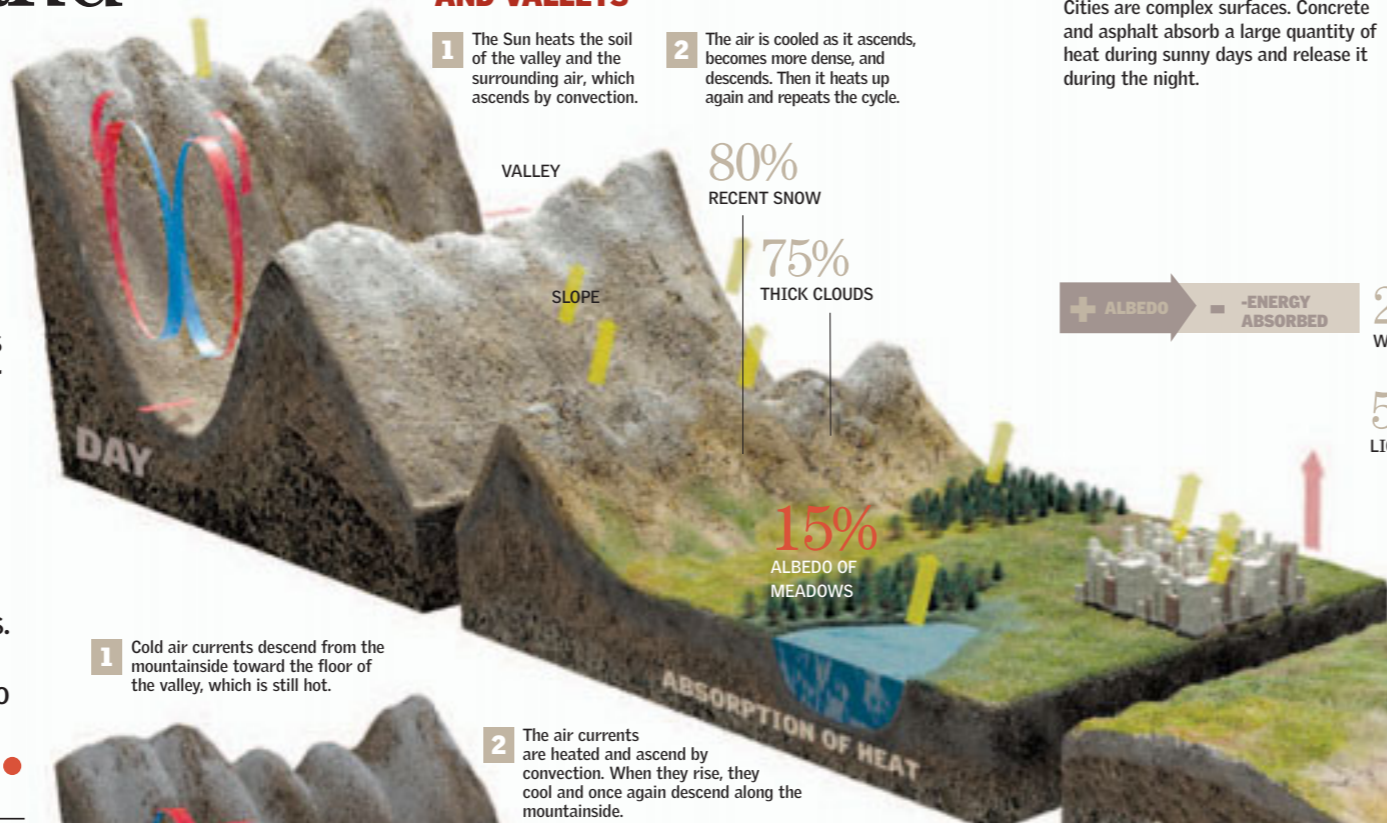
The dry and cool wind descends down the mountain slope on the leeward side. It is called katabatic.



| Winds        | Characteristics | Location                         |
|--------------|-----------------|----------------------------------|
| Autan wind   | Dry and mild    | Southwestern France              |
| Berg         | Dry and warm    | South Africa                     |
| Bora         | Dry and cold    | Northeastern Italy               |
| Brickfielder | Dry and hot     | Australia                        |
| Buran        | Dry and cold    | Mongolia                         |
| Harmattan    | Dry and cool    | North Africa                     |
| Levant       | Humid and mild  | Mediterranean region             |
| Mistral      | Dry and cold    | Rhône valley                     |
| Santa Ana    | Dry and hot     | Southern California              |
| Sirocco      | Dry and hot     | Southern Europe and North Africa |
| Tramontana   | Dry and cold    | Northeast Spain                  |
| Zonda        | Dry and mild    | Western Argentina                |

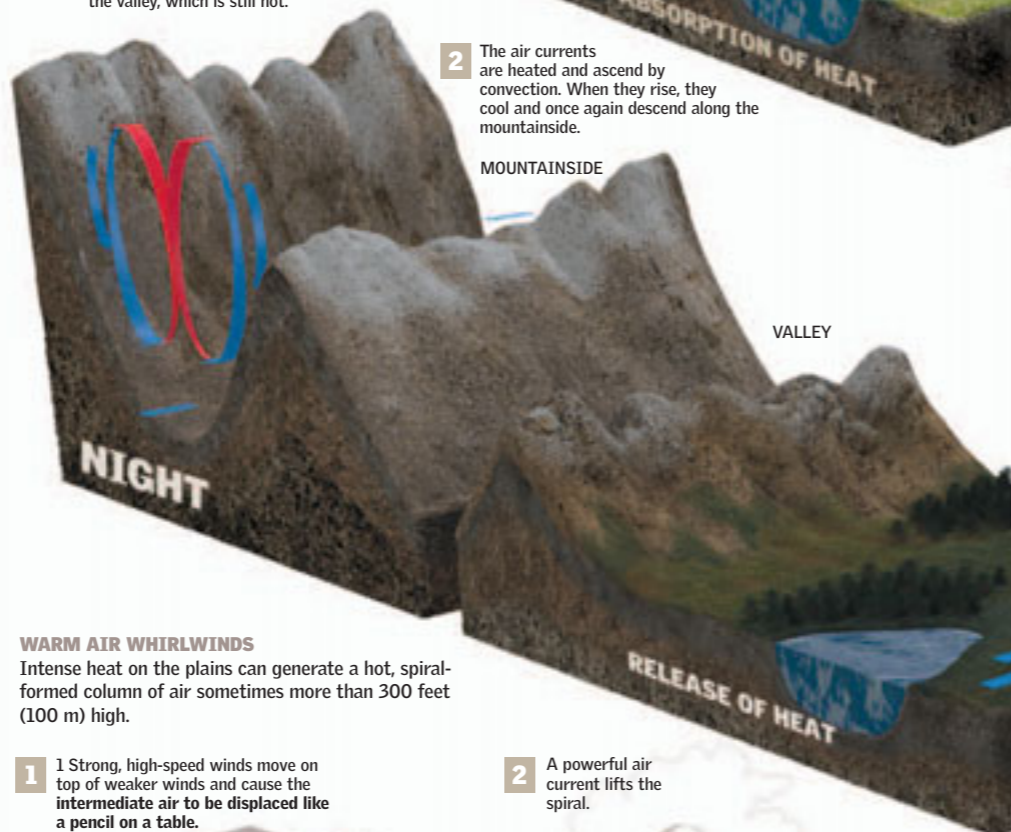
## WINDS OF THE MOUNTAINS AND VALLEYS

- 1 The Sun heats the soil of the valley and the surrounding air, which ascends by convection.
- 2 The air is cooled as it ascends, becomes more dense, and descends. Then it heats up again and repeats the cycle.



- 1 Cold air currents descend from the mountainside toward the floor of the valley, which is still hot.

- 2 The air currents are heated and ascend by convection. When they rise, they cool and once again descend along the mountainside.



### WARM AIR WHIRLWINDS

Intense heat on the plains can generate a hot, spiral-formed column of air sometimes more than 300 feet (100 m) high.

- 1 Strong, high-speed winds move on top of weaker winds and cause the intermediate air to be displaced like a pencil on a table.

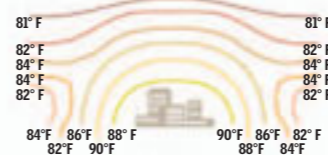
- 2 A powerful air current lifts the spiral.



## HEAT ISLANDS

Cities are complex surfaces. Concrete and asphalt absorb a large quantity of heat during sunny days and release it during the night.

### Isotherms in a typical city



They absorb a significant amount of heat but remain cool because much energy is used to evaporate the moisture.

## CONTINENTALITY

In the interior of a landmass, there is a wide variation of daily temperatures, while on the coasts, the influence of the ocean reduces this variation. This continentality effect is quite noticeable in the United States, Russia, India, and Australia.

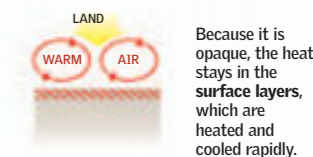


### Daily variation of temperatures in the United States

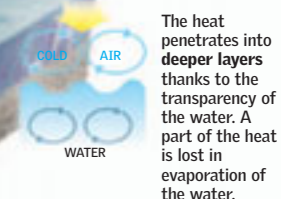


## COASTAL BREEZES

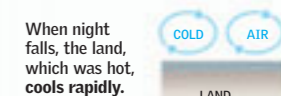
1. **ON THE LAND**  
During the day, the land heats up more rapidly than the ocean. The warm air rises and is replaced by cooler air coming from the sea.



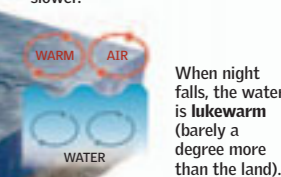
2. **ON THE LAND**  
During the evening, the land radiates away its heat more rapidly than the water. The difference in pressure generated replaces the cold air of the coast with warm air.



2. **ON THE LAND**  
During the evening, the land radiates away its heat more rapidly than the water. The difference in pressure generated replaces the cold air of the coast with warm air.



2. **ON THE OCEAN**  
The loss of heat from the water is slower.



# Monsoons

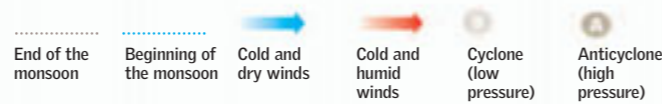
The strong humid winds that usually affect the tropical zone are called monsoons, an Arabic word meaning "seasonal winds." During summer in the Northern Hemisphere, they blow across Southeast Asia, especially the Indian peninsula. Conditions change in the winter, and the winds reverse and shift toward the northern regions of Australia. This phenomenon, which is also frequent in continental areas of the United States, is part of an annual cycle that, as a result of its intensity and its consequences, affects the lives of many people. ●

## AREAS AFFECTED BY MONSOONS

This phenomenon affects the climates in low latitudes, from West Africa to the western Pacific. In the summer, the monsoon causes the rains in the Amazon region and in northern Argentina. There in the winter rain is usually scarce.

Predominant direction of the winds during the month of July

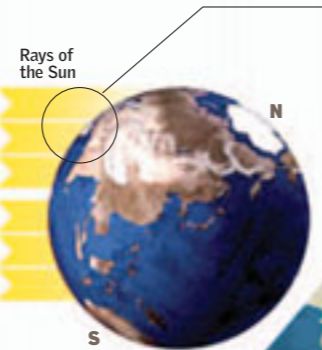
## How monsoons are created in India



**1 THE CONTINENT COOLS**  
After the summer monsoon, the rains stop and temperatures in Central and South Asia begin to drop. Winter begins in the Northern Hemisphere.

**Northern Hemisphere**  
It is winter. The rays of the Sun are oblique, traveling a longer distance through the atmosphere to reach the Earth's surface. Thus they are spread over a larger surface, so the average temperature is lower than in the Southern Hemisphere.

**Southern Hemisphere**  
It is summer. The rays of the Sun strike the surface at a right angle; they are concentrated in a smaller area, so the temperature on average is higher than in the Northern Hemisphere.



**2 FROM THE CONTINENT TO THE OCEAN**  
The masses of cold and dry air that predominate on the continent are displaced toward the ocean, whose waters are relatively warmer.

**3 OCEAN STORMS**  
A cyclone located in the ocean draws the cold winds from the continent and lifts the somewhat warmer and more humid air, which returns toward the continent via the upper layers of the atmosphere.

**INTERTROPICAL INFLUENCE**  
The circulation of the atmosphere between the tropics influences the formation of monsoon winds. The trade winds that blow toward the Equator from the subtropical zones are pushed by the Hadley cells and deflected in their course by the Coriolis effect. Winds in the tropics occur within a band of low pressure around the Earth called the Intertropical Convergence Zone (ITCZ). When this zone is seasonally displaced in the warm months of the Northern Hemisphere toward the north, a summer monsoon occurs.

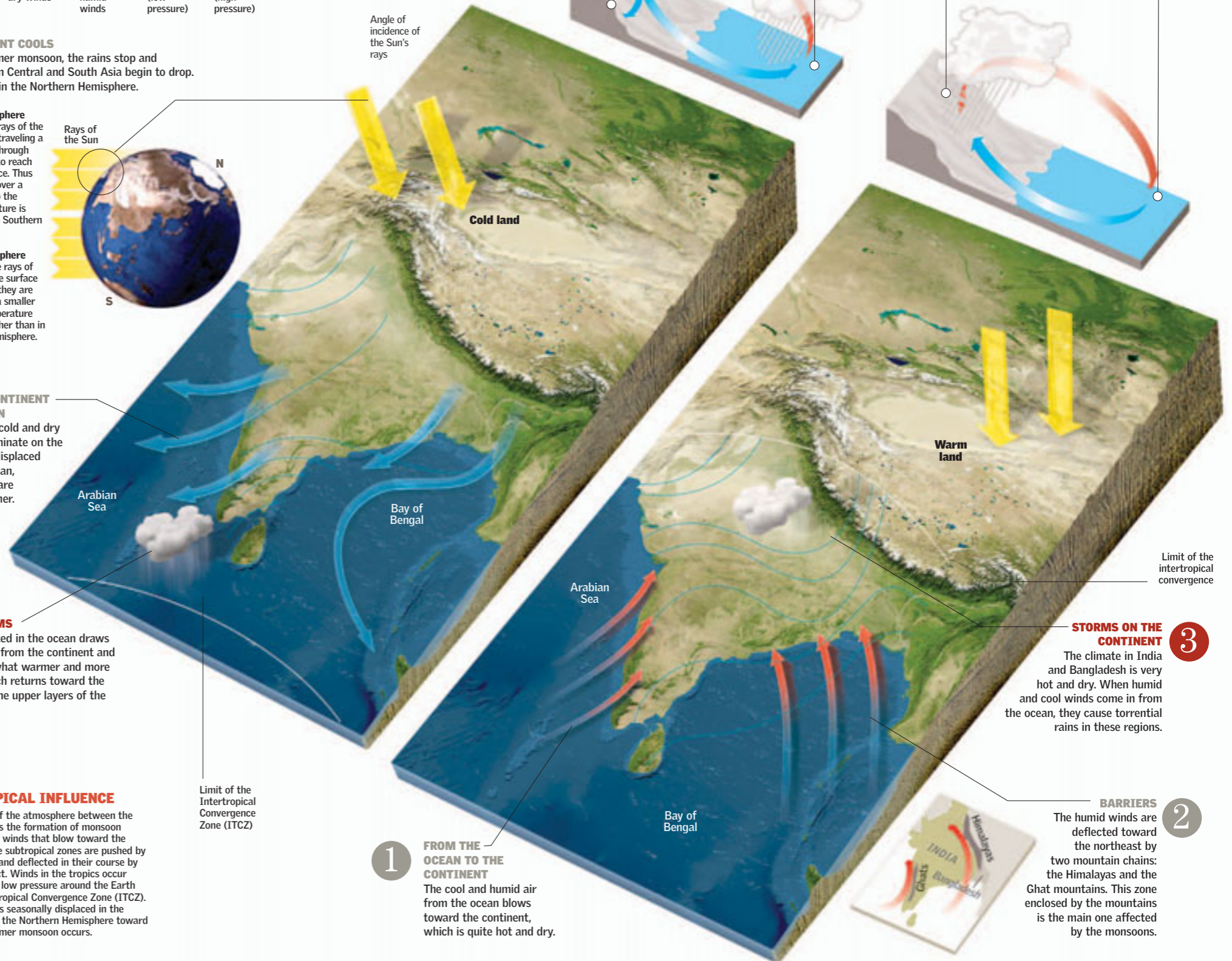
## THERMAL DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE LAND AND THE OCEAN

The land is cold, so near the ground the breeze blows toward the ocean.

The sea is a little warmer than the land; therefore, the humid air rises. The cool air colliding with it causes clouds and rain.

The Earth is hot, and therefore the air rises and is replaced in the lower layers by cool breezes that blow in from the sea. The meeting of the two breezes causes clouds and rain on the continent.

The sea is cold because the rays of the Sun heat up the water more slowly than the land. The cool air from the ocean blows toward the coast, toward areas that are warmer.



**1 FROM THE OCEAN TO THE CONTINENT**  
The cool and humid air from the ocean blows toward the continent, which is quite hot and dry.

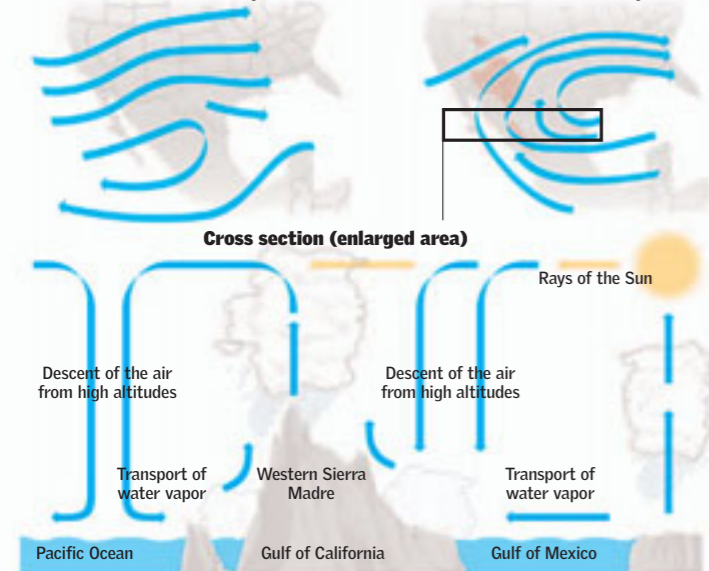
**3 STORMS ON THE CONTINENT**  
The climate in India and Bangladesh is very hot and dry. When humid and cool winds come in from the ocean, they cause torrential rains in these regions.

**2 BARRIERS**  
The humid winds are deflected toward the northeast by two mountain chains: the Himalayas and the Ghat mountains. This zone enclosed by the mountains is the main one affected by the monsoons.

## THE MONSOON OF NORTH AMERICA

Pre-monsoon. Month of May.

Monsoon. Month of July.



# Good Fortune and Catastrophe

The monsoons are a climatic phenomenon governing the life and the economy of one of the most densely populated regions of the planet, especially India. The arrival of the intense rains is celebrated as the end of a season that might have been extremely dry, but it is also feared. The flooding at times devastates agriculture and housing. The damage is even greater because of the large population of the region. Therefore, anticipating disaster and taking precautions, such as evacuating areas prone to flooding, are part of the organization of agricultural activity, which thrives in periods of heavy rains, even in fields that are flooded.



**UNDERWATER HARVEST**

The mud increases the fertility of the soil, which compensates for the losses. The accumulation of humid sand is later used in the dry season. Rice is a grain that grows in fields that are underwater.

**OVERFLOWING RIVERS**

The valley that connects the Ganges with the Brahmaputra in Bangladesh is the most afflicted by floods caused by these rains. The rains destroy harvests and property.

**In June 2006**

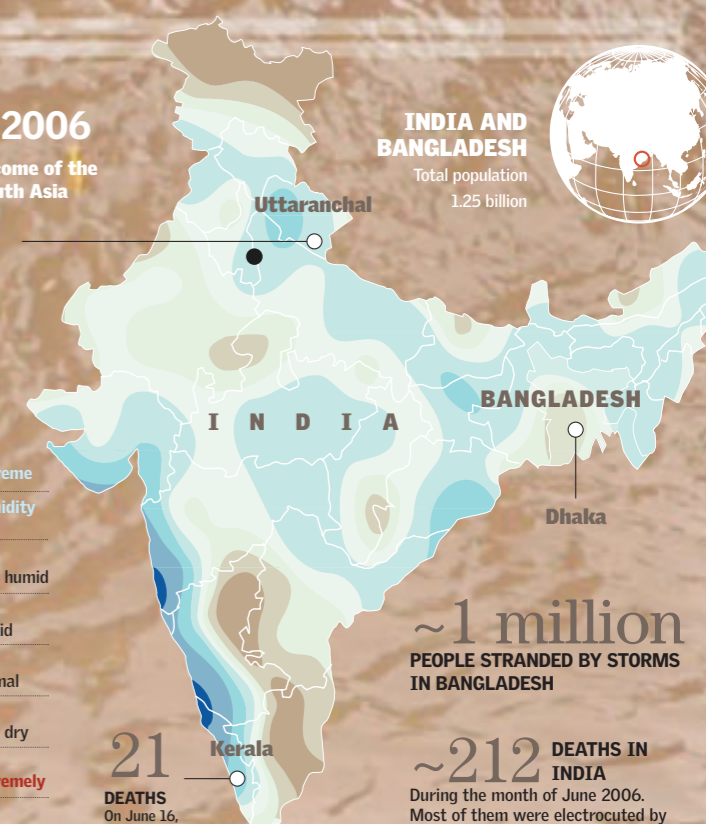
The tragic outcome of the monsoon in South Asia

~49

DEATHS  
on June 16, 2006

Precipitation  
(in inches (mm))

|          |                  |
|----------|------------------|
| 16 (400) | Extreme humidity |
| 8 (200)  | Very humid       |
| 4 (100)  | Humid            |
| 2 (50)   | Normal           |
| 1 (25)   | Very dry         |
| 0.4 (10) | Extremely dry    |
| 0 (0)    |                  |



**INDIA AND BANGLADESH**  
Total population  
1.25 billion

~1 million  
PEOPLE STRANDED BY STORMS  
IN BANGLADESH

21

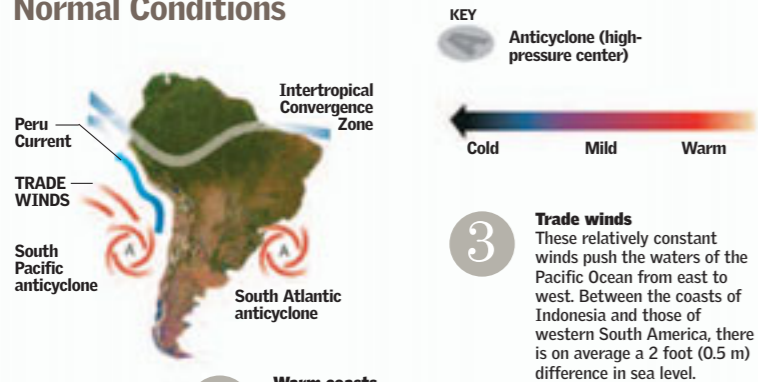
DEATHS  
On June 16,  
2006

~212 DEATHS IN  
INDIA  
During the month of June 2006.  
Most of them were electrocuted by  
lightning during electrical storms.

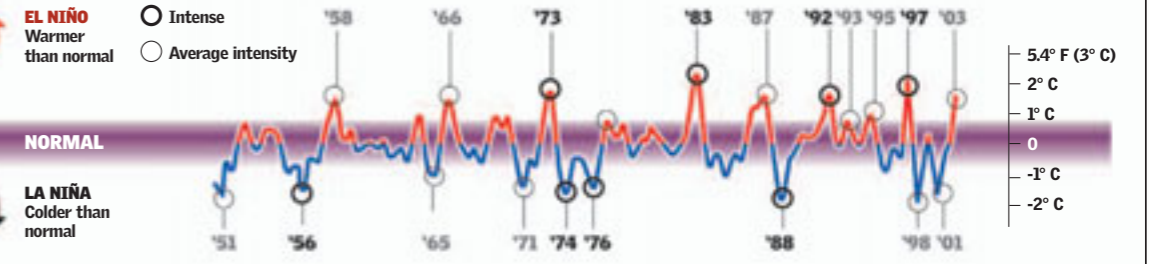
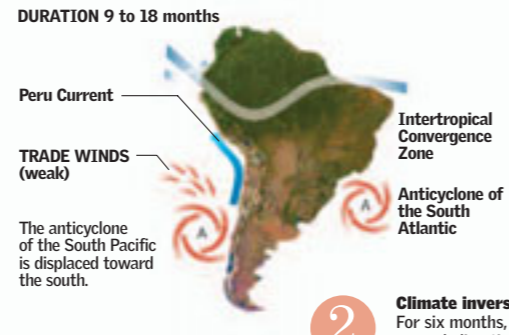
# The Arrival of El Niño

The hydrosphere and the atmosphere interact and establish a dynamic thermal equilibrium between the water and the air. If this balance is altered, unusual climatic phenomena occur between the coasts of Peru and Southeast Asia. For example, the phenomenon El Niño or, less frequently, another phenomenon called La Niña are responsible for atypical droughts and floods that every two to seven years affect the routine life of people living on these Pacific Ocean coasts. ●

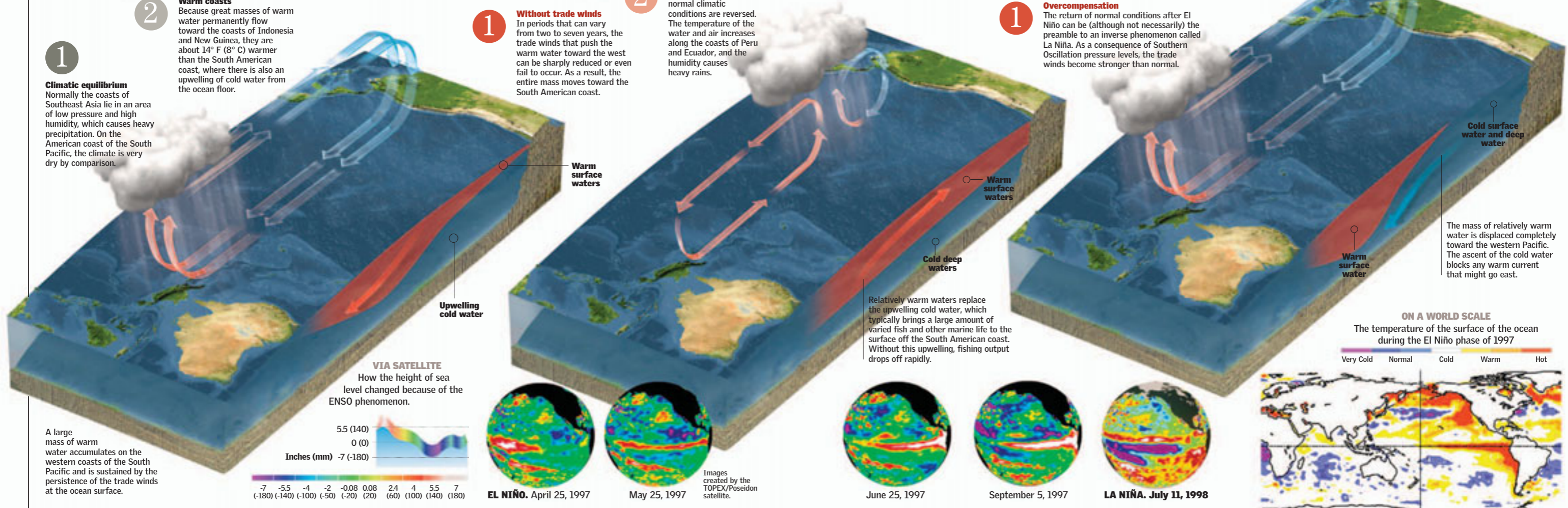
## Normal Conditions



## El Niño (the warm phase of El Niño/Southern Oscillation [ENSO])



## La Niña (cold ENSO)



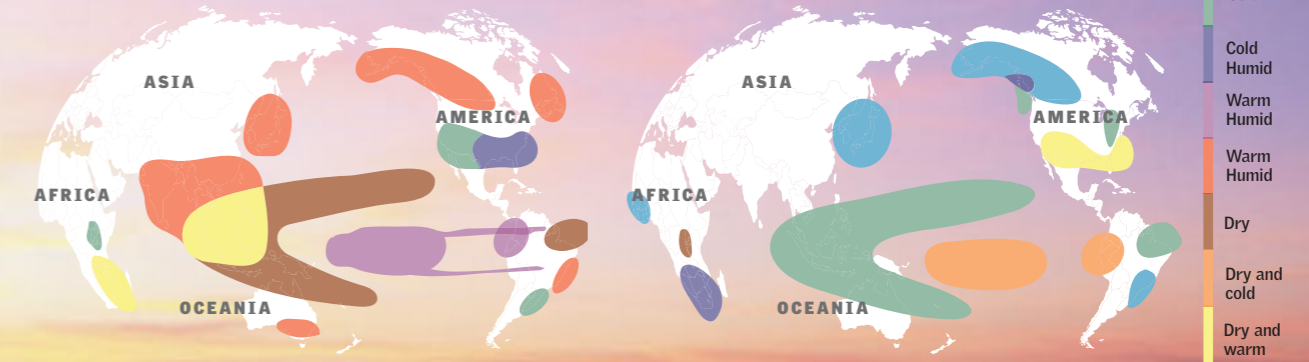
# The Effects of El Niño

The natural warm phenomenon known as El Niño alters the temperature of the water within the east central zone of the Pacific Ocean along the coasts of Ecuador and Peru. Farmers and fishermen are negatively affected by these changes in temperature and the modification of marine currents. The nutrients normally present in the ocean decrease or disappear from along the coast because of the increase in temperature. As the entire food chain deteriorates, other species also suffer the effects and disappear from the ocean. In contrast, tropical marine species that live in warmer waters can flourish. The phenomenon affects the weather and climate of the entire world. It tends to cause flooding, food shortages, droughts, and fires in various locations. ●

## Areas Affected

EL NIÑO from December to February

LA NIÑA from June to August



**ATACAMA, CHILE**  
 Laguna Blanca  
 Salt Marsh  
 Latitude 22° 54' S  
 Longitude 68° 12' W

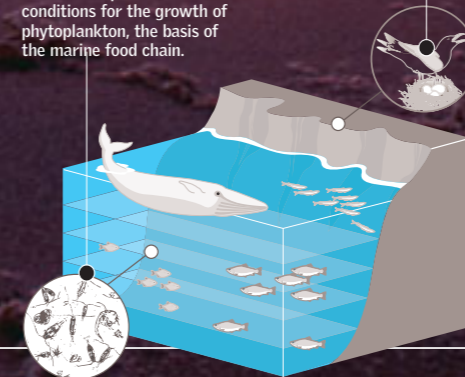
|              |                                    |
|--------------|------------------------------------|
| Surface area | 1,200 square miles (3,000 sq km)   |
| Cause        | Floods caused by El Niño anomalies |
| Year         | 1999                               |

**FLOODING**  
 Abnormal flooding caused by El Niño in the desert regions of Chile and the later evaporation of water leave behind hexagonal deposits of potassium nitrate.

**Normal conditions**

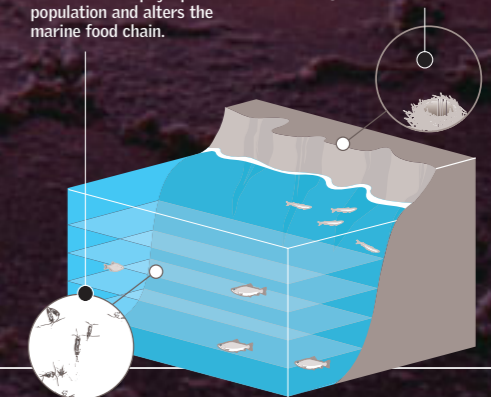
Cold waters, rich in nutrients, ascend from the bottom of the sea and provide favorable conditions for the growth of phytoplankton, the basis of the marine food chain.

The phytoplankton promote the normal development of microorganisms, fish, and other creatures.



**During El Niño,** the scarcity of cold water debilitates the phytoplankton population and alters the marine food chain.

Various marine species die off for lack of food or must migrate to other zones.



# Meteorological Phenomena

## HURRICANE ALERT

This image of Hurricane Elena, captured by the Space Shuttle on September 1, 1985, allowed meteorologists to evaluate its scope before it reached the Gulf of Mexico.

## CAPRICIOUS FORMS 38-39

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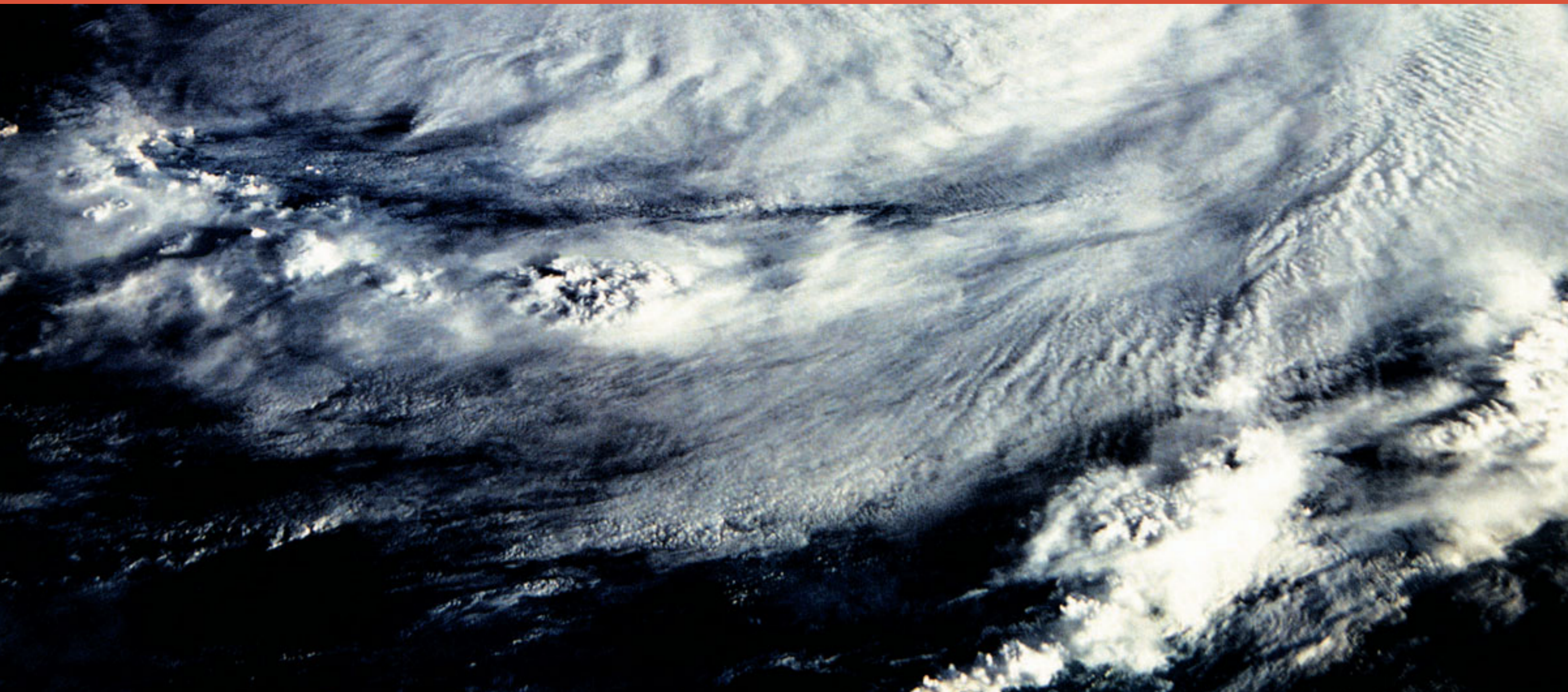
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**T**ropical cyclones (called hurricanes, typhoons, or cyclones in different parts of the world) cause serious problems and often destroy everything in their path.

They uproot trees, damage buildings, devastate land under cultivation, and cause deaths. The Gulf of Mexico is one of the areas of the planet continually affected by hurricanes. For this reason,

the government authorities organize preparedness exercises so that the population knows what to do. To understand how hurricanes function and improve forecasts, investigators

require detailed information from the heart of the storm. The use of artificial satellites that send clear pictures has contributed greatly to detecting and tracking strong winds, preventing many disasters. ●

# Capricious Forms

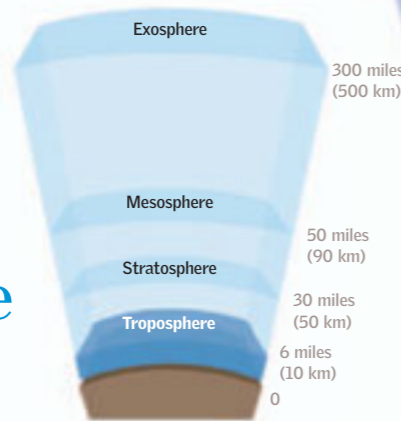
Clouds are masses of large drops of water and ice crystals. They form because the water vapor contained in the air condenses or freezes as it rises through the troposphere. How the clouds develop depends on the altitude and the velocity of the rising air. Cloud shapes are divided into three basic types: cirrus, cumulus, and stratus. They are also classified as high, medium, and low depending on the altitude they reach above sea level. They are of meteorological interest because they indicate the behavior of the atmosphere. ●

## TYPES OF CLOUDS

| NAME    | MEANING       |
|---------|---------------|
| CIRRUS  | FILAMENT      |
| CUMULUS | AGGLOMERATION |
| STRATUS | BLANKET       |
| NIMBUS  | RAIN          |

## Troposphere

The layer closest to the Earth and in which meteorological phenomena occur, including the formation of clouds



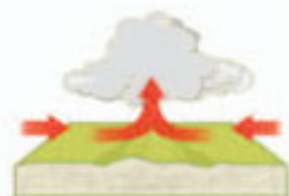
## HOW THEY ARE FORMED

Clouds are formed when the rising air cools to the point where it cannot hold the water vapor it contains. In such a circumstance, the air is said to be saturated, and the excess

water vapor condenses. Cumulonimbus clouds are storm clouds that can reach a height of 43,000 feet (13,000 m) and contain more than 150,000 tons of water.



**Convection**  
The heat of the Sun warms the air near the ground, and because it is less dense than the surrounding air, it rises.



**Convergence**  
When the air coming from one direction meets air from another direction, it is pushed upward.

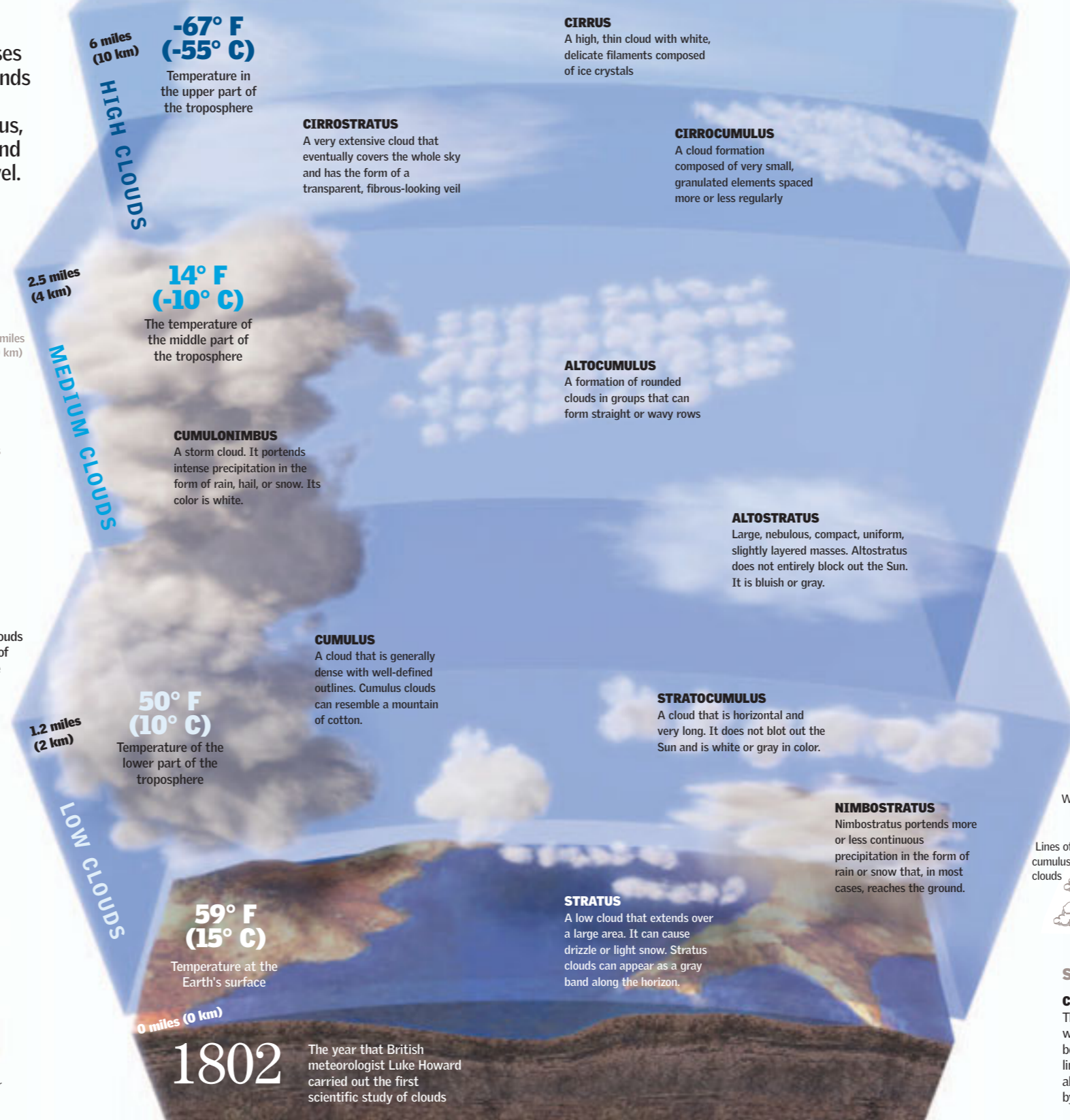


**Geographic elevation**  
When the air encounters mountains, it is forced to rise. This phenomenon explains why there are often clouds and rain over mountain peaks.



**Presence of a front**  
When two masses of air with different temperatures meet at a front, the warm air rises and clouds are formed.

T R O P O S P H E R E



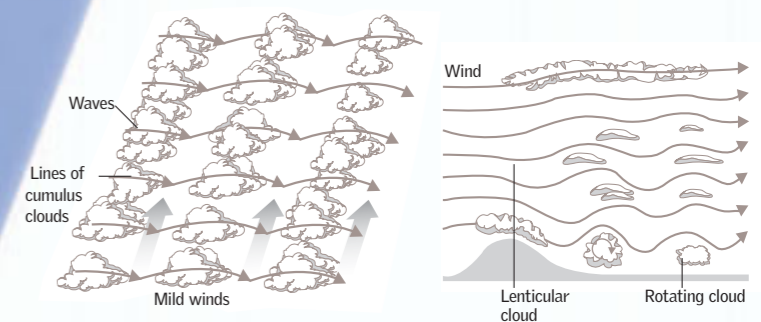
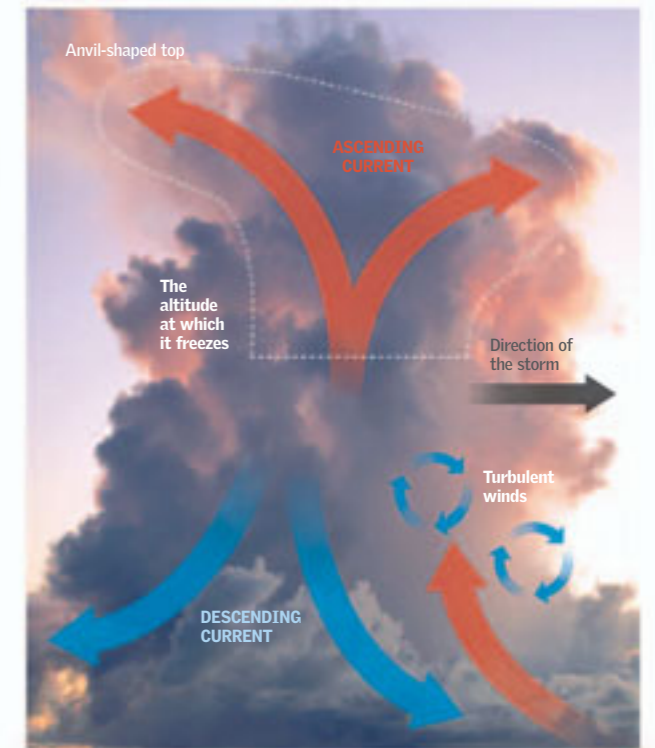
1802 The year that British meteorologist Luke Howard carried out the first scientific study of clouds

## The Inside

The altitude at which clouds are formed depends on the stability of the air and the humidity. The highest and coldest clouds have ice crystals. The lowest and warmest clouds have drops of water. There are also mixed clouds. There are 10 classes of clouds depending on their height above sea level. The highest clouds begin at a height of 2.5 miles (4 km). The mid-level begins at a height of 1.2 to 2.5 miles (2-4 km) and the lowest at 1.2 miles (2 km) high.

1.2 to 5 miles (2-8 km)  
Thickness of a storm cloud

150,000 tons of water  
can be contained in a storm cloud.



## SPECIAL FORMATIONS

**CLOUD STREETS**  
The form of the clouds depends on the winds and the topography of the terrain beneath them. Light winds usually produce lines of cumulus clouds positioned as if along streets. Such waves can be created by differences in surface heating.

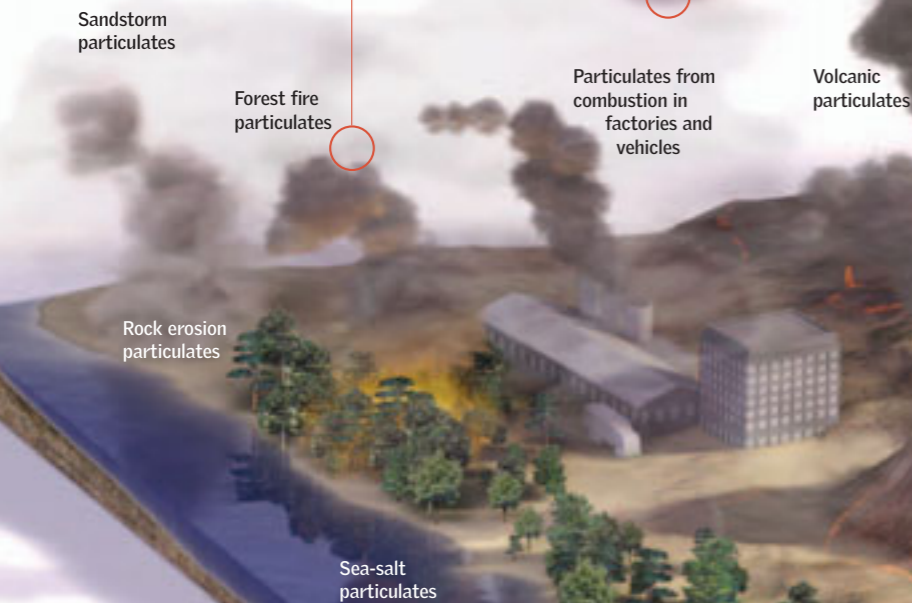
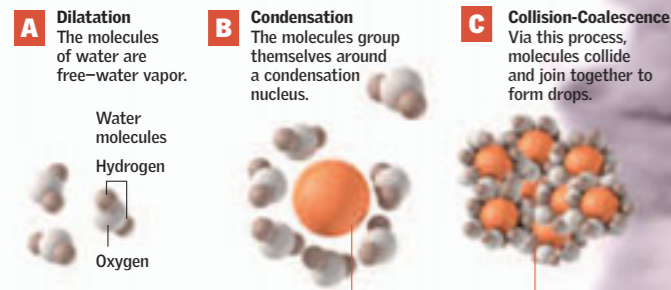
**LENTICULAR CLOUDS**  
Mountains usually create waves in the atmosphere on their lee side, and on the crest of each wave lenticular clouds are formed that are held in place by the waves. Rotating clouds are formed by turbulence near the surface.

# The Rain Announces Its Coming

The air inside a cloud is in continuous motion. This process causes the drops of water or the crystals of ice that constitute the cloud to collide and join together. In the process, the drops and crystals become too big to be supported by air currents and they fall to the ground as different kinds of precipitation. A drop of rain has a diameter 100 times greater than a droplet in a cloud. The type of precipitation depends on whether the cloud contains drops of water, ice crystals, or both. Depending on the type of cloud and the temperature, the precipitation can be liquid water (rain) or solid (snow or hail).

**1 CONDENSATION NUCLEI**  
Salt, dust, smoke, and pollen, among other particulates, serve as a surface on which water molecules, ascending by convection, can combine and form water droplets.

**2 GROWTH**  
The smallest clouds adhere to one another to form larger clouds, increasing their size and height.



LEVEL OF CONDENSATION

**3 MATURATION**  
Mature clouds have very strong ascending currents, leading to protuberances and rounded formations. Convection occurs.

4 miles (7 km)  
-22° F (-30° C)  
When the air cools, it descends and is then heated again, repeating the cycle.

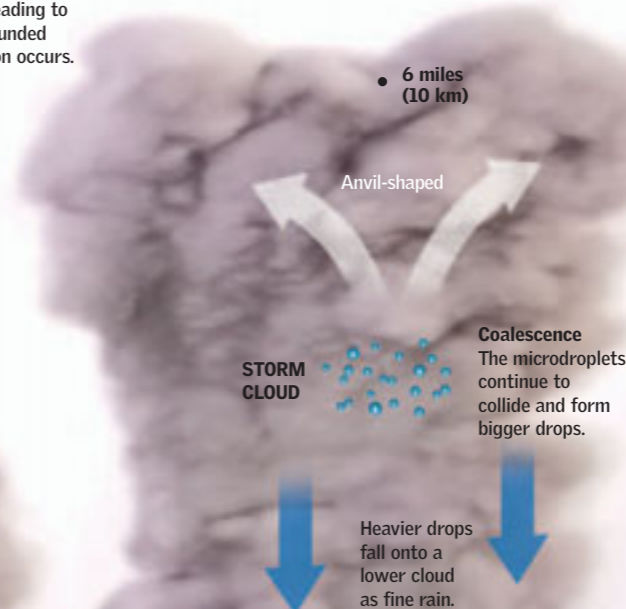
0.02 inch (0.5 mm)  
The air cools. The water vapor condenses and forms microdroplets of water.

0.6-1.2 miles (1-2 km)

68° F (20° C)  
The hot air rises.

0 miles (0 km)

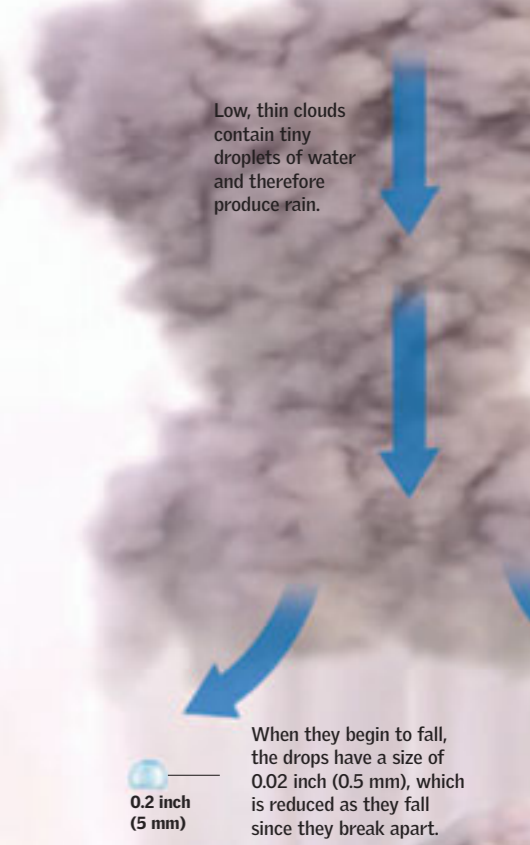
**4 RAIN**  
The upper part of the cloud spreads out like an anvil, and the rain falls from the lower cloud, producing descending currents.



0.04 inch (1 mm)

0.07 inch (2 mm)

**5 DISSIPATION**  
The descending currents are stronger than the ascending ones and interrupt the feeding air, causing the cloud to disintegrate.



0.2 inch (5 mm)

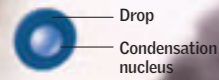
0.04 inch (1 mm)

**26,875 trillion**  
molecules occupy 1 cubic millimeter under normal atmospheric conditions.

**6 SNOW**  
Tiny ice crystals combine to form a hexagonal star, or snowflake. They form at  $-4^{\circ}\text{F}$  ( $-20^{\circ}\text{C}$ ).

**A HOW CRYSTALS ARE FORMED**

The drop attaches itself to a nucleus or solid particle.



Then the surface of the drop freezes.



**C**  
If the drops crystallize near the freezing level, they fall in the form of sleet.

**ASCENDING WARM CURRENT**

**SLEET**

**ICE CRYSTAL**

3 miles (5 km)  
 $-39^{\circ}\text{F}$  ( $-39^{\circ}\text{C}$ )

**SNOWFLAKE**

2 miles (3 km)  
 $-9^{\circ}\text{F}$  ( $-23^{\circ}\text{C}$ )

**B**  
The ice crystals combine and form snowflakes.

0.6 mile (1 km)  
 $19^{\circ}\text{F}$  ( $-7^{\circ}\text{C}$ )

**SNOWFALL**

Most snowflakes disintegrate before they reach the ground. They fall as snowflakes only when the air near the ground is very cold.

10 feet (3.11 m)

The record of annual snowfall Mount Rainier, Washington. From February 19, 1971, to February 18, 1972.

**HYDROMETEORS**

Drops of condensed or frozen water in the atmosphere are called hydrometeors. These include rain, fog, hail, mist, snow, and frost.

**DEW**

Water vapor that condenses during the night into very small drops. The condensation forms on surfaces that radiate heat during the night, such as plants, animals, and buildings.



**TYPES OF CRYSTALS**



Plate



Column

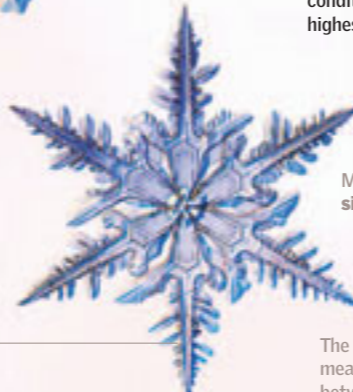


Dendrite



Needle clusters

No two snowflakes are identical to each other.



**VARIED FORMS**

Snow crystals can have a variety of shapes; most of them have six points, although some have three or 12, and they have hexagonal symmetry in a plane. They can also be cubic crystals, but these form under conditions of extremely low temperature in the highest regions of the troposphere.

Most have six points.

The flakes measure between 0.04 and 0.8 inch (1 and 20 mm).

**WARM ASCENDING CURRENT**

**A**  
Vertical air currents cause the microdroplets to ascend and descend within the cloud.

A cloud with a greenish tinge or rain with a whitish color can portend a hailstorm.

**B**  
The droplets freeze, and each time they are carried upward in the cloud, they acquire a new layer of ice. This process, called accretion, increases the size of the hailstone.

Very small hail (0.2 inch [5 mm] or less in diameter) is called snow pellets.

**C**  
When the hailstones are too heavy to be supported by the ascending air currents, they fall to the ground.

**7 HAIL**  
Precipitation in the form of solid lumps of ice. Hail is produced inside storm clouds in which frozen droplets grow in size as they rise and fall within the cloud.

**CROSS SECTION OF A HAILSTONE**



0.2 to 2 inches (5 to 50 mm)  
The typical range of hailstone sizes

2 pounds (1 kg)

The heaviest hailstones that fell on April 14, 1986, in Gopalganj, Bangladesh.

**FROST**

Frost forms when the dew point of the air is less than  $32^{\circ}\text{F}$  ( $0^{\circ}\text{C}$ ), and the water vapor transforms directly into ice when it is deposited on surfaces.

**HOAR FROST**

Similar to frost but thicker. It usually forms when there is fog.

$27^{\circ}\text{F}$  ( $-3^{\circ}\text{C}$ )  
Temperature of the air

$32^{\circ}\text{F}$  ( $0^{\circ}\text{C}$ )  
**DEW POINT**

$41^{\circ}\text{F}$  ( $5^{\circ}\text{C}$ )  
Temperature of the ground

# Lost in the Fog

When atmospheric water vapor condenses near the ground, it forms fog and mist. The fog consists of small droplets of water mixed with smoke and dust particles. Physically the fog is a cloud, but the difference between the two lies in their formation. A cloud develops when the air rises and cools, whereas fog forms when the air is in contact with the ground, which cools it and condenses the water vapor. The atmospheric phenomenon of fog decreases visibility to distances of less than 1 mile (1.6 km) and can affect ground, maritime, and air traffic. When the fog is light, it is called mist. In this case, visibility is reduced to 2 miles (3.2 km).

160 feet  
(50 m)

The densest fog affects visibility at this distance and has repercussions on car, boat, and airplane traffic. In many cases, visibility can be zero.

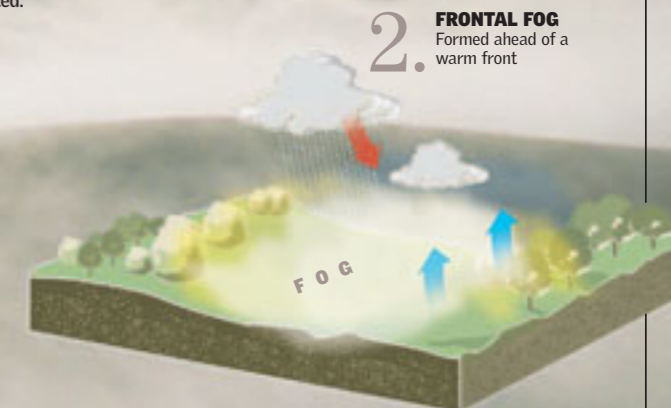
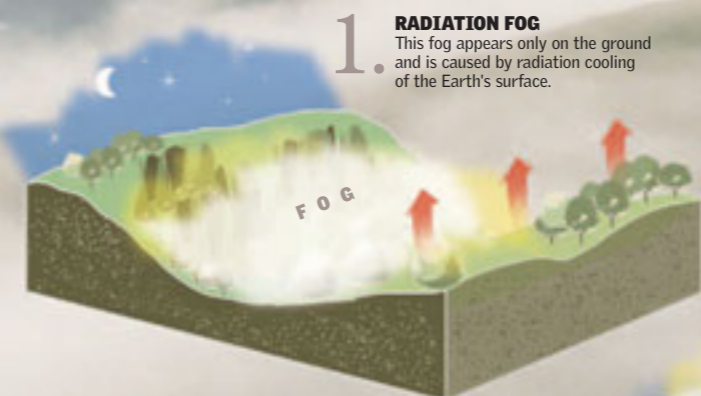
## Fog and Visibility

Visibility is defined as a measure of an observer's ability to recognize objects at a distance through the atmosphere. It is expressed in miles and indicates the visual limit imposed by the presence of fog, mist, dust, smoke, or any type of artificial or natural precipitation in the atmosphere. The different degrees of fog density have various effects on maritime, land, and air traffic.



## Types of Fog

**Radiation fog** forms during cold nights when the land loses the heat that was absorbed during the day. Frontal fog forms when water that is falling has a higher temperature than the surrounding air; the drops of rain evaporate, and the air tends to become saturated. These fogs are thick and persistent. Advection fog occurs when humid, warm air flows over a surface so cold that it causes the water vapor from the air to condense.



**Orographic barrier**  
Fog develops on lee-side mountain slopes at high altitudes and occurs when the air becomes saturated with moisture.

**4. OROGRAPHIC FOG**

The air becomes saturated as it ascends.

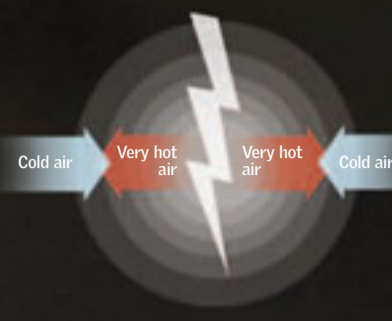
ASCENDING AIR

**Dew**  
The condensation of water vapor on objects that have radiated enough heat to decrease their temperature below the dew point

**Mist**  
Mist consists of salt and other dry particles imperceptible to the naked eye. When the concentration of these particles is very high, the clarity, color, texture, and form of objects we see are diminished.

# Brief Flash

Electrical storms are produced in large cumulonimbus-type clouds, which typically bring heavy rains in addition to lightning and thunder. The storms form in areas of low pressure, where the air is warm and less dense than the surrounding atmosphere. Inside the cloud, an enormous electrical charge accumulates, which is then discharged with a zigzag flash between the cloud and the ground, between the cloud and the air, or between one cloud and another. This is how the flash of lightning is unleashed. Moreover, the heat that is released during the discharge generates an expansion and contraction of the air that is called thunder. ●



**THUNDER**  
This is the sound produced by the air when it expands very rapidly, generating shock waves as it is heated.



**1. ORIGIN**  
Lightning originates within large cumulonimbus storm clouds. Lightning bolts can have negative or positive electric charges.



**2. INSIDE THE CLOUD**  
Electrical charges are produced from the collisions between ice or hail crystals. Warm air currents rise, causing the charges in the cloud to shift.



**3. ELECTRICAL CHARGES**  
The cloud's negative charges are attracted to the positive charges of the ground. The difference in electrical potential between the two regions produces the discharge.



**4. DISCHARGE**  
The discharge takes place from the cloud toward the ground after the stepped leader, a channel of ionized air, extends down to the ground.

**SEPARATION**  
The charges become separated, with the positive charges accumulating at the top of the cloud and the negative charges at the base.

**INDUCED CHARGE**  
The negative charge of the base of the cloud induces a positive charge in the ground below it.

## TYPES OF LIGHTNING

Lightning can be distinguished primarily by the path taken by the electrical charges that cause them.



### Cloud-to-air

The electricity moves from the cloud toward an air mass of opposite charge.

### Cloud-to-cloud

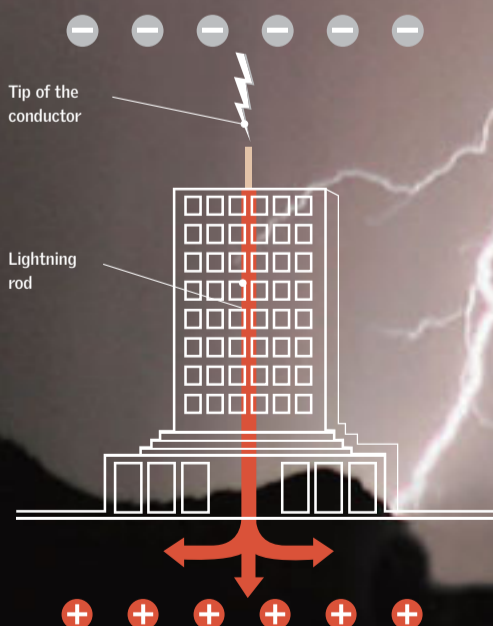
A lightning flash can occur within a cloud or between two oppositely charged areas.

### Cloud-to-ground

Negative charges of the cloud are attracted by the positive charges of the ground.

## LIGHTNING RODS

The primary function of lightning rods is to facilitate the electrostatic discharge, which follows the path of least electrical resistance.



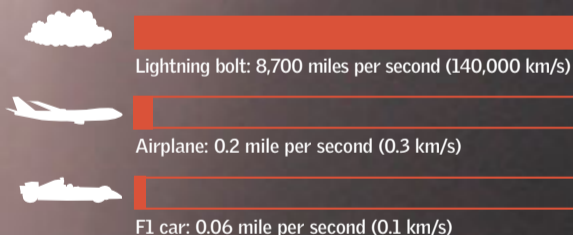
A lightning rod is an instrument whose purpose is to attract a lightning bolt and channel the electrical discharge to the ground so that it does no harm to buildings or people. A famous experiment by Benjamin Franklin led to the invention of this apparatus. During a lightning storm, he flew a kite into clouds, and it received a strong discharge. That marked the birth of the lightning rod, which consists of an iron rod placed on the highest point of the object to be protected and connected to the ground by a metallic, insulated conductor. The principle of all lightning rods, which terminate in one or more points, is to attract and conduct the lightning bolt to the ground.



**65 feet (20 m)**

This is the radius of a lightning bolt's effective range on the surface of the Earth.

**8,700 miles per second**  
(140,000 km/s) speed

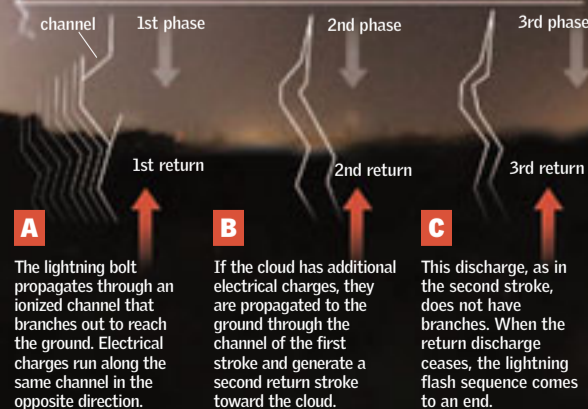


**100 million volts**  
IS THE ELECTRICAL POTENTIAL OF A LIGHTNING BOLT.

A windmill generates 200 volts. | 110 volts is consumed by a lamp.

**5. RETURN STROKE** In the final phase, the discharge rises from the Earth to the cloud.

### DISCHARGE SEQUENCE



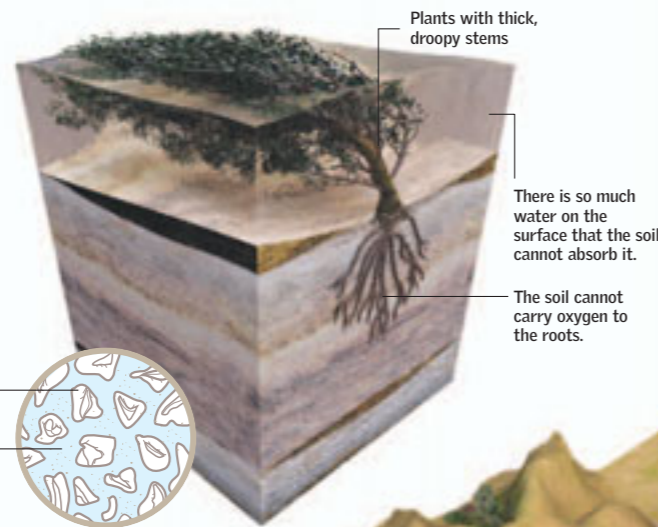
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# When Water Accumulates

**W**ater is a vital element for life, but in excess it leads to serious consequences for people and their economic activity. Flooding occurs when certain areas that are normally dry are covered with water for a more or less prolonged period. The most important causes are excessive rains, the overflow of rivers and lakes, and giant waves that wash over the coast. Such waves can be the result of unusually high tides caused by strong surface winds or by submarine earthquakes. Walls, dikes, dams, and embankments are used to help prevent flooding. ●

## Flooded Land

When land is flooded for days or months, the air in the soil is replaced by water, which prevents the buildup of oxygen, thus affecting the biological activity of plants and the soil itself. In the latter case, if the water does not have sufficient salt, the incomplete decomposition of organic matter and the significant washing away of nutrients make the soil more acidic. If the water contains a great deal of salt, the salt will remain in the soil, causing a different problem: salinization.



## Floodplains

Floodplains are areas adjacent to rivers or streams that are subject to recurrent flooding.

## Reduction

The components of the soil that are oxidized can be reduced and thus change their properties.

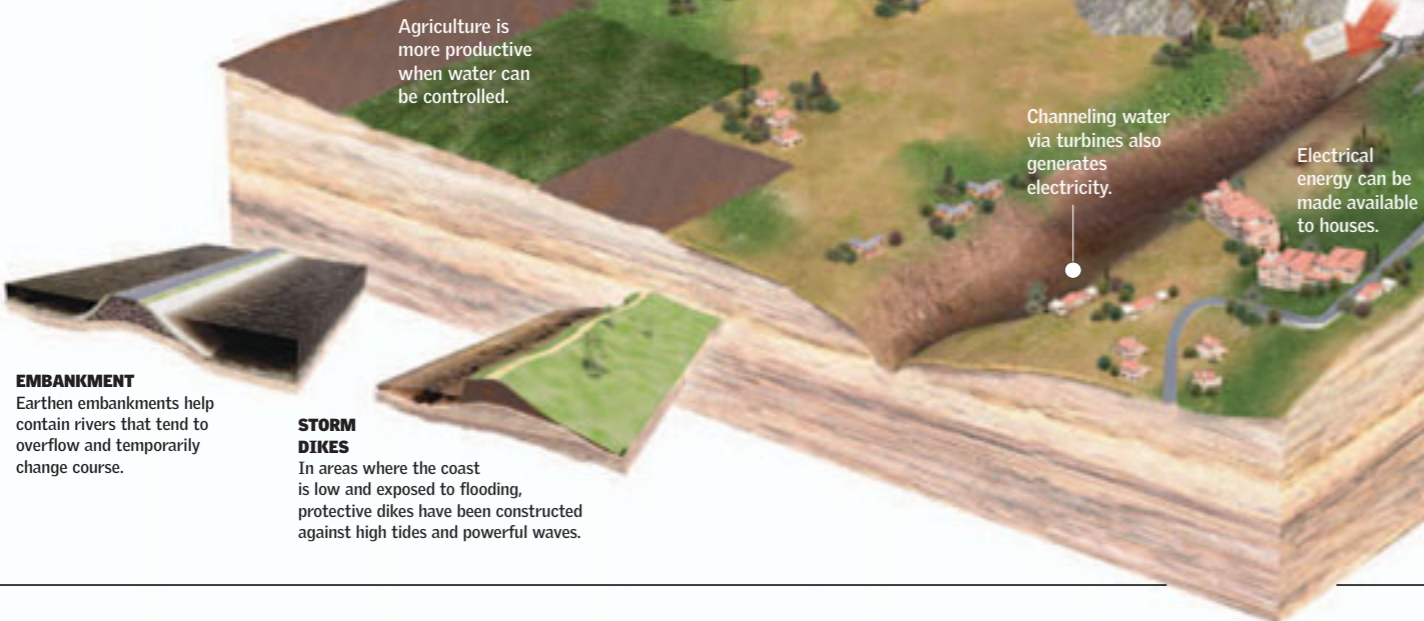
Solid particulates

The water causes a decline in oxygen in the aerated spaces of the soil.



## Flood Control

With the construction of dikes and embankments, the flow of rivers prone to flooding is largely contained.



**EMBANKMENT**  
Earthen embankments help contain rivers that tend to overflow and temporarily change course.

**STORM DIKES**  
In areas where the coast is low and exposed to flooding, protective dikes have been constructed against high tides and powerful waves.

## Torrential Rains

Caused by low pressure systems, instability of the air mass, and high humidity

**Torrential rains** raise the level of the water in the rivers and the riverbeds.

**Snow** increases runoff into the rivers.

Little or no rain penetrates into the valley slopes covered with pines.

Principal river

Tributary river

**Low-lying terrain**  
The main river cannot contain the increased flow of the tributary rivers.

**250,000**

Victims of flooding in the Bay of Bengal, Bangladesh, in 1970

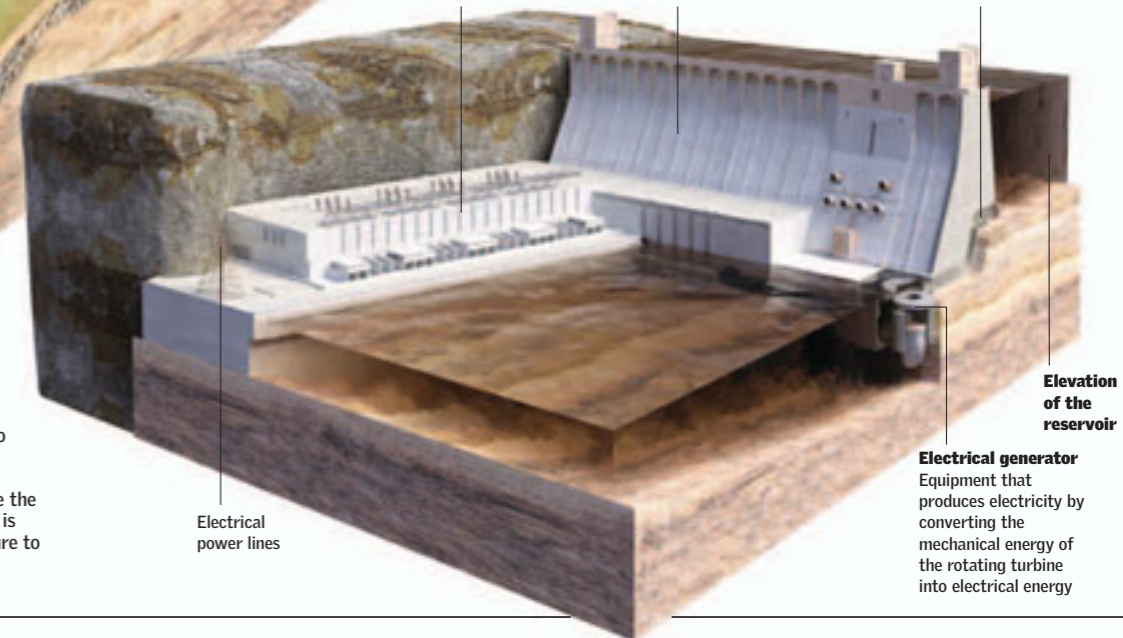
## Hydroelectric Plants

use the force and velocity of running water to turn turbines. There are two types: run-off-river (which uses the natural kinetic energy of the river's running waters) and reservoir (where the water accumulates behind dams and is then released under increased pressure to the power plant).

**Transformers**  
Their job is to transform the voltage of the electric current.

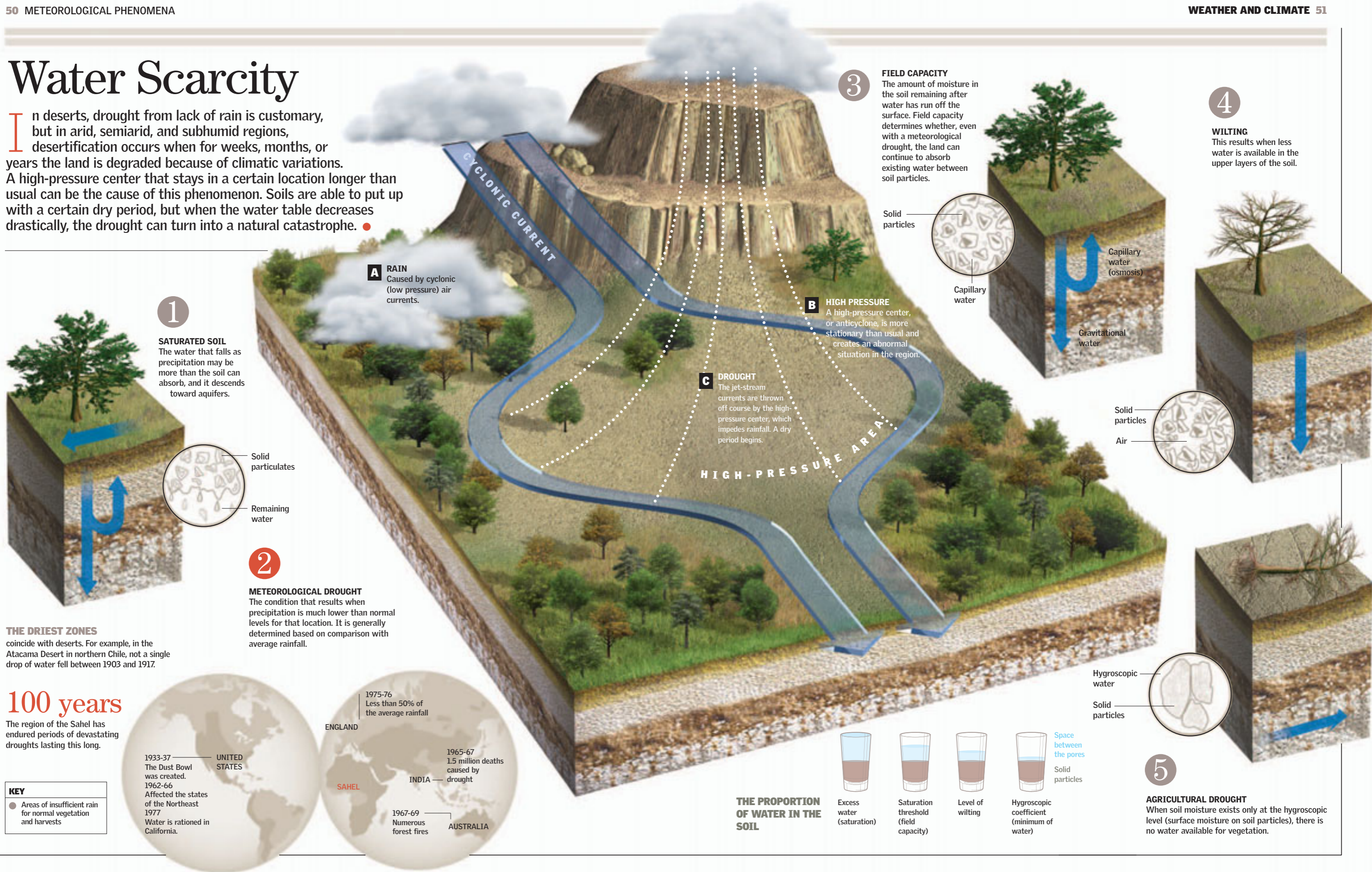
**Dam**  
stores water to divert it or to regulate its flow outside the riverbed.

**Filtering grates**  
prevent the passage of unwanted objects in the water used to produce hydroelectric power.



# Water Scarcity

In deserts, drought from lack of rain is customary, but in arid, semiarid, and subhumid regions, desertification occurs when for weeks, months, or years the land is degraded because of climatic variations. A high-pressure center that stays in a certain location longer than usual can be the cause of this phenomenon. Soils are able to put up with a certain dry period, but when the water table decreases drastically, the drought can turn into a natural catastrophe. ●



**1 SATURATED SOIL**  
The water that falls as precipitation may be more than the soil can absorb, and it descends toward aquifers.

**A RAIN**  
Caused by cyclonic (low pressure) air currents.

**B HIGH PRESSURE**  
A high-pressure center, or anticyclone, is more stationary than usual and creates an abnormal situation in the region.

**C DROUGHT**  
The jet-stream currents are thrown off course by the high-pressure center, which impedes rainfall. A dry period begins.

**2 METEOROLOGICAL DROUGHT**  
The condition that results when precipitation is much lower than normal levels for that location. It is generally determined based on comparison with average rainfall.

**3 FIELD CAPACITY**  
The amount of moisture in the soil remaining after water has run off the surface. Field capacity determines whether, even with a meteorological drought, the land can continue to absorb existing water between soil particles.

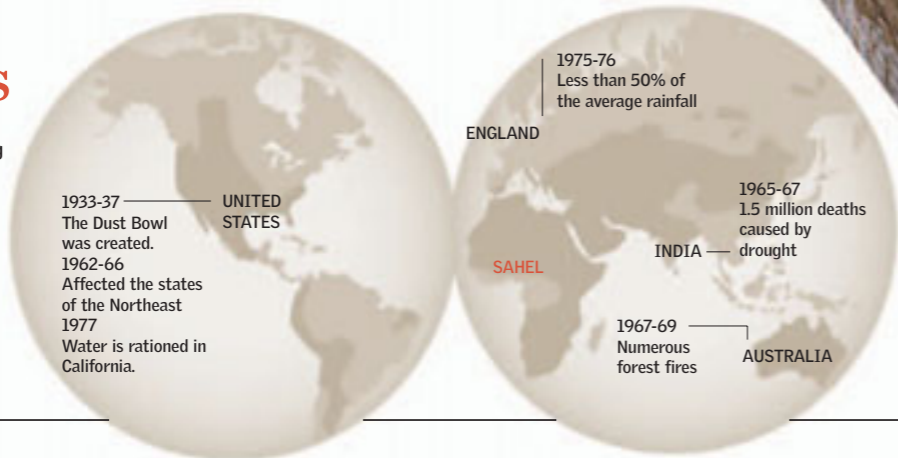
**4 WILTING**  
This results when less water is available in the upper layers of the soil.

**5 AGRICULTURAL DROUGHT**  
When soil moisture exists only at the hygroscopic level (surface moisture on soil particles), there is no water available for vegetation.

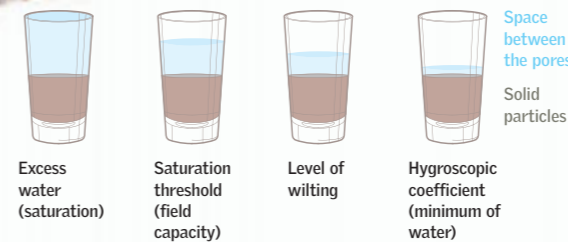
**THE DRIEST ZONES**  
coincide with deserts. For example, in the Atacama Desert in northern Chile, not a single drop of water fell between 1903 and 1917.

**100 years**  
The region of the Sahel has endured periods of devastating droughts lasting this long.

**KEY**  
● Areas of insufficient rain for normal vegetation and harvests



**THE PROPORTION OF WATER IN THE SOIL**



# Lethal Force

Tornadoes are the most violent storms of nature. They are generated by electrical storms (or sometimes as the result of a hurricane), and they take the form of powerful funnel-shaped whirlwinds that extend from the sky to the ground. In these storms, moving air is mixed with soil and other matter rotating at velocities as high as 300 miles per hour (480 km/h). They can uproot trees, destroy buildings, and turn harmless objects into deadly airborne projectiles. A tornado can devastate a whole neighborhood within seconds. ●

6 miles  
(10 km)

Maximum height that it can attain



TOP  
The top of the tornado remains inside the cloud.

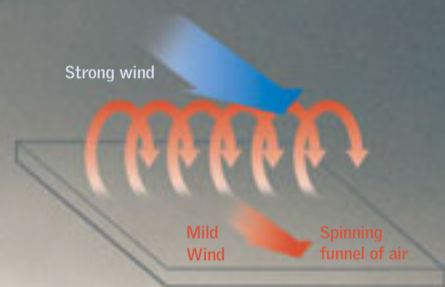
## How They Form

Tornadoes begin to form when a current of warm air ascends inside a cumulonimbus cloud and begins to rotate under the influence of winds in the upper part of the cloud. From the base of the column, air is sucked toward the inside of the turning spiral. The air

rotates faster as it approaches the center of the column. This increases the force of the ascending current, and the column continues to grow until it stretches from high in the clouds to the ground. Because of their short duration, they are difficult to study and predict.

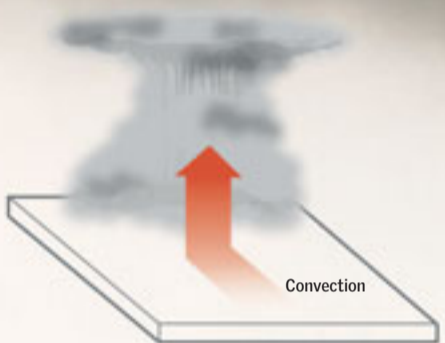
300 miles  
per hour  
(480 km/h)

Maximum velocity the tornado winds can attain



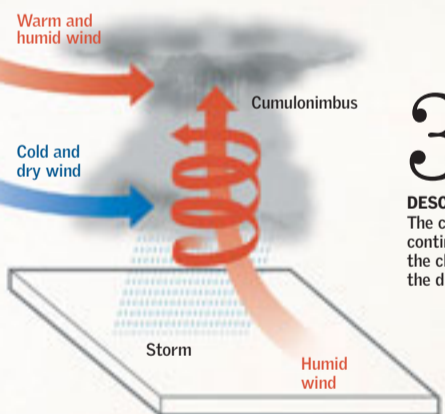
1.

**BEGINNING OF A TORNADO**  
When the winds meet, they cause the air to rotate in a clockwise direction in the Southern Hemisphere and in the reverse direction in the Northern Hemisphere.



2.

**ROTATION**  
The circulation of the air causes a decrease in pressure at the center of the storm, creating a central column of air.



3.

**DESCENT**  
The central whirling column continues to descend within the cloud, perforating it in the direction of the ground.

4.

**THE OUTCOME**  
The tornado reaches the Earth and depending on its intensity can send the roofs of buildings flying.

## Where and When

Most tornadoes occur in agricultural areas. The humidity and heat of the spring and summer are required to feed the storms that produce them. In order to grow, crops require both the humidity and temperature variations associated with the seasons.

● Tornadoes  
● Agricultural areas



1,000  
tornadoes are generated on average annually in the United States.

3:00 P.M.-9:00 P.M.  
The period of the day with the highest probability of tornado formation

**SPIRALING WINDS**  
First a cloud funnel appears that can then extend to touch the ground.

**PATH**  
Normally the tornado path is no more than 160 to 330 feet (50-100 m) wide.

The tornado generally moves from the southwest to the northeast.

Some tornadoes are so powerful that they can rip the roofs off houses.

125 miles  
(200 km)

The length of the path along the ground over which a tornado can move

## FUJITA SCALE

The Fujita-Pearson scale was created by Theodore Fujita to classify tornadoes according to the damage caused by the wind, from the lightest to the most severe.

WIND VELOCITY MILES PER HOUR (KM/H)

CATEGORY

EFFECTS

40-72  
(64-116)

F0

Damage to chimneys, tree branches broken

73-112  
(117-180)

F1

Mobile homes ripped from their foundations

113-157  
(181-253)

F2

Mobile homes destroyed, trees felled

158-206  
(254-332)

F3

Roofs and walls demolished, cars and trains overturned

207-260  
(333-418)

F4

Solidly built walls blown down

261-320  
(420-512)

F5

Houses uprooted from their foundations and dragged great distances

# Death and Destruction

Of the 1,000 tornadoes that annually strike the United States, there is one that has the unfortunate distinction of being one of the worst: the Tri-State tornado, which occurred on March 18, 1925, and caused extreme devastation. It moved across Missouri, Illinois, and Indiana, destroying homes and causing the confirmed deaths of 695 people, although it is believed that the number may have been much higher. The tornado traveled 230 miles (368 km) at an average velocity of 66 miles an hour (105 km/h), and its duration set a record at three hours and 30 minutes. It has been rated on the Fujita scale as an F5 tornado—one of the most damaging—and caused losses to the United States of \$17 million.



## MISSOURI (U.S.)

Latitude 37° N  
Longitude 93° W

|                           |                                     |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Value on the Fujita scale | <b>F5</b>                           |
| Duration                  | <b>3 hours 30 minutes</b>           |
| Average velocity          | <b>66 miles per hour (105 km/h)</b> |

**1:01 P.M.**

First contact with the ground

**ELLINGTON**  
First town affected  
**One dead**

**REDFORD**  
Town hit by tornado

**ANNAPOLIS AND LEADANNA**  
Large number of victims  
**75 injured and 2 dead**

**90 percent destroyed**

**BIEHLE**  
A number of houses destroyed

**40 percent destroyed**

**MURPHYSBORO**  
Town with the greatest number of fatalities  
**234 dead**

**100 percent destroyed**

**GORHAM**  
Town in ruins  
**34 dead**

**30 percent destroyed**  
**DE SOTO**  
Partial destruction but a large number of victims  
**69 dead**

ILLINOIS

**WEST FRANKFORT**  
Partial destruction  
**450 wounded and 127 dead**

**20 percent destroyed**

**90 percent destroyed**  
**PARRISH**  
Almost total destruction  
**22 dead**

**In 40 minutes, 541 people died.**

**230 miles (368 km) TOTAL PATH TRAVELLED**  
190 miles (307.5 km)  
65 miles per hour (104 km/h) Average velocity  
38 miles (60.5 km)  
70 miles per hour (115 km/h) Velocity  
9° of rotation

Rural area

**60 miles per hour (96 km/h)**

**100 percent destroyed**  
**GRIFFIN**  
150 houses destroyed, and many children killed.

**OWENSVILLE**  
Serious damage to houses

**4:30 P.M.**

Final contact with the ground

INDIANA

**PRINCETON**  
Half of the town destroyed  
**65 deaths**

**50 percent destroyed**

## Tornadoes in the United States

Unlike hurricanes, which are tropical storms primarily affecting the Gulf of Mexico, tornadoes are phenomena that occur between the Great Plains of the United States, the Rocky Mountains, and the Gulf of Mexico and usually appear in the spring and summer.



**3:00 P.M. - 9:00 P.M.**

The period of the day with the highest probability of tornado formation

**1,000**

The number of tornadoes occurring per year in the United States

**THE TOWN OF GRIFFIN, IN THE STATE OF INDIANA, WAS LEFT IN RUINS.**

**15,000**

houses destroyed

**17 million**

dollars in losses

Victims

2,500

2,000

1,500

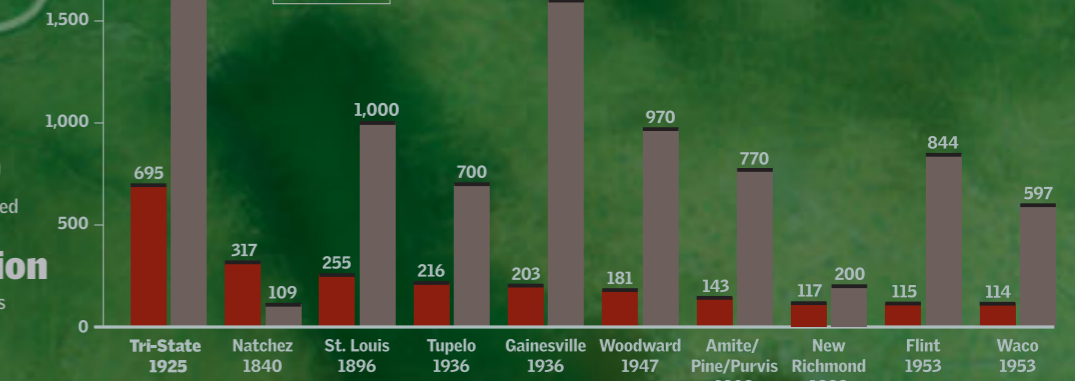
1,000

500

0

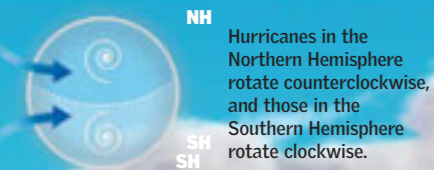
## THE 10 MOST DEVASTATING TORNADOES

Deaths (red bar)  
Injuries (grey bar)



# Anatomy of a Hurricane

A hurricane, with its ferocious winds, banks of clouds, and torrential rains, is the most spectacular meteorological phenomenon of the Earth's weather. It is characterized by an intense low-pressure center surrounded by cloud bands arranged in spiral form; these rotate around the eye of the hurricane in a clockwise direction in the Southern Hemisphere and in the opposite direction in the Northern Hemisphere. While tornadoes are brief and relatively limited, hurricanes are enormous and slow-moving, and their passage usually takes many lives.



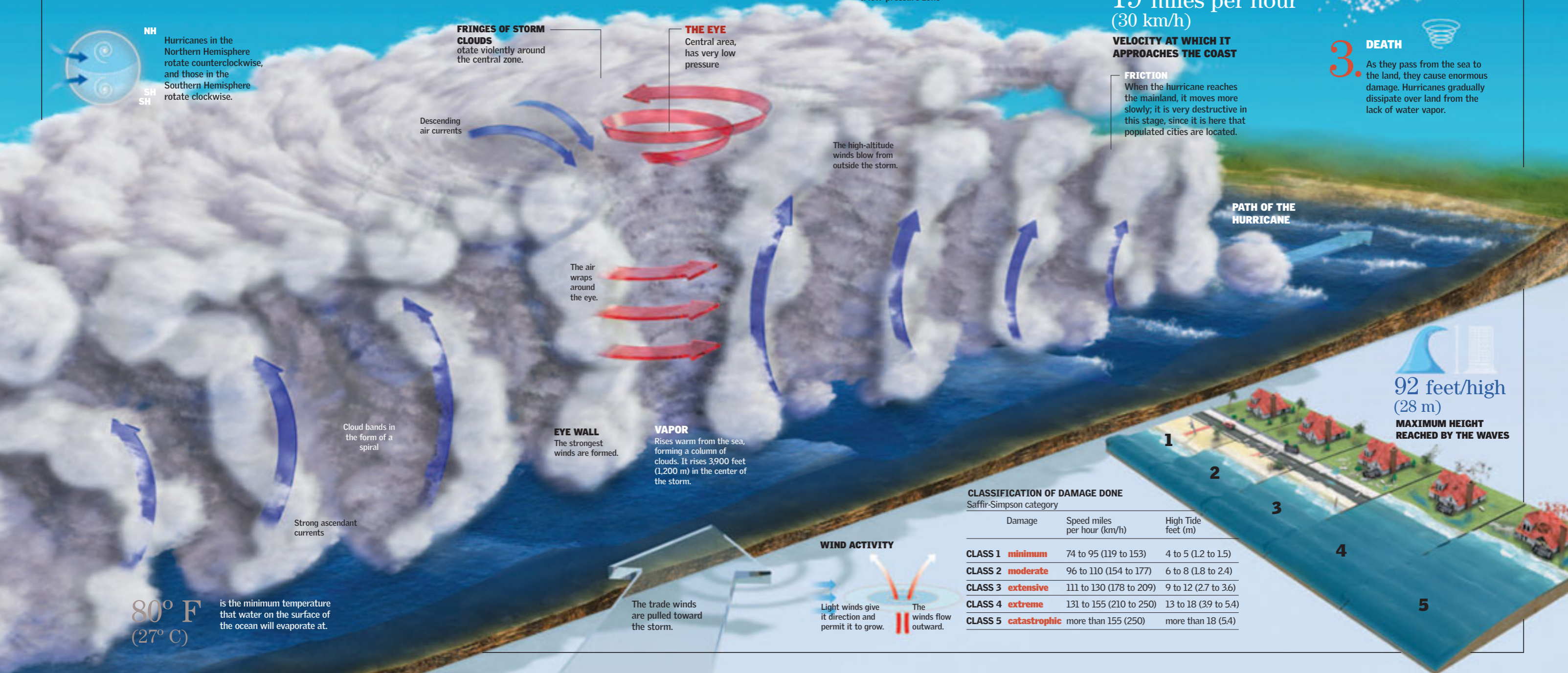
**1. BIRTH**  
Forms over warm seas, aided by winds in opposing directions, high temperatures, humidity, and the rotation of the Earth

**2. DEVELOPMENT**  
Begins to ascend, twisting in a spiral around a low-pressure zone

**19 miles per hour (30 km/h)**  
**VELOCITY AT WHICH IT APPROACHES THE COAST**

**3. DEATH**  
As they pass from the sea to the land, they cause enormous damage. Hurricanes gradually dissipate over land from the lack of water vapor.

**FRICITION**  
When the hurricane reaches the mainland, it moves more slowly; it is very destructive in this stage, since it is here that populated cities are located.



**80° F (27° C)** is the minimum temperature that water on the surface of the ocean will evaporate at.

**CLASSIFICATION OF DAMAGE DONE**  
Saffir-Simpson category

|                | Damage              | Speed miles per hour (km/h) | High Tide feet (m)    |
|----------------|---------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>CLASS 1</b> | <b>minimum</b>      | 74 to 95 (119 to 153)       | 4 to 5 (1.2 to 1.5)   |
| <b>CLASS 2</b> | <b>moderate</b>     | 96 to 110 (154 to 177)      | 6 to 8 (1.8 to 2.4)   |
| <b>CLASS 3</b> | <b>extensive</b>    | 111 to 130 (178 to 209)     | 9 to 12 (2.7 to 3.6)  |
| <b>CLASS 4</b> | <b>extreme</b>      | 131 to 155 (210 to 250)     | 13 to 18 (3.9 to 5.4) |
| <b>CLASS 5</b> | <b>catastrophic</b> | more than 155 (250)         | more than 18 (5.4)    |

# What Katrina Took Away

**H**urricane Katrina lashed the south and the center of the United States in August 2005. The force of the wind razed thousands of houses, buildings, oil installations, highways, and bridges, leaving a vast area of the country without communication and some heavily populated areas without provisions. It resulted in extensive material damage and thousands of deaths in Florida, the Bahamas, Louisiana, and Mississippi. Satellite images reveal the scope of the disaster, considered one of the most devastating in the history of the country. ●



## NEW ORLEANS

Latitude 30° N  
Longitude 90° W

|                            |                                          |
|----------------------------|------------------------------------------|
| Area                       | 360 square miles (933 square kilometers) |
| Number of inhabitants      | 500,000                                  |
| Altitude (above sea level) | 10 feet (3 m)                            |



**THE WATER**  
advances toward the city,  
invading the central regions.

**THE WINDS**  
At 155 miles per hour (250  
km/h), they force the water  
against the protective walls..

### LAKE PONTCHARTRAIN

**DIKES**  
were breached by the  
water and the wind,  
causing a great flood.

**6:00 A.M.**  
The time when  
the hurricane  
made landfall

17TH STREET  
CANAL

ORLEANS  
AVENUE CANAL

LONDON  
AVENUE CANAL

**80%**

Area of New Orleans  
affected by flooding

Area most affected  
by the flood

Areas most affected  
by the flood

**75%**

of the inhabitants  
of this zone were  
evacuated.

**OVER  
1,500**

Deaths confirmed after Katrina

**OVER  
75 billion**

dollars was the cost of the repairs.

The hurricane winds pushed the  
water 14 feet (4.3 m) above the  
normal sea level.

Along with the storm, the  
backed-up water reaches the  
dikes of the Mississippi River.

### AUGUST 23

A tropical depression forms in the  
Bahamas. It intensifies and becomes  
tropical storm Katrina. On August  
25, it makes landfall in Florida as a  
category 1 hurricane.

**14** Huracanes fueron  
registrados en 2005.

**26** El total de tormentas  
tropicales registradas  
en el año 2005.

### AUGUST 27

Leaves the Gulf of Mexico and  
reaches category 3. On August 28,  
it is transformed from category 3  
to category 5 and increases in size.

### AUGUST 29

In the early hours, it makes landfall in  
Louisiana as a category 4 hurricane.  
A little later, it makes landfall for the  
third time, in Mississippi.

**155 miles  
per hour  
(250 km/h)**  
**MAXIMUM WIND SPEED**

### SEPTEMBER 1

What remains of the hurricane  
is weakened as it moves north  
to Canada, where it dissipates.

Direction of  
the hurricane

# Foresight to Prevent Tragedies

Hurricanes usually lash specific regions of the planet, and the population must become aware of the disasters that can strike the community. Each family must know which area of the house is the most secure in case the roof, a door, or a window collapses. They must also know when it is time to go to a shelter or if it is better to remain at home. Another important precaution is to organize and store all family documents and real-estate records in a water- and fireproof strongbox. ●

**1 BEFORE THE HURRICANE**  
If you live in a hurricane-prone area, it is recommended that you know the emergency plans of the community and that you have a plan of action for your family.

Secure all the doors and windows to keep them from opening.



Store nonperishable food and potable water.

Keep the car supplied with a full tank of fuel just in case.

Reinforce roof tiles to keep them from being loosened.

Keep valuable objects and documents in a waterproof container.

Follow news reports with a battery-powered radio.

Administer first aid when necessary.

Disconnect all electrical devices and shut off the house circuit breaker.

Use a battery-powered radio to tune into local stations to get information.

Turn off the main water valve and the main gas valve.

**3 AFTER THE HURRICANE**  
First verify that everyone in the family is well and that there are no injuries. Do not touch loose cables or fallen poles. Call the fire department or the police in case you need food, clothing, or immediate medication.

**2 DURING THE HURRICANE**  
The important thing is to remain calm and to stay informed via radio or television about the path of the hurricane. Move away from doors and windows. Do not leave until the authorities announce the danger from the hurricane has ended.

Help people who are injured or trapped.

Keep documents confirming your ownership of property close at hand.

Return home only when the authorities say that it is safe.

Do not drink water unless you are sure it is potable.

Use the telephone only for emergency calls.

Verify that there are no natural-gas leaks or damage to the electrical system.

Check the most fire-prone areas.

Do not touch wires or damaged electrical equipment.

When you are on the move, use caution whether on foot or driving.

**HOW TO PREPARE EMERGENCY EQUIPMENT**  
A complete first-aid kit must be prepared and available. Consult a pharmacist or your family physician.



**HOW TO PREPARE DOCUMENTATION**  
To be prepared for evacuation, keep family documents in good order.

**First-aid kit**  
Check the first-aid kit and replace any expired items.



**Inventory**  
Make a complete list of belongings of each person.

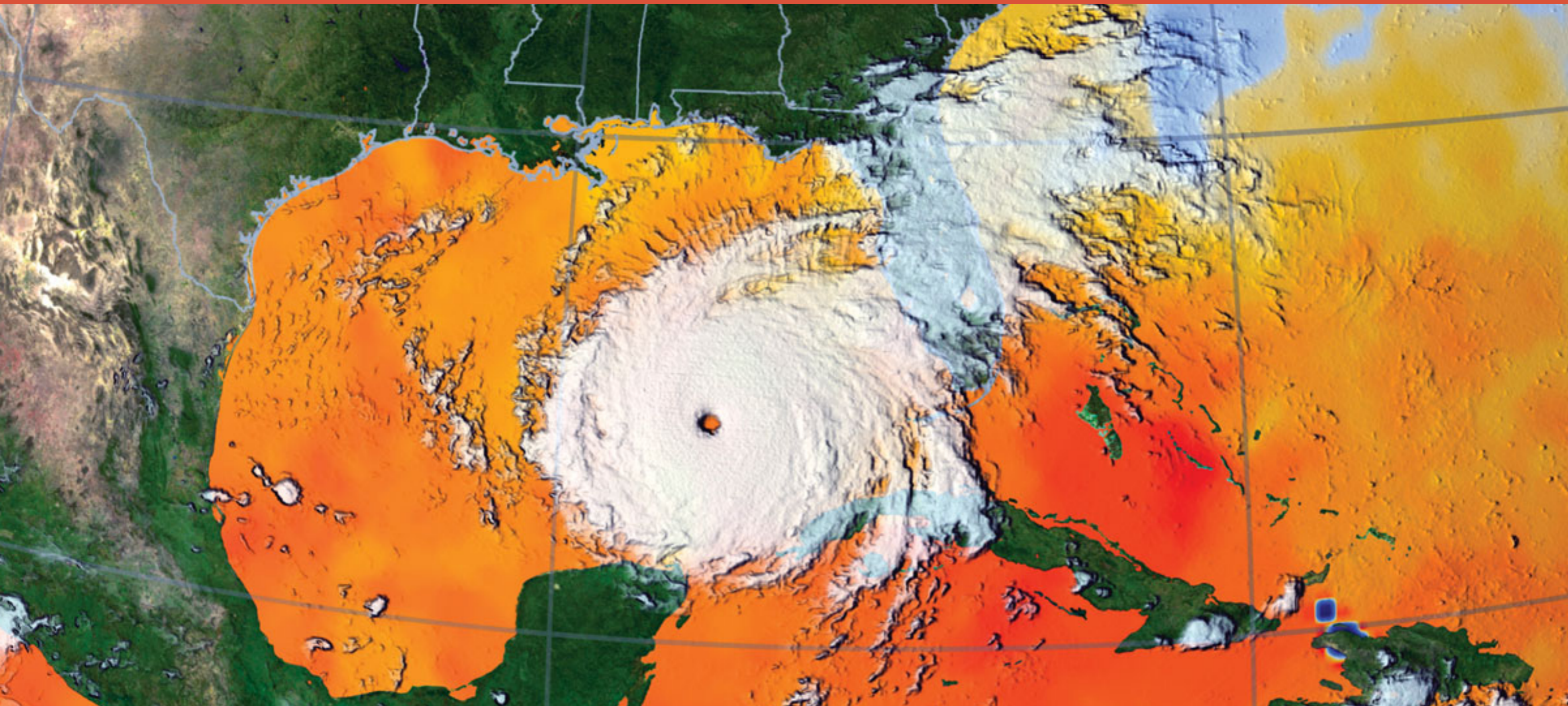
**First-aid course**  
You should be prepared for dealing with the most common symptoms and injuries.



**Personal ID**  
It is important for everyone to have an ID card.

**RITA, SEPTEMBER 2003**  
The image from the GOES-12 satellite shows the configuration of Hurricane Rita in the eastern portion of the Gulf of Mexico.

**WEATHER FOLKLORE 64-65**  
**COMPILATION OF INFORMATION 66-67**  
**INSTANTANEOUS MAPS 68-69**  
**RAIN, COLD, OR HEAT 70-71**  
**MOBILE SATELLITES 72-73**



The use of satellites orbiting the Earth, recording the coming of rain, air currents, and clouds, allows us to know with some hours of advance warning if a

severe storm is heading toward a certain point on the planet. Counting on this type of precise information about when and where tropical cyclones will occur, for example, has allowed government

officials to coordinate the evacuation of people from the affected zones. The surface of the planet is also monitored by a system of meteorological stations placed hundreds of miles from each

other. These collect information from and send information to all areas of the world so that meteorologists can prepare maps, graphics, and predictions to inform the public. ●

# Weather Folklore

Before the development of meteorology as we know it today, people observed in nature signs that allowed them to predict rains, floods, or strong winds. All this knowledge has been transmitted over the centuries in the form of proverbs or rhymes. Most of these fragments of meteorological knowledge lack a scientific foundation, but some of them reflect certain principles. Plants and animals play a major role in these observations. ●

## Signs from Plants and Animals

In every rural community, concern for the harvest and dependency on weather resulted in a series of beliefs, with varying degrees of accuracy, taken as prophesies of later events. In any case, even though it is certain that people as well as plants and animals react to the current weather, there is nothing to indicate that this might reveal anything about the weather in the future except to the degree that an incipient change is related to the current weather. For example, some signs accompany the increase in humidity that occurs prior to the passage of a cold front.

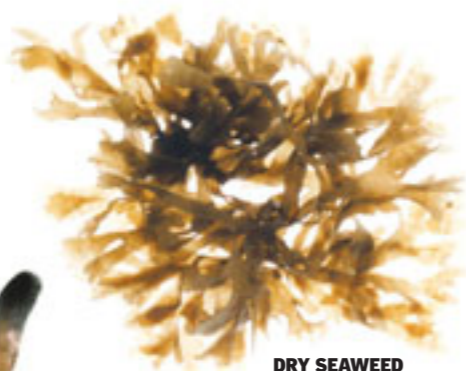


## Swallow

**When swallows fly low, get your rain gear in tow.**  
Swallows usually appear before a heavy rain.



**OPEN AND CLOSED PINECONES**  
Open pinecones mean dry weather; closed pinecones mean humid weather.



**DRY SEAWEED**  
The lower the humidity, the more probable it is that the next day will be dry.

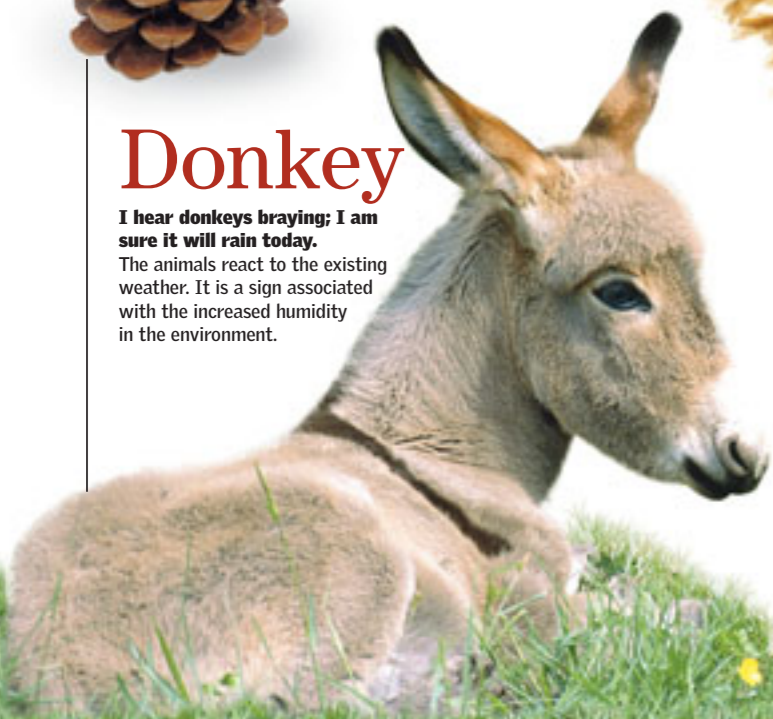


**OAK**  
If the leaves of the oak fall before those of the ash, the summer will be dry.

**ASH**  
If the leaves of the ash fall before those of the oak, the summer will be wet.

## Donkey

**I hear donkeys braying; I am sure it will rain today.**  
The animals react to the existing weather. It is a sign associated with the increased humidity in the environment.



## Toad

**When you see a toad walking, it will be a wet spring.**  
When a toad is swimming in the water, this means it will soon rain. If it stays in the water without moving, the rain will last for some time.



## Moon

**When the Moon has a halo, tomorrow will have wet or bad weather.**  
Halos occur as a consequence of the refraction of light by ice crystals in cirrostratus clouds covering the Sun or Moon. They portend a warm front, which will be followed by rain.

## Almanac Forecasts

In the 16th century, almanacs with weather forecasts were sold throughout Europe. Each month of the year has its own refrain, although this depends on the hemisphere a person lives in. The monthly and annual calendars offered agricultural and medical advice. From the most remote times, there was a general belief that the Moon determined the behavior of the atmosphere and that variations in the weather were caused by changes in the phase of the Moon. Some examples of these popular sayings are: "Sweet April showers do spring May flowers;" "After a dark winter's night, the next day will be bright."

## Clouds

**Clouds with a fringe or lining—secure your sails well.**  
This relates to clouds that are carried by winds at high altitudes; these clouds are often a sign that a low-pressure system, or cyclone, is approaching.

**WEATHER PREDICTION**  
There are thousands of refrains that refer to changes in weather conditions. Here are some examples.

**WIND**  
Wind from the east, rain like a beast.



**MORNING DEW**  
Dew and cool in May, bring wine to the vine and hay to the cow.



**CLEAR SUNSET**  
Rainbow at sundown, good weather at dawn.



## Snails

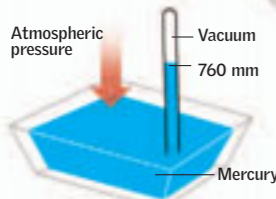
**When you see a black slug in your way, rain is not far away.**  
Snails are usually hidden in the garden. You see them only on humid days, just prior to the rain.



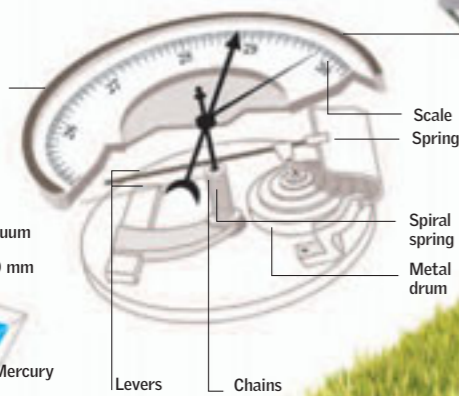
# Compilation of Information

Most of the information available regarding climatic data comes from the record that meteorologists everywhere in the world keep regarding cloud cover, temperature, the force and direction of the wind, air pressure, visibility, and precipitation. Then from each meteorological station, the data is sent by radio or satellite, and this makes it possible to make forecasts and maps. ●

**ANEROID BAROMETER** measures atmospheric pressure. Changes are shown by the pointers.



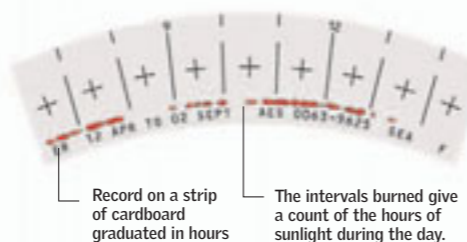
**MERCURY BAROMETER** An instrument used to measure atmospheric pressure. It consists of a glass tube full of mercury, with the open end submerged in a reservoir.



## Workplace

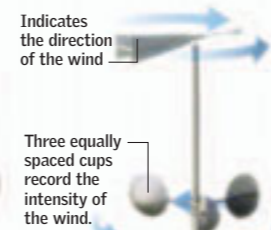
A typical meteorological station checks the temperature, humidity, wind velocity and direction, solar radiation, rain, and barometric pressure. In some places, soil temperature and flow of nearby rivers are also monitored. The compilation of this data makes it possible to predict different meteorological phenomena.

**IMPRESSION** The concentrated rays of sunlight burn cardboard placed behind the glass sphere.



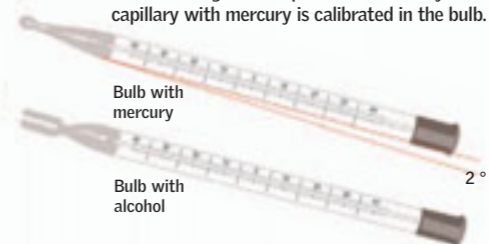
**EVAPORIMETER** As its name indicates, it measures the effective evaporation of water from a mass of liquid in the open air, from its loss from the surface through transformation to water vapor.

**WEATHER VANE** shows which way the wind is blowing. It is a perfectly balanced mechanical system.



**DATA RECORDER** records the data obtained.

**MAXIMUM THERMOMETER** shows the highest temperature of the day. The capillary with mercury is calibrated in the bulb.



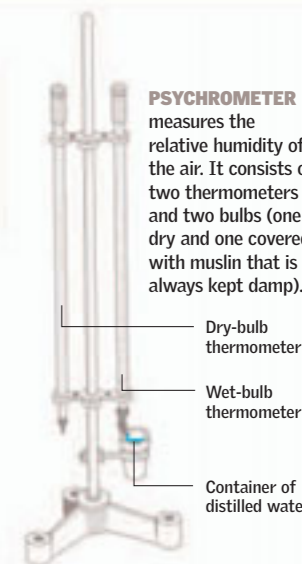
**MINIMUM THERMOMETER** indicates the lowest temperature of the day. It has a fork-shaped bulb.

## METEOROLOGICAL SHELTER

It is built of wood or fiberglass on a base that insulates it from the soil and protects certain instruments (thermometers, psychrometers, and others) from solar radiation. Screens in the windows ensure good ventilation.

**HYGROTHERMOGRAPH** simultaneously records the air temperature and relative humidity. A thermograph and a hygrograph independently make records on paper of the daily variations in temperature and humidity.

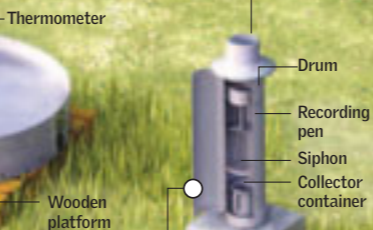
**PSYCHROMETER** measures the relative humidity of the air. It consists of two thermometers and two bulbs (one dry and one covered with muslin that is always kept damp).



## Weather Station

Meteorologists collect data at different heights. They use various instruments at ground level: a thermometer for temperature, a hygrometer for humidity, and a barometer for atmospheric pressure.

In the Northern Hemisphere, the doors should be oriented toward the north to prevent the Sun's rays from striking the instruments when observations are being made.

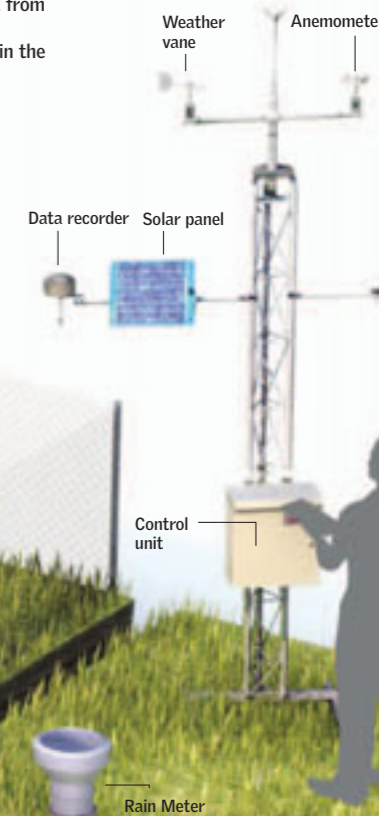


**RAIN METER** This is used to keep a chronological record of the amount of water falling as rain.

**RAIN GAUGE** The precipitation that falls on the ground in the form of rain is collected by the rain gauge.

## Automatic Weather Station

An automatic meteorological station uses electrical sensors to record temperature, humidity, wind velocity and direction, atmospheric pressure, and rainfall, among other parameters. The readings are processed by microprocessors and transmitted via an automatic system. This station functions autonomously, 24 hours a day, powered by solar energy (solar panels) or wind energy.



Double circulation of the air to prevent the heating of the instruments when the radiation is very intense

Psychrometer  
Maximum and minimum thermometers  
Hygrothermograph

Slats allow the air to flow through freely without creating currents.

# Instantaneous Maps

Weather maps represent at any given moment the state of the atmosphere at different altitudes. These maps are made based on the information provided by meteorological stations and are useful for specialists. The data collected by them include various values for pressure and temperature that make it possible to forecast the probability of precipitation, whether the weather will remain stable, or if it will change because a weather front is moving in. ●

## NOMENCLATURE

Every meteorological map carries a label that indicates the date and time it was made.

12 indicates the hour and Z Greenwich Mean Time.

This map is prepared with the initial values of Tuesday, September 2.

It indicates the initial values.

INIT: TUE, 02SEP2003 12Z

## 1686

is the year in which English astronomer Edmond Halley made the first meteorological map.

## SYMBOLS

There are a number of different symbols to represent different kinds of fronts.



**WARM** A warm air mass with local storms is advancing.



**COLD** A cold air mass with rain is advancing.



**STATIONARY** Moderately bad weather and little change of temperature



**OCCCLUDED FRONT** It is mixed; it will act first as a warm front and then as a cold front.

## Isobar Maps

One of the variables that provides the most information in real time for knowing meteorological conditions is atmospheric pressure, whose values over land (at sea level) are represented on what are called isobar maps, or ground-level weather maps. The isobars, or lines that connect points of equal pressure, make it possible to estimate the velocity and direction of the wind at ground level. This information helps forecast the movement of cold or warm air masses. The letter A indicates an anticyclonic area, which indicates atmospheric stability and that the probability of rain is very low. The letter B indicates a low-pressure area and presages major atmospheric instability with possible rain.

### ANTICYCLONE

In this area, the atmospheric stability is high, since the downward motion of the air prevents the formation of clouds. There is low probability of rain.

**WINDS**  
They circulate and move away from the area.

**HIGH PRESSURE**  
This is a high-pressure area. The pressure decreases from the internal isobars toward the external isobars.

**ISOBARS**  
are lines joining points of equal pressure.

**OCCCLUDED FRONT**  
indicates the line of collision between a cold front and a warm front. These are usually associated with severe storms.

### LOW PRESSURE, OR DEPRESSION

In this zone, atmospheric stability will be low given that the air is rising, and there is a high probability of precipitation.

**LOW PRESSURE**  
This is a low-pressure zone. The pressure increases from the internal isobars toward the external isobars.

**WINDS**  
circulate around the center of the area.

## Upper-air Map

Another type of map, which is used to analyze upper-air weather conditions, is an upper-level, or geopotential, map. On these maps, contour lines connect points located at the same altitude for a certain pressure level (normally 500 hectopascals [hPa]) and correlate with the temperature of the air in the higher layers of the troposphere (at 16,400 feet [5,000 meters] altitude on the 500 hPa map). The temperature is represented in each region of the troposphere by lines called isotherms.

**BAD WEATHER**  
Instability and high probability of abundant rain

**LOW-PRESSURE TROUGH**  
This phenomenon increases the probability of bad weather. A low-pressure trough has a low geopotential value.

**HIGH-PRESSURE RIDGE**  
Area of high geopotential values in which the chances of rain are slight

**GOOD WEATHER**  
Atmospheric stability and low expectation of precipitation

**LOW-PRESSURE TROUGH AXIS**

**HIGH-PRESSURE RIDGE AXIS**

### WINDS

The direction and intensity of the winds are indicated by a segment with a circle at its end, which indicates the direction from which the wind is blowing. On this segment, perpendicular lines are traced that indicate the velocity of the wind in knots, where one knot equals 1.2 miles per hour (1.9 km/h).

**SYMBOLS**  
The direction of the wind is represented by these symbols:

**POSITION**  
The line indicates the direction of the wind. It can be north, northeast, east, southeast, south, southwest, west, or northwest.

**OVERCAST SKY**  
A black circle indicates an overcast sky and a white circle a clear sky.

**WIND VELOCITY**  
A short line indicates five knots, a longer line indicates 10 knots, and a terminal triangle indicates more than 40 knots.

## UPPER-LEVEL MAPS

The contour lines traced in these charts connect points of equal geopotential height, which define high-pressure ridges and low-pressure troughs. The wind direction is parallel to these lines. These charts are used to prepare weather forecasts.

- 250 hPa ● 36,100 FEET (11,000 METERS)
- 500 hPa ● 18,000 FEET (5,500 METERS)
- 700 hPa ● 9,800 FEET (3,000 METERS)
- 850 hPa ● 4,900 FEET (1,500 METERS)
- SURFACE ● 0 FEET (0 METERS)

**500 HPA**  
The first pressure value that represents a geopotential of 500 hectopascals (hPa)

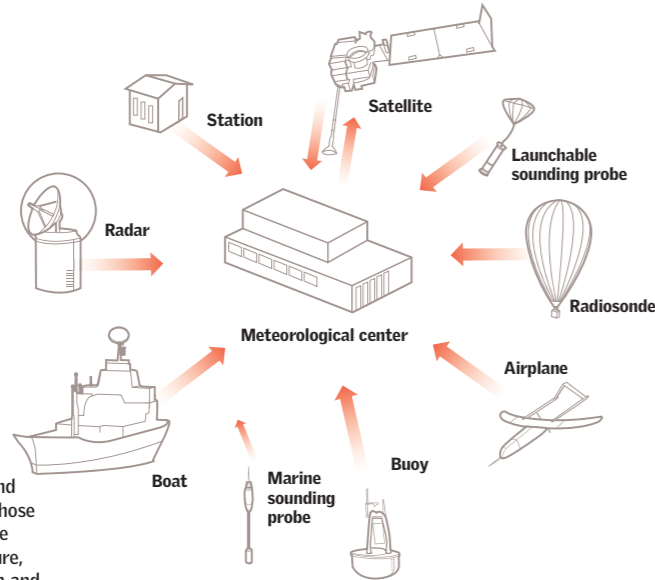


# Rain, Cold, or Heat

Knowing ahead of time what the weather will be is sometimes a question of life or death. The damage resulting from a torrential rain or a heavy snowfall can be avoided thanks to the forecasts of meteorologists. The forecasts they make are based on information gathered from many sources, including instruments on the ground, in the air, and at sea. Despite the use of sophisticated information systems, the weather can be forecast only for the next few hours or days. Nonetheless, it is very useful in helping to prevent major catastrophes. ●

## DATA COLLECTION

The World Meteorological Organization acts as a center for receiving and transmitting data coming from various stations located in the air, on the ocean, and on land.



## On Land

The observations made at ground level are more numerous than those made at higher altitudes. They include measurements of atmospheric pressure, temperature, humidity, wind direction and velocity, the extent and altitude of cloud cover, visibility, and precipitation.

## METEOROLOGICAL STATION

Measurements at ground level permit the collection of partial data. Thermometers measure temperature, the hygrometer measures humidity, and the barometer measures atmospheric pressure.

## In the Air

Data can be collected by airplanes, satellites, or sounding probes. One single satellite can cover the entire surface of the Earth. Precise information helps prevent meteorological catastrophes such as hurricanes or flooding.

## RADIOSONDE

carries out airborne measurements of temperature, pressure, and relative humidity at different altitudes or atmospheric levels. It also indicates the direction and speed of the wind.

**49,200 feet (15,000 m)**

is the altitude that a radiosonde can reach.

**32,800 feet (10,000 m)**

The height at which they fly, near the upper limit of the troposphere

**METEOROLOGICAL AIRCRAFT** obtain temperature and humidity data and photograph particles contained in the clouds.

## HURRICANE HUNTER P-3 AIRPLANE

Its Doppler radar has a resolution four times greater than the standard Doppler radar in conventional use.

**14,000 feet (4,270 m)**

is the altitude that can be reached by the P-3 aircraft.

**ARTIFICIAL SATELLITES** provide images used for visualizing clouds and water vapor in the atmosphere and for measuring the temperature of land and ocean surfaces.

**49,200 feet (13,000 m)**

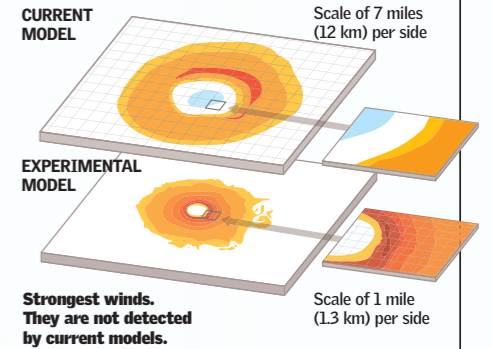
is the altitude that can be reached by the G-IV airplane.

## LAUNCHABLE SOUNDING PROBE

is launched from an airplane toward the ground. Its trajectory is followed as it relays information about wind velocity, temperature, humidity, and pressure.

## Better Forecasts

New models that measure changes in such variables as humidity, temperature, wind velocity, and cloud displacement may make it possible to improve forecasts by 25 percent over current ones.



## AEROSONDE

Pilotless weather aircraft capable of sending meteorological information at intervals of tenths of a second

**1,200 feet (365 m)**

is the altitude that can be reached by a radio sounding probe.

## METEOROLOGICAL CENTERS

They improve worldwide cooperation in meteorological observations, normalize the data obtained in different cities throughout the world, and promote the application of forecasts to various human activities.

## OCEANOGRAPHIC SHIP

gathers data on the direction and speed of the wind and the temperature of the air and water, among other things.

- Navigation lights
- Anemometer
- Data transmitter
- Solar panel

## METEOROLOGICAL BUOY

provides information about conditions of the sea in areas that are not covered by ships. The buoy floats freely with the ocean currents and transmits readings automatically via satellite.

**6,600 feet (2,000 m)**

is the depth reached by the vehicle.

## ACOUSTIC SIGNAL

An acoustic depth sounder sends out sound waves to measure the depth of the water.

## AUTONOMOUS UNDERWATER VEHICLE

Images related to the physical properties of the ocean water, such as the temperature, salinity, and density, are relayed to operators and its location and depth tracked via the Global Positioning System (GPS).

## MARITIME SOUNDING PROBES

They are dropped from airplanes and then sink.

## RADAR STATION

is utilized to measure the intensity with which rain, snow, or ice is falling. The radar sends radio waves that bounce off raindrops, and the return signal is displayed on a receiving screen.

## On the Sea

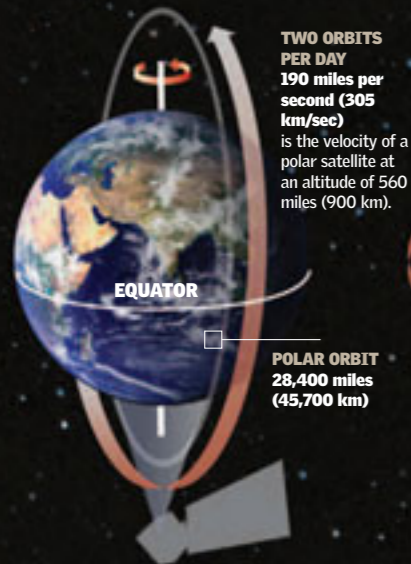
Boats, buoys, and autonomous underwater vehicles help measure water temperature, salinity, density, and reflected sunlight. All the information gathered is sent to a meteorological center.

# Mobile Satellites

Meteorological satellites, which have been orbiting the Earth for more than 30 years, are an indispensable aid to scientists. Along with the images generated by these instruments, meteorologists receive data that can be used to prepare weather bulletins. These reports, circulated via the mass media, allow people all over the world to know the weather forecast. Moreover, the most advanced satellites are used to study the characteristics of phenomena such as tropical cyclones (hurricanes, cyclones, and typhoons).

## Polar Orbit

They orbit from pole to pole with a synchronized period. As they move in their orbits, they scan swaths of the Earth's surface. They pass over any given point twice a day. Their operational lifetime is approximately two years.



## Geostationary

They orbit the Earth above the Equator and are synchronized with the Earth's rotation—that is, as they orbit the Earth, they are always over the same geographic point on the Earth's surface.



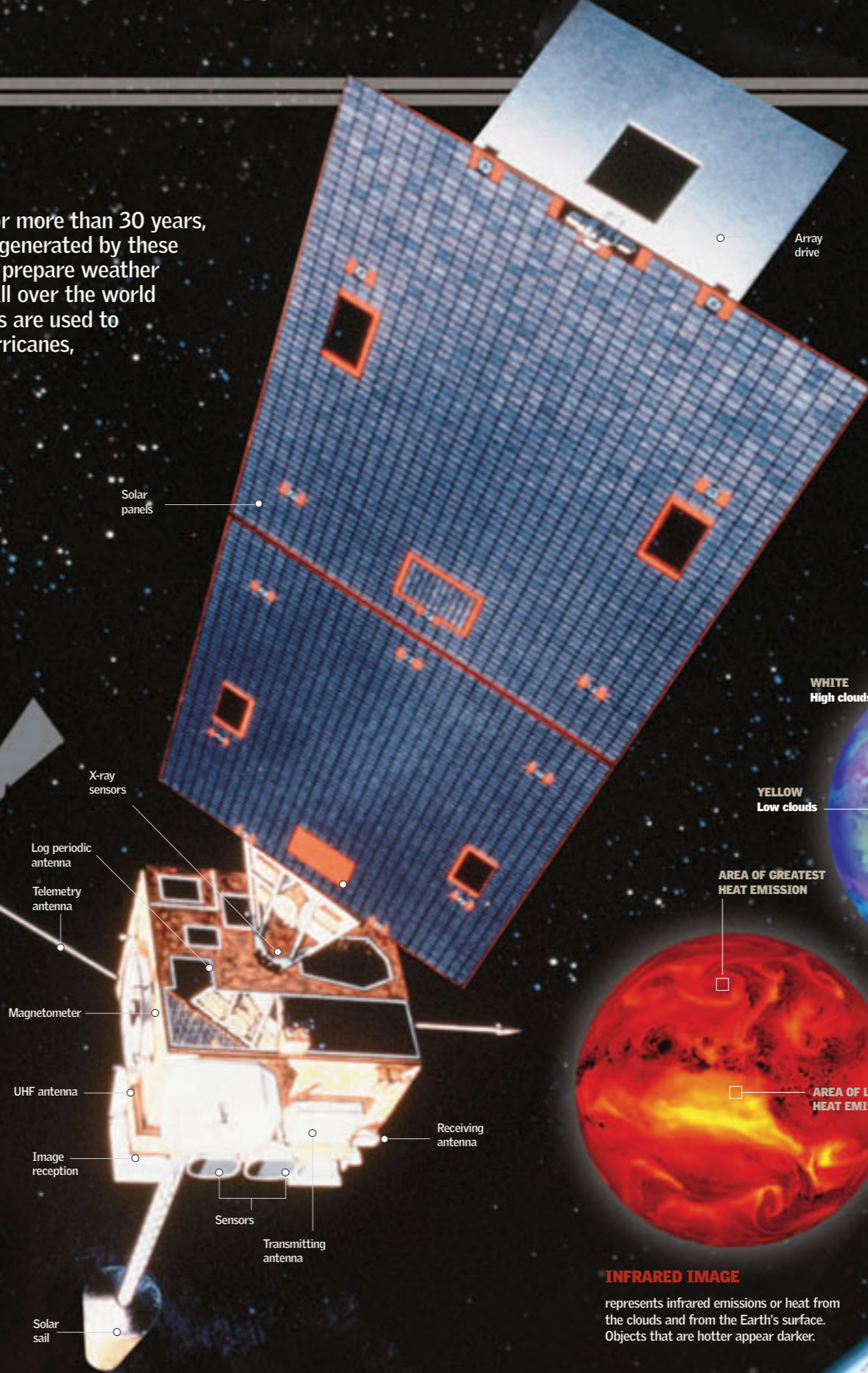
### CHARACTERISTICS

|                     |                          |
|---------------------|--------------------------|
| ORBITAL ALTITUDE    | 22,300 miles (35,900 km) |
| ROTATIONAL VELOCITY | 100 RPM                  |
| ORBITAL PERIOD      | 24 hours                 |

### ACTIVE POLAR SATELLITES



### ACTIVE GEOSTATIONARY SATELLITES



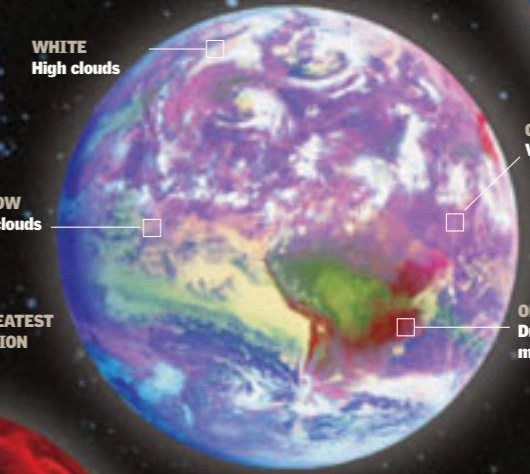
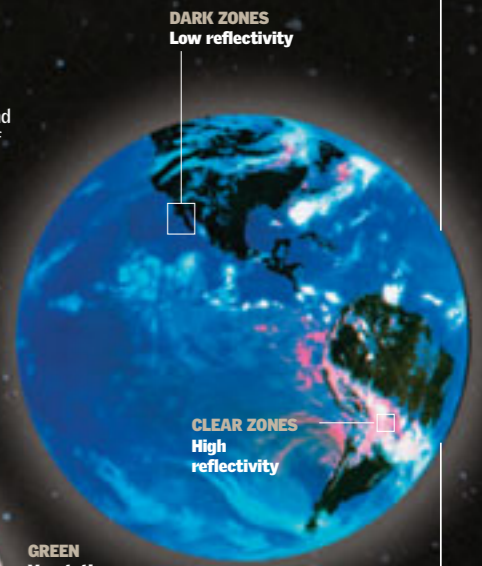
### GOES EAST

|                  |                          |
|------------------|--------------------------|
| Orbital altitude | 22,370 miles (36,000 km) |
| Weight           | 4,850 pounds (2,200 kg)  |
| Launch date      | 2001                     |
| Orbit            | 75°                      |



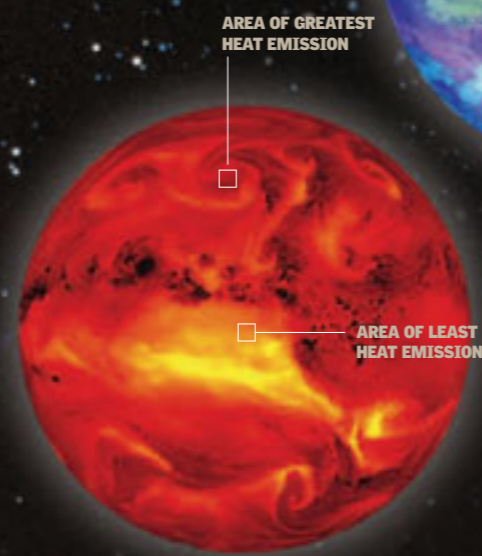
## Images, Yesterday and Today

The TIROS satellites (Television and Infra-Red Observation Satellite) of the 1960s provided the first images of cloud systems. The modern GOES satellites (Geostationary Operational Environmental Satellites), which take more precise time and space measurements, provide higher-quality images of clouds, continents, and oceans. They also measure the humidity of the atmosphere and the temperature at ground level.



### VISIBLE IMAGE

Oceans and continents have low albedo and appear as darker areas. Areas with high albedo, in contrast, are clear and bright.



### COMBINED IMAGES

They are composed of infrared images (which permit differentiation of high and low clouds) and visible-light images (which measure the reflectivity of each climatic subsystem).

### INFRARED IMAGE

represents infrared emissions or heat from the clouds and from the Earth's surface. Objects that are hotter appear darker.

# Climate Change

## GLACIERS IN ALASKA

Approximately 5 percent of the land is covered by glaciers, which advance and break up when they reach the ocean, where they form impressive cliffs of ice.

**GODS AND RITUALS 76-77**

**CLIMATE ZONES 78-79**

**PALEOCLIMATOLOGY 80-81**

**THE PLANET WARMS UP 82-83**

**ACCELERATED MELTING 84-85**

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**CHANGE; EVERYTHING CHANGES 90-91**



**M**ountain glaciers are melting, and this is a threat to the availability of freshwater. It is calculated that 8 cubic miles (35 cu km) of water

melts from the glaciers each year, which is the glaciers' major contribution to raising the global sea level; it is thought that the continental ice sheet may play a significantly larger role. The volume of the glaciers in the

European Alps and in the Caucasus Mountains has been reduced by half, and in Africa, only 8 percent of the largest glacier of Mount Kenya still exists. If these tendencies continue, by the end of the century, most

glaciers will have disappeared completely, including those in Glacier National Park in the United States. That will have powerful repercussions on the water resources of many parts of the world. ●

# Gods and Rituals

Predicting the weather was a subject of interest to all the early civilizations that populated the Earth. Greeks, Romans, Egyptians, pre-Columbians, and Orientals venerated the gods of the Sun, the Moon, the heavens, the rain, storms, and the wind for centuries. In their own way, with rituals and praise, they tried to influence the weather to improve the bounty of the harvest. ●



## ZEPHYRUS

The Greek god of the west wind had an important presence. At times he was beneficial, and at other times catastrophic. Though the ancient Greeks were not sure whether the winds were male or female, they did believe the winds had wings.

## Greeks

The powerful Zeus was the king of the Greek gods and dispenser of divine justice. He was the sovereign of heaven (his brothers Poseidon and Hades governed the ocean and the underworld, respectively). He carried a thunderbolt to represent his power, associated with the weather. Zeus lived on Mount Olympus, from where he could observe and often intervene in the affairs of humans. The Greeks believed that Poseidon, when annoyed, would break up the mountains and throw them into the sea to form islands. Uranus was a personification of heaven for the Greeks, and Apollo was the god of the sun, light, and creation.

## Egyptians

As in all ancient civilizations, the gods of weather were very much a part of Egyptian life. Civilization extended along the banks of the Nile, where water was crucial for survival—that is, where cities, temples, pyramids, and the entire economic life of the kingdom were concentrated. The weather influenced the rising of the river and the harvests. Therefore the Egyptians venerated Re (the god of the sun), Nut (the god of heaven), Seth (the god of the storm), and Toth (the god of the moon).



## RE

Egyptian sun god, the primordial creator. His center of worship was Heliopolis, or the City of the Sun.



## SETH

Egyptian god of the storm, represented by a jackal, a dog, or a wolf. The son of Re and brother of Osiris.

## The Romans

The Romans worshiped many gods because they inherited them from the Greek oracles. The gods of weather were Jupiter (wise and just, who reigned over the earth), Apollo (the god of the sun), Neptune (the god of the sea and storms), and Saturn (the god of agriculture). Each god had a specific function. As a result, any human activity could suffer or benefit from the attitude of the god in charge of that particular function. Thus, the purpose of ritual worship and sacrifice to the gods was to gain their favor.

## THE LIGHTNING BOLT

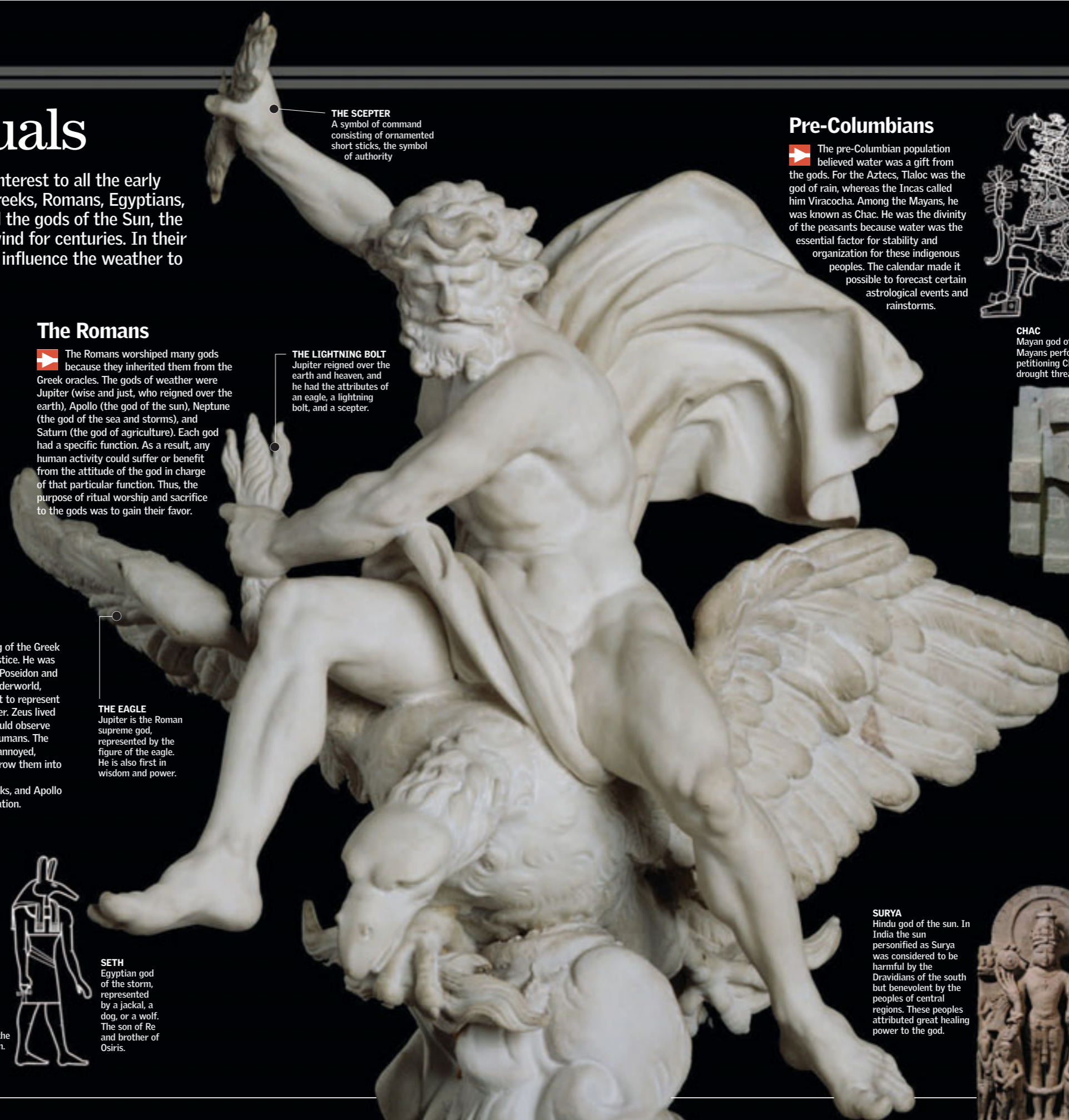
Jupiter reigned over the earth and heaven, and he had the attributes of an eagle, a lightning bolt, and a scepter.

## THE EAGLE

Jupiter is the Roman supreme god, represented by the figure of the eagle. He is also first in wisdom and power.

## THE SCEPTER

A symbol of command consisting of ornamented short sticks, the symbol of authority



## Pre-Columbians

The pre-Columbian population believed water was a gift from the gods. For the Aztecs, Tlaloc was the god of rain, whereas the Incas called him Viracocha. Among the Mayans, he was known as Chac. He was the divinity of the peasants because water was the essential factor for stability and organization for these indigenous peoples. The calendar made it possible to forecast certain astrological events and rainstorms.



## CHAC

Mayan god of agriculture. The Mayans performed ceremonies petitioning Chac for rain when drought threatened the harvest.



## TLALOC

Venerated by the Aztecs, he was known as the provider because he had the power to bring rain, which made the corn grow.



## VIRACOCHA

For the Incas, he was all powerful. Creator of the universe and of all the earth, he was linked with rays of light, thunder, lightning, and snow.

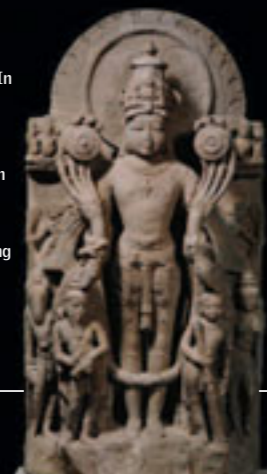


## FUJIN

Japanese god of wind. Drawn as a dark monster, covered with leopard skin, he carried a bag of wind on his shoulders.

## SURYA

Hindu god of the sun. In India the sun personified as Surya was considered to be harmful by the Dravidians of the south but benevolent by the peoples of central regions. These peoples attributed great healing power to the god.

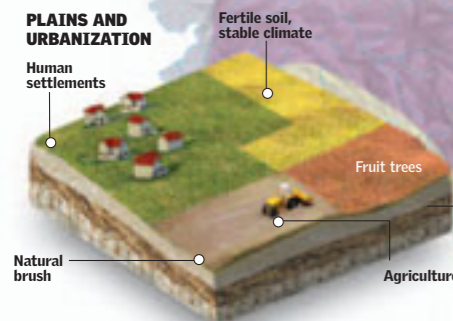


## The Orient

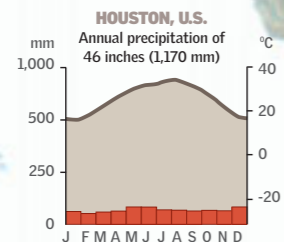
Hinduism has various weather-related gods. The most popular is Surya (god of the sun). Next come Chandra (god of the moon), Indra (the god who governs heaven), and Parjanya (god of rain). Japanese mythology emphasizes the following: Fujin (god of wind), Amaterasu (goddess of the sun), Tsukiyomi (god of the moon), Amatsu-kami (god of heaven), Susanoo (god of storms), and Aji-Suki-Taka-Hi-Kone (god of thunder).

# Climate Zones

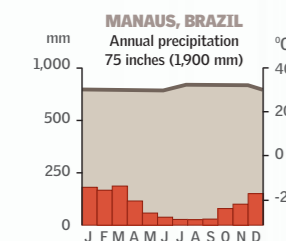
Different places in the world, even if far removed from each other, can be grouped into climate zones—that is, into regions that are homogeneous relative to climatic elements, such as temperature, pressure, rain, and humidity. There is some disagreement among climatologists about the number and description of each of these regions, but the illustrations given on this map are generally accepted. ●



**TEMPERATE**  
Characterized by pleasant temperatures and moderate rains throughout the year. Winters are mild, with long, frost-free periods. Temperate regions are ideal for most agricultural products.



**TROPICAL**  
High temperatures throughout the year, combined with heavy rains, are typical for this climate. About half of the world's population lives in regions with a tropical climate. Vegetation is abundant, and humidity is high because the water vapor in the air is not readily absorbed.



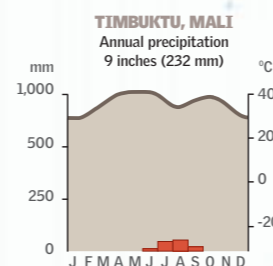
## Temperature and Rains

The temperature of the Earth depends on the energy from the Sun, which is not distributed equally at all latitudes. Only 5 percent of sunlight reaches the surface at the poles, whereas this figure rises to 75 percent at the Equator. Rain is an atmospheric phenomenon. Clouds contain millions of drops of water, which collide to form larger drops. The size of the drops increases until they are too heavy to be supported by air currents, and they fall as rain.

**59° F (15° C)**  
is the average annual temperature of the Earth.



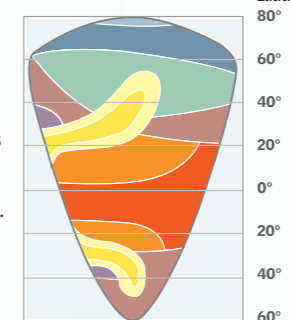
**DRY**  
Lack of rain controls the arid climate in desert or semidesert regions, the result of the atmospheric circulation of air. In these regions, dry air descends, leaving the sky clear, with many hours of burning Sun.



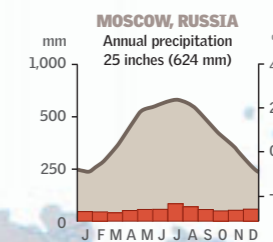
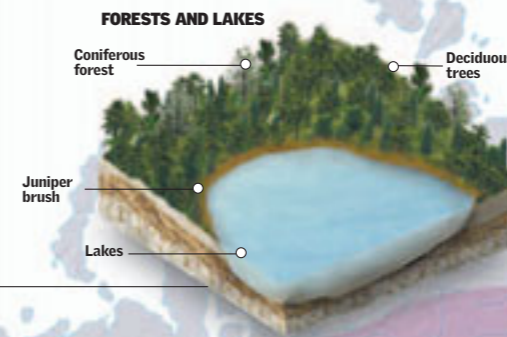
**12° F (6.5° C)**  
is the temperature decrease for every 3,300 feet (1,000 m) of increase in elevation.

## Köppen Climate Classification

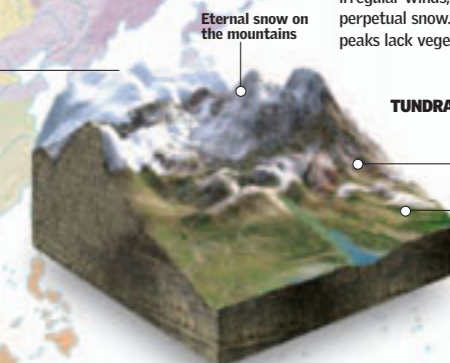
In 1936 Russian-born climatologist Wladimir Köppen presented a climatological classification based on temperature and precipitation. The table provides a broad overview of the approximate distribution of climates on the terrestrial globe. Köppen classification does not discuss climatic regions but rather the type of climate found in a given location according to specific parameters.



- KEY**
- Tropical forests, without a dry season
  - Tropical savanna, with a dry winter
  - Steppes (semiarid)
  - Desert (arid)
  - Temperate humid, without a dry season
  - Temperate, with a dry winter
  - Temperate, with a dry summer
  - Glacial
  - Mountain climate
  - Temperate cold continental (hot summer)
  - Temperate cold continental (cold summer)
  - Temperate cold continental (subarctic)
  - Tundra



**COLD**  
Very cold winters, with frequent freezing at night, are typical of these regions. In these zones, the climate changes more often than anywhere else. In most cold climate regions, the landscape is covered by natural vegetation.



**POLAR MOUNTAINOUS CLIMATE**  
Mountains create their own climate that is somewhat independent of their location. Near the poles, the polar climate is dominated by very low temperatures, strong and irregular winds, and almost perpetual snow. The mountain peaks lack vegetation.

# Paleoclimatology

The climate of the planet is constantly changing. In approximately two million years, the Earth has gone through very cold periods, or glaciations, that lasted thousands of years, alternating with warm periods. Today we live in an interglacial period that began some 10,000 years ago with an increase in average global temperature. These climatic changes can be analyzed over time periods that exceed hundreds of thousands of years. Paleoclimatology uses records derived from fossils, tree rings, corals, glaciers, and historical documents to study the climates of the past. ●



**VOSTOK**  
Latitude 77° S  
Longitude 105° E

|                          |                                   |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Surface area of the lake | 5,405 square miles (14,000 sq km) |
| Inhabitants              | Only scientists                   |
| Year of founding         | 1957                              |
| Temperature              | -67° F (-55° C)                   |
| Surface                  | 95% ice                           |

## Gas Measurement

Vertical ice cores (or samples) allow scientists to study the climate of the past. The nearly 12-foot-long (3.6-m) ice sample taken at the Russian Vostok station contains climatic data going back 420,000 years, including the concentration of carbon dioxide, methane, and other greenhouse gases in the atmosphere.

## SAMPLES

The zones marked on the map are places where scientists have gathered samples of ice, which were analyzed in the laboratories.

## KEY

- Drillings
- Ice sheets



## Chronology

During the history of the Earth, climate has changed greatly, which has had a large effect not only on the appearance of the

Earth's surface but also on animal and plant life. This timeline shows the planet's major climate changes and their consequences.

B.Y.A. = billions of years ago M.Y.A. = millions of years ago Y.A. = years ago

### 4.5 B.Y.A.

In the beginning, there was heat. Life produces oxygen and cools the climate.

### 2.7-1.8 B.Y.A.

Ice covers very extensive areas.

### 544 M.Y.A.

Glacial climate in a changing geography. Extinction of 70 percent of marine species.

### 330 M.Y.A.

Beginning of a long period of glaciation. Ice covers different geographic areas.

### 245 M.Y.A.

Drought and heat at the beginning. Abrupt cooling at the end of the period. Appearance of the dinosaurs.

### 65 M.Y.A.

Paleocene and beginning Eocene: very warm climate. Middle Eocene: cooling begins.

### 2 M.Y.A.

The cold continues; glaciation occurs every 100,000 years.

### 1.6 M.Y.A.

Interglacial. The beginning of a two-million-year period.

### 18,000 Y.A.

begins the last deglaciation. Increase in temperature; melting of ice.

### 1,300-700 Y.A.

Medieval warm period; in some places warmer than today. Vikings arrive in Greenland.

### 550-150 Y.A.

Little Ice Age. Alpine glaciers advance; more severe winters.

## CLOTHES

protect the scientists from the weather and prevent the contamination of samples.



## ICE CORES

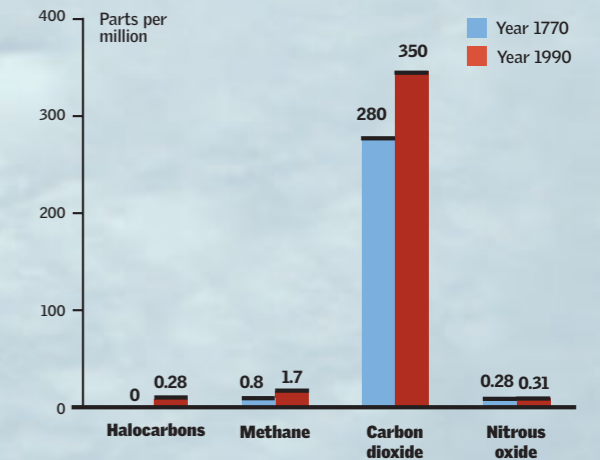
Samples are taken at different depths. The surface snow becomes more compact in the lower layers. In the last layer, there are rocks and sand.

|      |        |        |           |           |           |           |
|------|--------|--------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Feet | 174    | 177    | 6,024     | 6,027     | 10,007    | 10,010    |
|      | (53 m) | (54 m) | (1,836 m) | (1,837 m) | (3,050 m) | (3,051 m) |

## Human Activity

Climate can be divided into before and after the Industrial Revolution. This graphic shows the progressive increase of halocarbon gases, methane, carbon dioxide, and nitrous oxide between 1770 and 1990. It is clear that humans have contributed to the contamination of the planet.

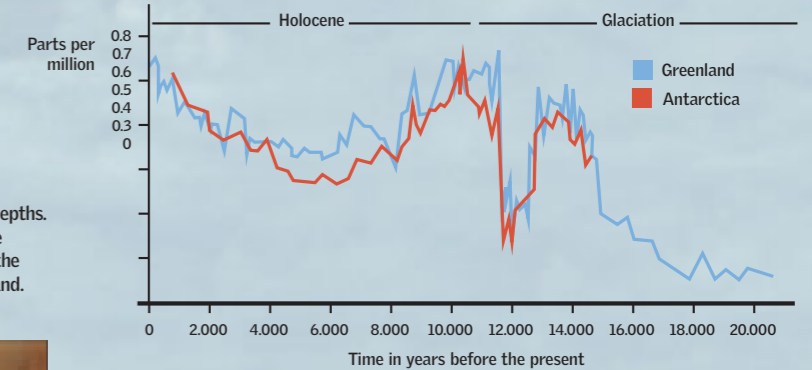
## EVALUATION OF GREENHOUSE GASES



## Composition

The lower graphic shows the change in concentration of methane in the atmosphere in the last 20,000 years until the end of the preindustrial era. The information collected was estimated on the basis of ice probes in Greenland and Antarctica.

## METHANE CONCENTRATION



# The Planet Warms Up

The increase in average temperature of the Earth's atmosphere and oceans is the result of global warming. The main cause is an increase in carbon dioxide emissions by industrialized nations during the past 200 years. This phenomenon has increased the greenhouse effect. It is estimated that the average global temperature has increased more than 1.1° F (0.6° C) between the end of the 19th century and the year 2000. The consequences of this are already beginning to be noticed. Changes are observed in the global distribution of precipitation: there are regions where there is an increase of rain, and there are other regions where rain is diminishing. This generates, among other things, a redistribution of fauna and flora, changes in ecosystems, and changes in human activities. ●



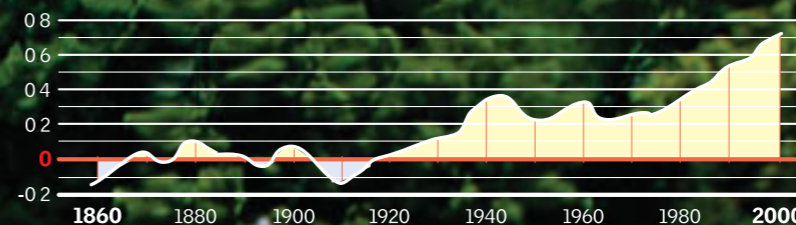
## GREAT BARRIER REEF

Latitude 18°S  
Longitude 147°E

|                |                        |
|----------------|------------------------|
| Surface        | 1,430 miles (2,300 km) |
| Types of reefs | 3,000                  |
| Age            | 300 million years      |
| Discovery      | 1770, by James Cook    |

### THE TEMPERATURE OF THE EARTH THROUGH THE YEARS

The effects of global warming are already noticeable. It is estimated that the average global temperature has increased more than 1.1° F (0.6° C) between the end of the 19th century and the year 2000.



## Product of Human Activity

Our planet is going through an accelerated process of global warming because of the accumulation in the atmosphere of a series of gases generated by human activity. These gases not only absorb the energy emitted by the surface of the Earth when it is heated by radiation coming from the Sun, but they also strengthen the naturally occurring greenhouse effect, whose purpose is to trap heat. One of the primary agents responsible for the growth of the greenhouse effect is CO<sub>2</sub> (carbon dioxide), which is artificially produced by burning fossil fuels (coal, petroleum, and natural gas). Because of the intensive use of these fuels, there has been a notable increase in the quantity of both carbon and nitrogen oxides

and carbon dioxide released into the atmosphere. Other aggravating human activities, such as deforestation, have limited the regenerative capacity of the atmosphere to eliminate carbon dioxide through photosynthesis. These changes have caused a slow increase in the average annual temperature of the Earth. Global warming, in turn, causes numerous environmental problems: desertification and droughts (which cause famines), deforestation (which further increases climate change), floods, and the destruction of ecosystems. Because all these variables contribute to global warming in complex ways, it is very difficult to predict with precision everything that will happen in the future.

84° F  
(29° C)

The discoloration of coral occurs when the temperature exceeds 84° F (29° C). Algae are lost, the coral weakens, and the color of the coral fades.

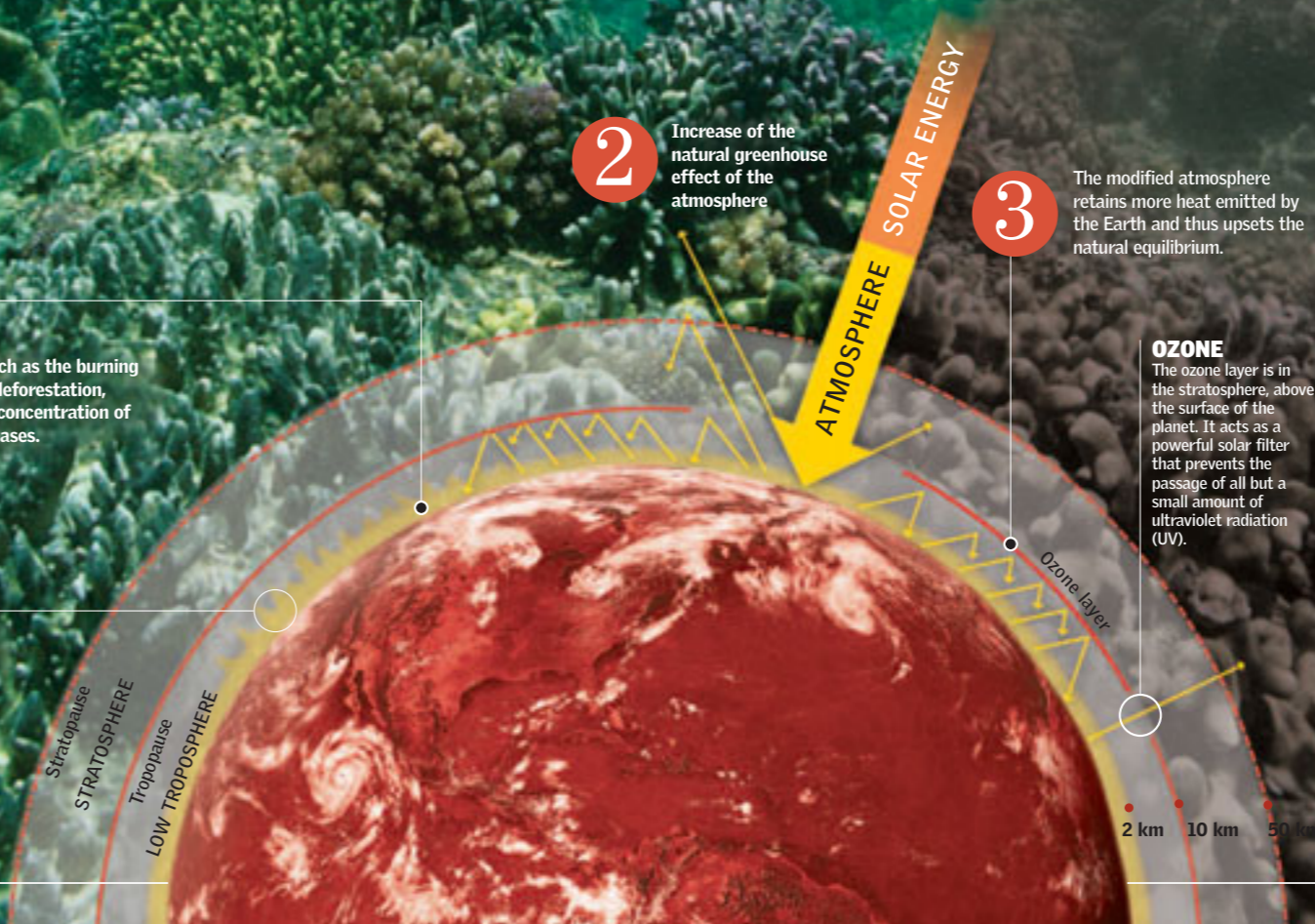
**1** Activities, such as the burning of fuels and deforestation, increase the concentration of greenhouse gases.

**INCREASE OF PRIMARY GREENHOUSE GASES**

**2** Increase of the natural greenhouse effect of the atmosphere

**3** The modified atmosphere retains more heat emitted by the Earth and thus upsets the natural equilibrium.

**OZONE**  
The ozone layer is in the stratosphere, above the surface of the planet. It acts as a powerful solar filter that prevents the passage of all but a small amount of ultraviolet radiation (UV).



1.1° F  
(0.6° C)

## APPROXIMATE INCREASE

Of the Earth's global average temperature from 1860

## A Different World

With the changing patterns of precipitation and the shifting of air-pressure systems, some regions will become more humid, and others will suffer droughts. One of the areas that will become drier will be the western part of North America, where desertification is already affecting agriculture. According to current forecasts, areas in high latitudes, closer to the poles, will go through a rapid warming in the next 40 years. Populations of animals will be forced to emigrate from their habitat to avoid extinction, and other animals, such as the polar bear and emperor penguin, will have trouble subsisting as their habitats disappear. Ocean levels are rising between 0.4 and 0.8 inch (1 and 2 cm) per decade. Some Pacific island nations such as Tuvalu have contingency plans for evacuation. Another affected region is the Great Barrier Reef of Australia. The coral is very sensitive to changes in temperature. At temperatures above a normal 84° F [29° C], the coral begin to expel the algae on which they depend for food, and then they die.

# Accelerated Melting

The climate is changing at a disconcerting speed. Glaciers are retreating, and sea level is rising because of a phenomenon known as thermal expansion. Scientists evaluating the planet's health deduce that this is the consequence of the Earth warming too rapidly. Human activity—in particular, the burning of fossil fuels and the consequent accumulation of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere—has increased this trend. ●



## ARCTIC

Latitude 66° N  
Longitude 0°

|              |                                           |
|--------------|-------------------------------------------|
| Surface area | 5,444,040 square miles (14,100,000 sq km) |
| Depth        | 13,100 to 6,600 feet (4,000 to 2,000 m)   |
| Temperature  | -58° F (-50° C) in winter                 |

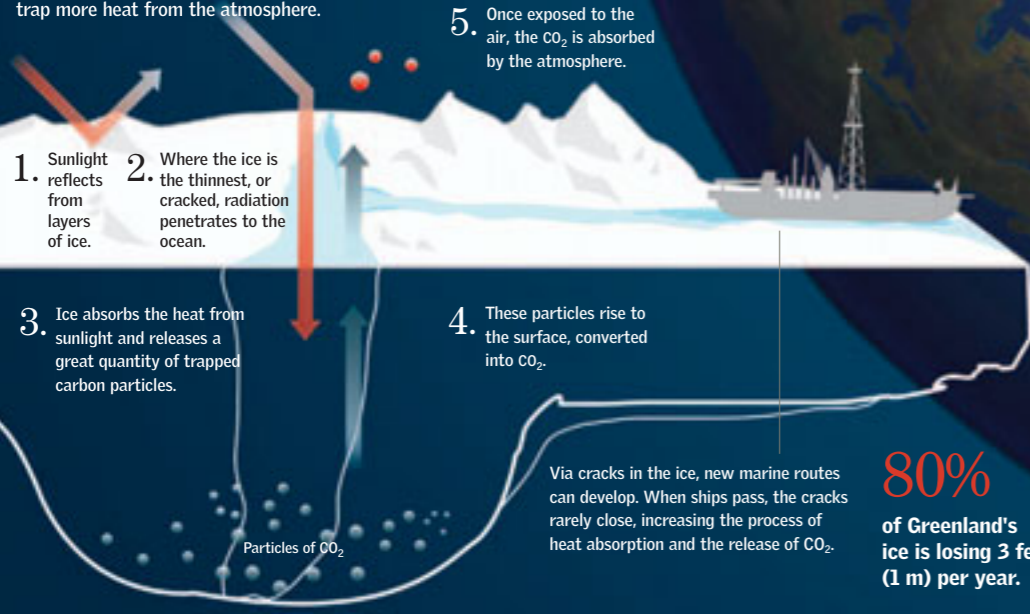
## Why It Happens

The thawing at the poles is, in part, caused by the increase of greenhouse gases. They absorb the radiation emitted by the Earth and heat up the atmosphere, further increasing the Earth's temperature. The melting of glaciers puts more water in the oceans.

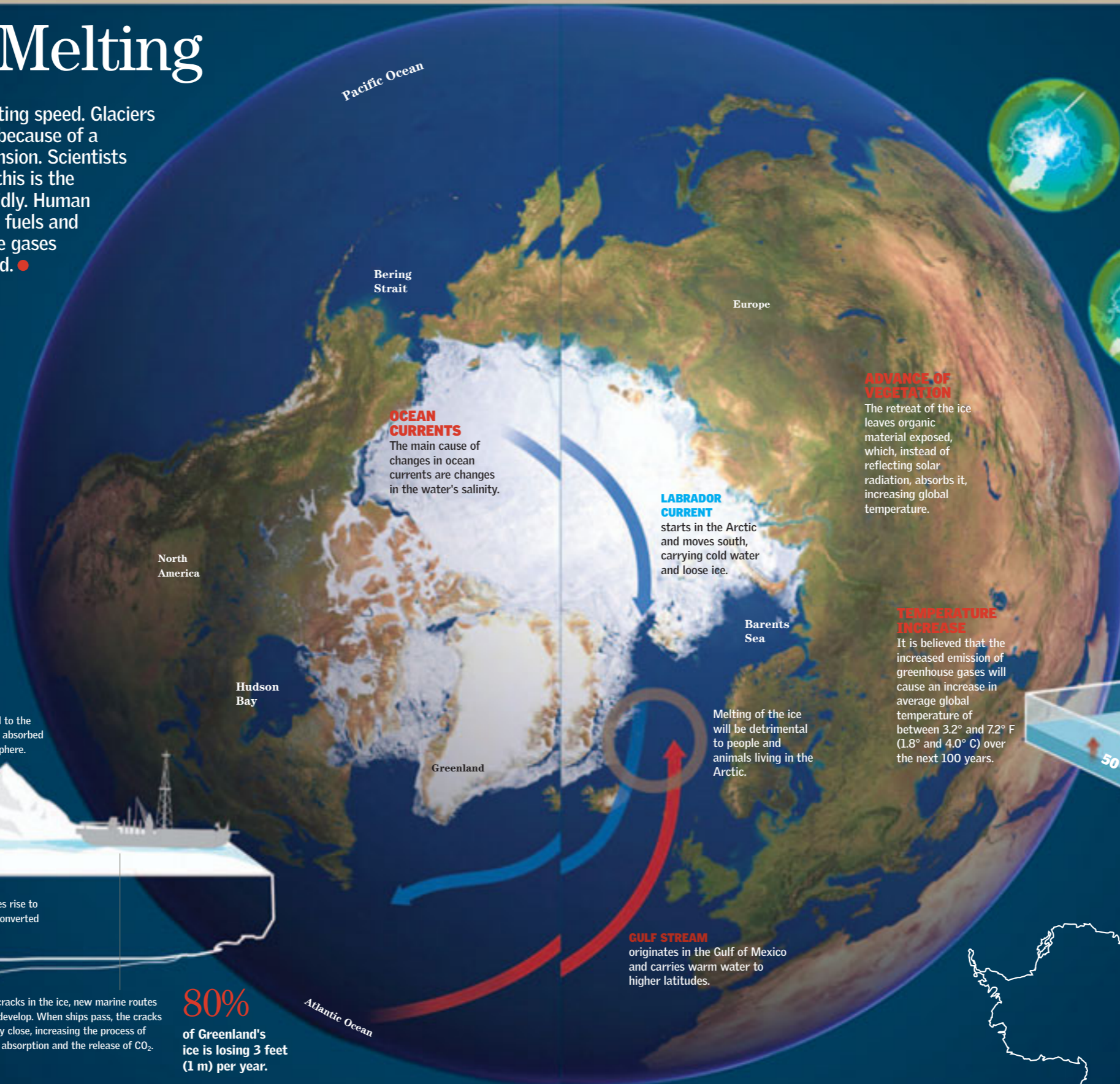
### EFFECT

The Arctic heats up more rapidly than the global average because of the darkness of the soil and the water, which, once exposed, trap more heat from the atmosphere.

5. Once exposed to the air, the CO<sub>2</sub> is absorbed by the atmosphere.



**80%** of Greenland's ice is losing 3 feet (1 m) per year.



**OCEAN CURRENTS**  
The main cause of changes in ocean currents are changes in the water's salinity.

**LABRADOR CURRENT**  
starts in the Arctic and moves south, carrying cold water and loose ice.

**ADVANCE OF VEGETATION**  
The retreat of the ice leaves organic material exposed, which, instead of reflecting solar radiation, absorbs it, increasing global temperature.

**TEMPERATURE INCREASE**  
It is believed that the increased emission of greenhouse gases will cause an increase in average global temperature of between 3.2° and 7.2° F (1.8° and 4.0° C) over the next 100 years.

Melting of the ice will be detrimental to people and animals living in the Arctic.

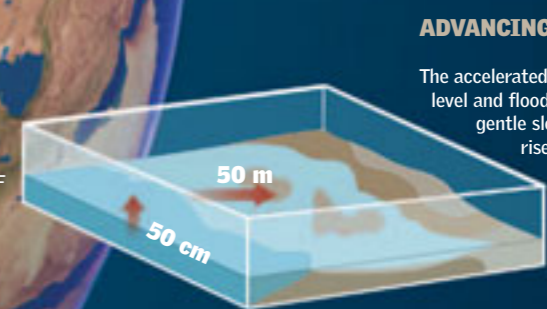
**GULF STREAM**  
originates in the Gulf of Mexico and carries warm water to higher latitudes.

**POSSIBLE FLOOD ZONES**

**PROJECTIONS 2010-30**  
Summer sea ice, currently in decline, tends to diminish more and more rapidly in the future.

**2040-60**  
As the century progresses, sea ice continues to melt more and more along the coasts of the Arctic Ocean.

**2070-90**  
Some scientific models project that summer sea ice will be virtually eliminated during this century.



### ADVANCING WATERS

The accelerated melting raises sea level and floods coasts that have a gentle slope. As the sea level rises, the width of coastal areas diminishes.

**164 feet (50 m)**  
The amount of coastal area lost when sea level rises 20 inches (50 cm)

**70%**  
of the freshwater in the world is in Antarctica.

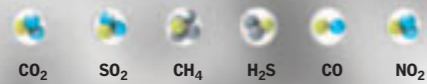
## Antarctica

The Antarctic loses 36 cubic miles (152 cu km) of ice per year, and the western ice sheet is becoming thinner at an accelerating pace. This is contributing to increases in sea level. Over the long term, the effect on the climate could be disastrous for many regions of the planet.

# Toxic Rain

Burning fossil fuel releases into the air chemicals that mix with water vapor and produce acid rain. The excess of sulfur dioxides and nitrogen dioxides in bodies of water makes the development of aquatic life more difficult, substantially increasing the mortality rate of fish. Likewise, it affects vegetation on land, causing significant damage in forested areas by contaminating animals and destroying substances vital for the soil. Moreover, acidic sedimentation can increase the levels of toxic metals, such as aluminum, copper, and mercury, that are deposited in untreated drinking-water reservoirs.

**1 GAS EMISSIONS**  
Generated by burning fuels and the eruption of volcanoes



**2 GAS MIXTURES**  
The molecules of various gases rise and mix with water in the air.

**3 PHOTOCHEMICAL REACTION**  
Sunlight increases the speed at which chemical reactions occur. Thus, sulfur dioxide and atmospheric gases rapidly produce sulfur trioxide.

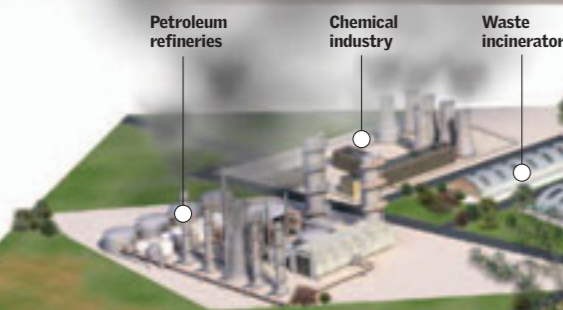
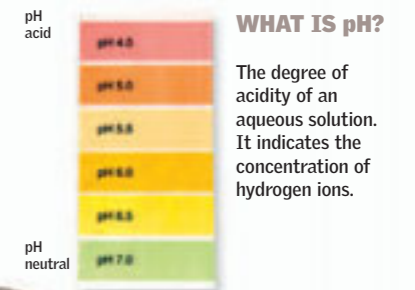
**4 ACID RAIN**  
falls in the form of water, fog, or dew and leaves the acids formed in the atmosphere on the ground.

pH:5 Acid rain      pH:6 Normal rain

## AREAS AFFECTED BY ACID RAIN

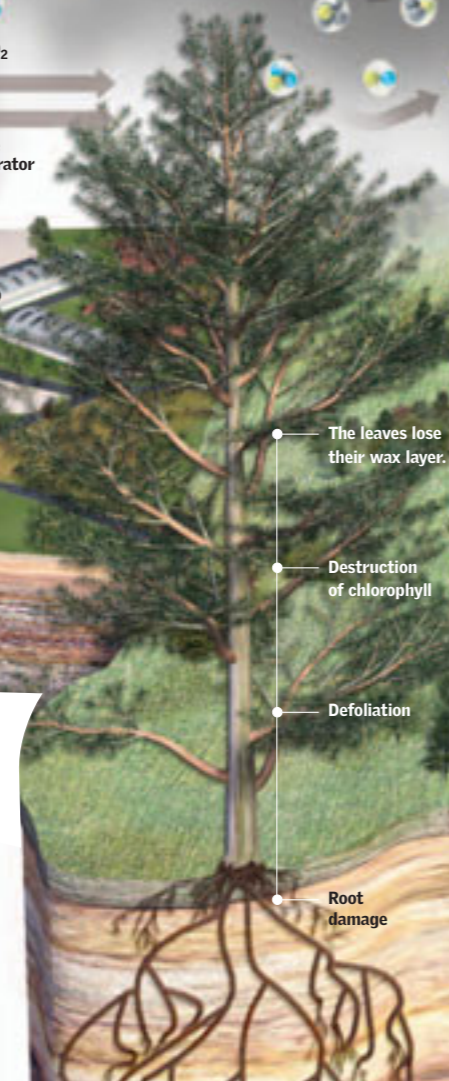


The regions most vulnerable to this phenomenon are Mexico, Beijing, Cairo, Jakarta (Indonesia), and Los Angeles.



**TYPES OF GASES EMITTED**

|                           |                                                                                                                     |
|---------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Petroleum refinery</b> | CO <sub>2</sub> (carbon dioxide)<br>SO <sub>2</sub> (sulfur dioxide)<br>CH <sub>4</sub> (methane)                   |
| <b>Chemical industry</b>  | CO <sub>2</sub> , SO <sub>2</sub> ,<br>H <sub>2</sub> S (hydrogen sulfide)                                          |
| <b>Waste incinerator</b>  | CO <sub>2</sub> , SO <sub>2</sub> , CH <sub>4</sub> ,<br>CO (carbon monoxide)<br>NO <sub>2</sub> (nitrogen dioxide) |



**CONSEQUENCES FOR PLANTS**  
Acid rain acts via certain mechanisms that weaken plants, making them more vulnerable to the effects of wind, cold, drought, disease, and parasites.

**CONSEQUENCES FOR AGRICULTURE**  
Areas under cultivation are not as vulnerable because they are generally improved by fertilizers that restore nutrients to the soil and neutralize acidity.

**EFFECTS ON THE WATER**  
The acidity of rainwater changes the neutral pH of bodies of water.  
pH 7 (neutral) → pH 4.3 (acid)

Seriously affected species are lettuce and tobacco, especially because their leaves, destined for human consumption, must be of high quality.

**pH 4.3 LEVEL AT WHICH FISH DO NOT SURVIVE IN THE WATER**

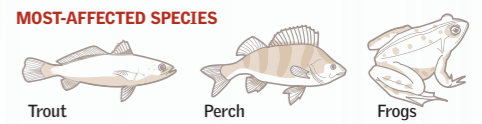
## SOIL CONSEQUENCES

**SILICATE SOIL**  
The effect of acidity increases because of the lack of buffering minerals.

**CALCAREOUS SOIL**  
The effect is neutralized by the presence of bicarbonate.

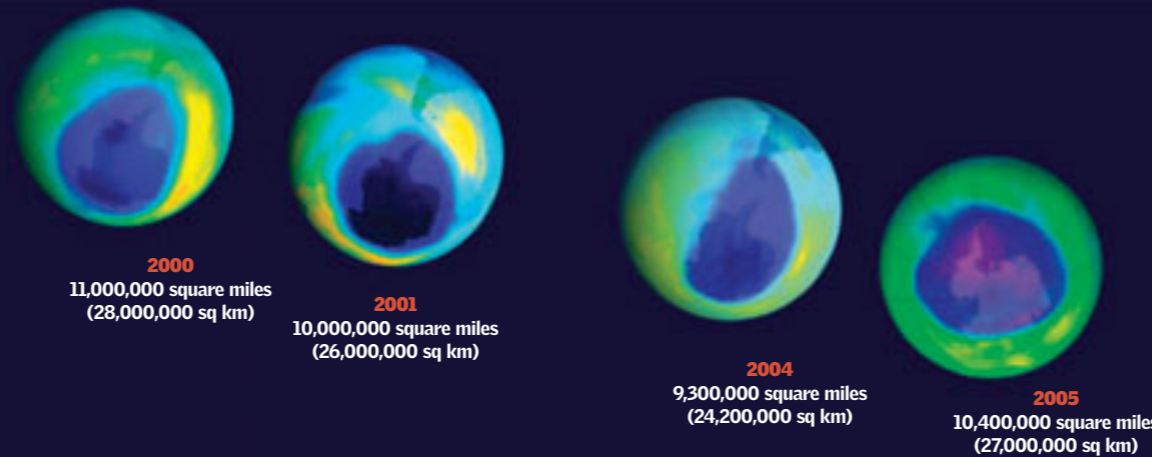
In mountainous areas, fog and snow contribute significant quantities of the gases in question.

**1972** The year when the phenomenon of acid rain was recorded for the first time



# Weaker and Weaker

Artificial substances are destroying the ozone layer, which provides protection against ultraviolet rays. This phenomenon is observed every year in polar regions (primarily in the Antarctic) between August and October. Because of this, the Earth is receiving more harmful rays, which perhaps explains the appearance of certain illnesses: an increase in skin cancer cases, damage to vision, and weakening of the immune system. ●



**THE SOUTHERN OZONE HOLE**  
The thinning of the ozone layer over the Antarctic is the result of a series of phenomena, including the action of chlorine radicals, which cause the destruction of ozone.

**11,000,000 square miles (28,000,000 sq km)**  
is the size of the area of attenuated ozone reached in 2000.

## UV RADIATION

Ultraviolet radiation (UV) is a radiant form of energy that comes from the Sun. The various forms of radiation are classified according to the average wavelength measured in nanometers (nm), equivalent to one millionth of a millimeter. The shorter the wavelength, the greater the energy of the radiation.

### UV-A

These rays easily penetrate the ozone layer. They cause skin wrinkling and aging.

### UV-B

are almost all absorbed by the ozone layer. They are harmful and cause various types of skin cancer.

### UV-C

These are the most damaging rays, but they are totally filtered by the upper part of the ozone layer.

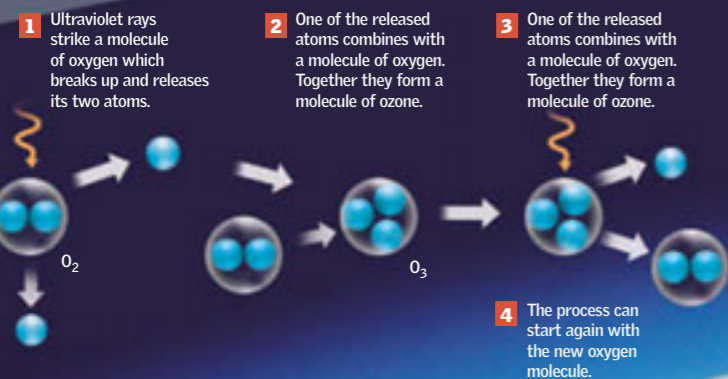


## OZONE LAYER

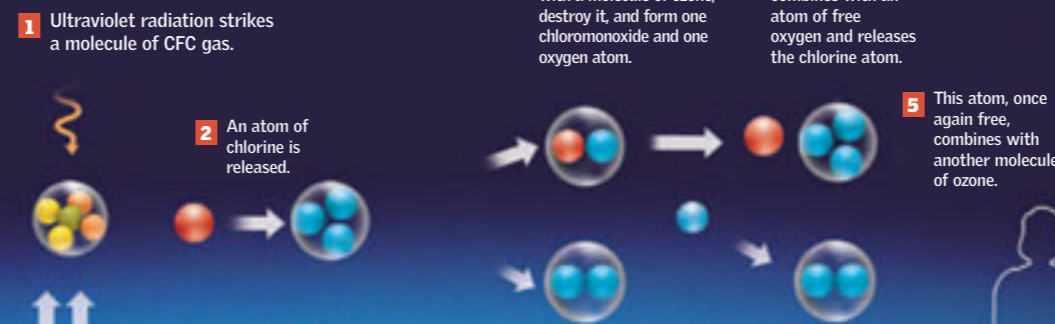
At an altitude of 12 to 19 miles (20 to 30 km), the Earth is surrounded by a stratospheric ozone layer that is of vital importance for life on the surface. The layer is formed from oxygen molecules through the absorption of ultraviolet light from the Sun. This reaction is reversible, that is, the ozone can return to its natural state, oxygen. This oxygen is reconverted into ozone, beginning a continuous process of formation and destruction of these components.

It is popularly called the ozone hole—a decrease or abnormal thinning that occurs in the ozone layer.

## HOW OZONE IS FORMED



## HOW IT DETERIORATES



## CFC GASES

are a family of gases with multiple applications. They are used in refrigeration systems, air-conditioning equipment, and aerosols.



## WHEN? WHO? HOW?

In 1974, it was discovered that industrial chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) affect the ozone layer. Chemists Mario Molina and F. Sherwood Rowland demonstrated that industrial CFCs are the gases that weaken the ozone layer by destroying the ozone molecules.

The ozone layer functions as a natural filter, absorbing UV rays.

**75%**  
OF SKIN CANCER IS ATTRIBUTED TO UV-B RADIATION.

**50 to 100**  
THE NUMBER OF YEARS THAT CFC GASES SURVIVE IN THE ATMOSPHERE

**HUMAN BEINGS**  
Skin cancer. Damage to vision. Weakening of the immune system. Severe burns. Skin aging.

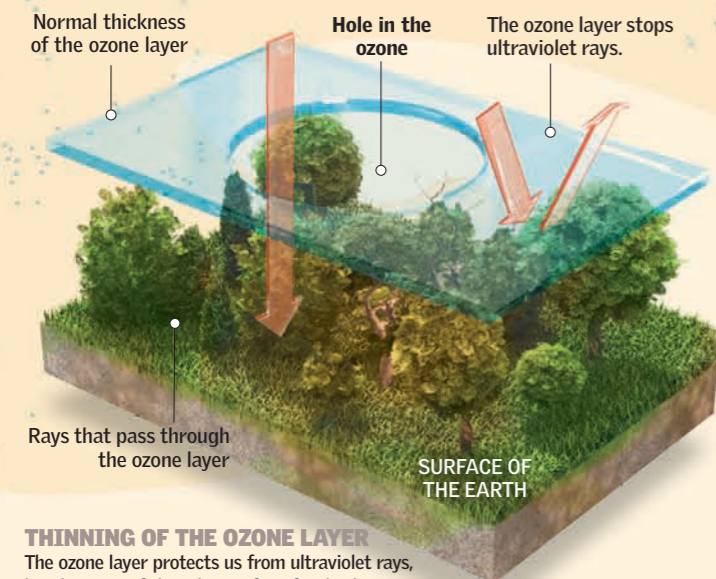
**PLANTS**  
Destruction of phytoplankton. Inhibition of the photosynthesis process. Changes in growth. Reduced harvest yields.

**ANIMALS**  
Diseases among farm animals. Destruction of links in the food chain. Increase of skin cancer.

# Change; Everything Changes

## The Most Responsible

The climate of the planet is constantly changing. At present, the average global temperature is approximately 59° F (15° C). Geologic and other types of evidence suggest that in the past the average could have been as low as 45° F (7° C) and as high as 81° F (27° C). Climate change is, in large part, caused by human activities, which cause an increase in the concentration of greenhouse gases. These gases include carbon dioxide, methane, and nitrogen dioxide and are released by modern industry, by agriculture, and by the burning of coal, petroleum, and natural gas. Its atmospheric concentration is increasing: atmospheric carbon-dioxide content alone has grown by more than 20 percent since 1960. Investigators indicate that this warming can have grave implications for the stability of the climate, on which most of the life on the planet depends.



### THINNING OF THE OZONE LAYER

The ozone layer protects us from ultraviolet rays, but, because of the release of artificial substances, it is thinning out. This phenomenon is observed each year over Antarctica between August and October and over the North Pole between October and May. Moreover, there is evidence that greater amounts of UV rays at the Earth's surface are destroying or altering vegetable cells and decreasing the production of oxygen.

### THE RISE IN TEMPERATURE

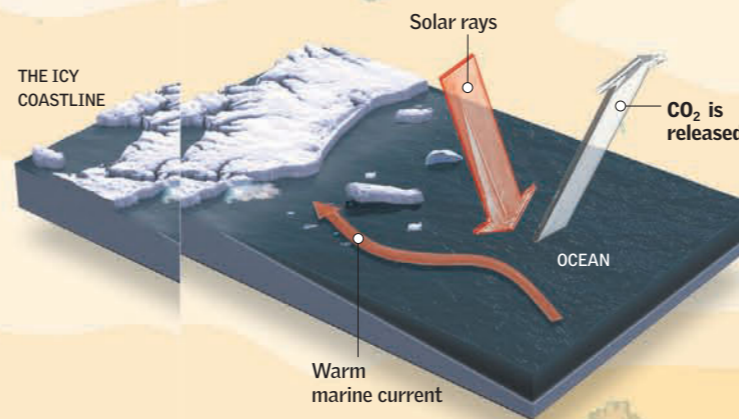
In Alaska and western Canada winter temperatures have increased between 5.4° and 7.2° F (3° and 4° C) in the past 50 years. It has been projected that in the next 100 years the Earth's average temperature will increase between 3.2° and 7.2° F (1.8° and 4.0° C).

From 3.6° to 5.4° F (2° to 3° C)

From 1.8° to 3.6° F (1° to 2° C)

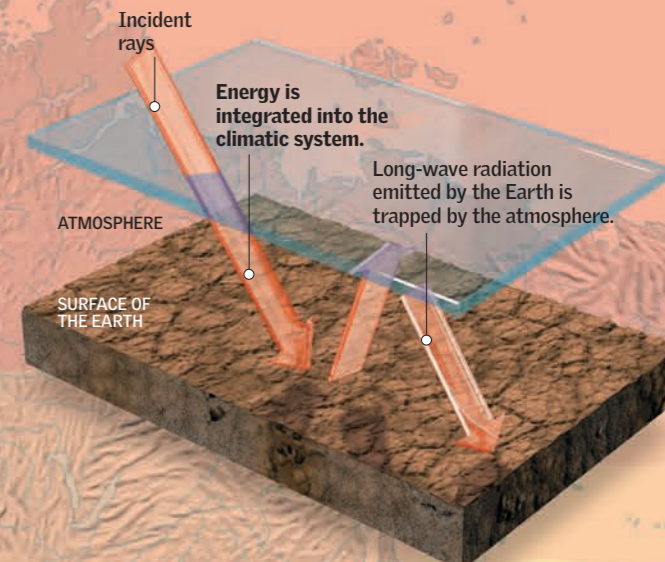
### THE EFFECT OF POLAR MELTING

The snow-covered sea ice reflects between 85 and 90 percent of the sunlight that strikes it, whereas sea water reflects only 10 percent. For that reason, as the ice and snow melt, many of today's coastlines will become submerged under water, which will cause yet more ice to melt.



## Cause and Effect

The burning of fossil fuels and the indiscriminate cutting of deciduous forests and rainforests cause an increase in the concentration of carbon dioxide, methane, and other greenhouse gases. They trap heat and increase the greenhouse effect. That is how the Arctic is warming up; the density of the ice is decreased by melting, and freshwater flows into the ocean, changing its salinity.



### ACCELERATION OF THE GREENHOUSE EFFECT

Ice reflects solar radiation, whereas the soil of jungles, forests, and steppes absorbs the energy and radiates it as sensible heat. This artificially increases the greenhouse effect and contributes to global warming.

100 years

is the length of time it takes for a deciduous forest to return to its natural state after it has been laid to waste.

# Glossary

## Accretion

Growth of an ice crystal in the atmosphere by direct capture of water droplets when the temperature is below 32° F (0° C).

## Acid Rain

Rain resulting from the mixture of water vapor in the air with chemical substances typically released by the combustion of fossil fuels.

## Aerosol

Aerosols are very small (liquid or solid) particles suspended in the atmosphere, with varied chemical composition. Aerosols play an essential role in the formation of clouds by acting as condensation nuclei. They are also important to the Earth's radiation balance since they help to increase the reflection and dispersion of radiation coming from the Sun.

## Air Mass

Extensive volume in the atmosphere whose physical properties, in particular the temperature and humidity in a horizontal plane, show only small and gradual differences. An air mass can cover an area of a few million square miles and can have a thickness of several miles.

## Albedo

A measure of the percentage of radiation reflected by a surface.

## Altitude

Height relative to sea level.

## Anemometer

Instrument for measuring wind velocity.

## Anticyclone

Region where the atmospheric pressure is relatively high compared with neighboring regions. Normally the air above an anticyclone descends, which prevents clouds from forming at medium and high levels of the atmosphere. Hence an anticyclonic system is associated with

good weather.

## Atmosphere

The gaseous envelope that surrounds the Earth.

## Atmospheric Pressure

The pressure or weight exerted by the atmosphere at a specific point. Its measurement can be expressed in various units: hectopascals, millibars, inches, or millimeters of mercury (Hg). It is also called barometric pressure.

## Aurora

A phenomenon that is produced in the higher layers of the atmosphere at polar latitudes. An aurora occurs when there is a collision between the electrically charged particles emitted by the Sun and the magnetic field of the Earth. In the Northern Hemisphere, the phenomenon is called the aurora borealis, and in the Southern Hemisphere, it is known as the aurora australis.

## Avalanche

A large mass of snow that flows down the side of a mountain.

## Barometer

An instrument for measuring atmospheric pressure. A decrease in pressure usually means that storms are on the way. Increasing pressure indicates good weather.

## Beaufort Scale

A scale invented at the beginning of the 19th century by a British sailor, Francis Beaufort, for estimating and reporting wind velocity. It is based on the different shapes taken by water waves at different wind velocities, and its graduation goes from 0 to 12. There is also a Beaufort scale for application on land based on observations of the wind's effect on trees and other objects.

## Carbon Dioxide

An odorless, colorless gas emitted in the engine

exhaust of automobiles, trucks, and buses. It is also produced by the combustion of coal and other organic material. Too much carbon dioxide in the atmosphere contributes to global warming.

## Chlorofluorocarbons

Artificial chemical substances often contained in aerosols, refrigerants, and air conditioners. These chemicals are largely responsible for the damage to the ozone layer.

## Cirrus

Wispy cloud formations at altitudes greater than 16,400 feet (5,000 m).

## Climate

The average state of the meteorological conditions of a location considered over a long period of time. The climate of a location is determined by climatological factors: latitude, longitude, altitude, topography, and continentality.

## Cloud

A visible mass of small particles, such as droplets of water and/or crystals of ice, suspended in the air. A cloud is formed in the atmosphere because of the condensation of water vapor onto solid particles of smoke, dust, ashes, and other elements called condensation nuclei.

## Coalescence

The process of growth of drops of water in a cloud. Two drops collide and remain joined after the collision, constituting a bigger drop. This is one of the mechanisms that explains the growth of the size of drops in a cloud until precipitation (rain) is produced.

## Cold Wave

A rapid drop in temperature to the point requiring special protective measures in agriculture, industry, commerce, or social activities.

## Condensation

The process by which water vapor is transformed into liquid by the effect of cooling.

## Conduction

The transfer of heat through a substance by molecular action or from one substance to another it is in contact with.

## Continental

The tendency of the interior regions of the continents to have more extreme temperature changes than coastal zones.

## Convection

The process by which a heated surface transfers energy to the material (air, water, etc.) above it. This material becomes less dense and rises. Cooler material descends to fill in the void. Air rising as a result of the heating of the ground by the Sun's rays.

## Coriolis Force

A fictitious or apparent force that applies when the Earth is used as a reference frame for motion. It depends upon the latitude and the velocity of the object in motion. In the Northern Hemisphere, the air is deflected toward the right side of its path, and in the Southern Hemisphere, the air is deflected toward the left side of its path. This force is strongest at the poles and does not exist at the Equator.

## Cyclone

A climatic low-pressure system.

## Desert

A hot or cold zone where annual precipitation is less than 1 inch (25 mm).

## Desertification

A process that converts fertile land to desert

through a reduction in precipitation.

## Dew

Condensation in the form of small drops of water formed on grass and other small objects near the ground when the temperature has dropped to the dew point. This generally happens during the night.

## Dike

An earthwork for containing or channeling a river or for protection against the sea.

## Drizzle

A type of light liquid precipitation composed of small drops with diameters between 0.007 and 0.019 inch (0.2 and 0.5 mm). Usually drizzle falls from stratus-type clouds that are found at low altitudes and can be accompanied by fog, which significantly decreases visibility.

## Drought

An abnormally dry climatic condition in a specific area where the lack of water is prolonged and which causes a serious hydrological imbalance.

## El Niño

The anomalous appearance, every few years, of unusually warm ocean conditions along the tropical west coast of South America.

## Erosion

Action in which the ground is worn down by moving water, glaciers, wind, or waves.

## Evaporation

Physical process by which a liquid (such as water) is transformed into its gaseous state (such as water vapor). The reverse process is called condensation.

## Exosphere

The outermost layer of the Earth's atmosphere.

## Flash Flood

Sudden flooding caused by the passage of a large quantity of water through a narrow space, such as a canyon or a valley.

## Fog

Visible manifestation of drops of water suspended in the atmosphere at or near ground level; this reduces the horizontal visibility to less than a mile. It originates when the temperature of the air is near the dew point, and sufficient numbers of condensation nuclei are present.

## Forecast

A statement about future events. The weather forecast includes the use of objective models based on a number of atmospheric parameters combined with the ability and experience of the meteorologist. It is also called weather prediction.

## Front

The transition or contact zone between two masses of air with different meteorological characteristics, which almost always implies different temperatures. For example, a front occurs at the area of convergence between warm humid air and dry cold air.

## Frontogenesis

The process of formation or intensification of a front. This happens when wind forces two adjacent masses of air of different densities and temperatures together, creating a front. It can occur when one of the masses of air, or both, move over a surface that reinforces their original properties. This is common on the east coast of North America or Asia, when a mass of air moving toward the ocean has a weak or undefined boundary. It is the opposite of frontolysis.

## Frost

A covering of ice crystals on a cold object.

## Global Warming

The heating of the atmosphere caused by increased concentrations of greenhouse gases due to human activities.

## Greenhouse Effect

A phenomenon explained by the presence of certain components in the atmosphere (primarily carbon dioxide [CO<sub>2</sub>], water vapor, and ozone) that absorb a portion of the infrared radiation emitted by the surface of the Earth and simultaneously reflect radiative energy back to the surface. This process contributes to the increase in the average temperature near the surface.

## Gust

A rapid and significant increase in wind velocity. The maximum velocity of the wind must reach at least 16 knots (18 miles per hour [30 km/h]), and the difference between the peaks and calm must be at least 10 knots (12 miles per hour [18 km/h]). It generally lasts less than 20 seconds.

## Hail

Precipitation that originates in convective clouds, such as the cumulonimbus, in the form of masses or irregular pieces of ice. Typically hail has a diameter of 0.2 to 2 inches (5 to 50 mm) but may grow significantly larger. The smallest ice fragments—whose diameter is 0.2 inch (5 mm) or less—are called small hailstones, or graupel. Strong upward currents are required inside the clouds for hail to be produced.

## Heat Wave

A period of abnormally hot and uncomfortable weather. It can last from a few days to a number of weeks.

## Hectopascal

A pressure unit equal to 100 pascals and equivalent to 1 millibar—a millibar being equivalent to 0.031 inch (0.8 mm) of ordinary

mercury. The millibar (mb) was the technical unit used to measure pressure until recently, when the hectopascal was adopted. The pascal is the unit for pressure in the MKS system, corresponding to the pressure exerted by the unit force (1 newton) on a unit surface (1 square meter—11 square feet); 1,000 hPa = 1,000 mb = 1 bar = 14.5 pounds per square inch.

## High

A prefix describing cloud formations at an altitude between 6,560 and 16,400 feet (2,000 and 5,000 m).

## Humidity

The amount of water vapor contained in the air.

## Hurricane

The name for a tropical cyclone with sustained winds of 64 knots (74 miles per hour [119 km/h]) or more, which develops in the North Atlantic, the Caribbean, the Gulf of Mexico, and the Pacific Northeast. This storm is called a typhoon in the western Pacific and a cyclone in the Indian Ocean.

## Hygrometer

An instrument used to measure humidity.

## Ice

The solid state of water. It is found in the atmosphere in the form of ice crystals, snow, or hail.

## Jet Streams

Air currents high in the troposphere (about 6 miles [10 km] above sea level), where the wind velocity can be up to 90 meters per second (200 miles per hour). This type of structure is seen in subtropical latitudes in both hemispheres, where the flow is toward the east, reaching its maximum intensity during the winter.

## Latitude

A system of imaginary parallel lines that encircle the globe north and south of the Equator. The poles are located at 90° latitude

north and south and the Equator at 0° latitude.

## Lightning

A discharge of the atmosphere's static electricity occurring between a cloud and the ground.

## Mesosphere

The layer of the Earth's atmosphere that lies above the stratosphere.

## METAR

The name of the format airport meteorological bulletins are reported in. This includes data on wind, visibility, temperature, dew point, and atmospheric pressure, among other variables.

## Meteorology

The science and study of atmospheric phenomena. Some of the subdivisions of meteorology are agrometeorology, climatology, hydrometeorology, and physical, dynamic, and synoptic meteorology.

## Microbarometer

A very sensitive barometer that records pressure variations using a magnified scale.

## Mist

Microscopic drops of water suspended in the air, or humid hygroscopic particles, which reduce visibility at ground level.

## Monsoon

A seasonal wind that causes heavy rains in tropical and subtropical regions.

## Normal

The standard value accepted for a meteorological element as calculated for a specific location over a specific number of years. The normal values refer to the distribution of data within the limits of the common occurrence. The parameters can include temperature (high, low, and divergences),

pressure, precipitation (rain, snow, etc.), winds (velocity and direction), storms, cloud cover, percentage of relative humidity, and so on.

## Ocean Current

The movement of water in the ocean caused by the system of planetary winds. Ocean currents transport warm or cold water over long distances around the planet.

## Orographic Rain

Rain that results from the cooling of humid air as it crosses over a mountain range.

## Ozone Layer

A layer of the atmosphere situated 20 to 30 miles (30 to 50 km) above the Earth's surface between the troposphere and the stratosphere. It acts as a filtering mechanism for ultraviolet radiation.

## Polar Front

An almost permanent and very large front of the middle latitudes that separates the relatively cold polar air and the relatively warm subtropical air.

## Precipitation

A liquid or solid, crystallized or amorphous particle that falls from a cloud or system of clouds and reaches the ground.

## Radiation

The process by which energy propagates through a specific medium (or a vacuum) via wave phenomena or motion. Electromagnetic radiation, which emits heat and light, is one form of radiation. Other forms are sound waves.

## Seaquake

An earthquake at the bottom of the ocean, causing a violent agitation of ocean waves, which in some cases reach coastal areas and cause flooding.

## Snow

Precipitation in the form of white or transparent frozen ice crystals, often in the form of complex hexagons. In general, snow falls from stratiform clouds, but it can also fall from cumulus clouds, usually in the form of snowflakes.

## Stratosphere

The layer of the atmosphere situated above the troposphere.

## Stratus

Low clouds that form layers. They often produce drizzle.

## Synoptic Map

A map that shows weather conditions of the Earth's surface at a certain time and place.

## Thermal Inversion

An inversion of the normal reduction in temperature with an increase in altitude.

## Thermometer

An instrument for measuring temperature. The different scales used in meteorology are Celsius, Fahrenheit, and Kelvin (or absolute).

## Tornado

A column of air that rotates with great violence, stretching between a convective cloud and the surface of the Earth. It is the most destructive phenomenon in the atmosphere. Tornadoes can occur, under the right conditions, anywhere on Earth, but they appear most frequently in the central United States, between the Rocky Mountains and the Appalachian Mountains.

## Tropical Cyclone

A cyclone without fronts, it develops over tropical waters and has a surface circulation organized and defined in a counterclockwise direction. A cyclone is classified, according to the intensity of its winds, as a tropical

disturbance (light ground-level winds), tropical depression (maximum ground-level winds of 38 miles per hour [61 km/h]), tropical storm (maximum winds in the range of 39 to 73 miles per hour [62 to 112 km/h]), or hurricane (maximum ground-level winds exceeding 74 miles per hour [119 km/h]).

## Troposphere

The layer of the atmosphere closest to the ground, its name means "changing sphere," and this layer is where most changes in weather take place. This is also where most of the phenomena of interest in meteorology occur.

## Turbulence

Disorderly motion of air composed of small whirlwinds that move within air currents. Atmospheric turbulence is produced by air in a state of continuous change. It can be caused by thermal or convective currents, by differences in terrain and in the velocity of the wind, by conditions along a frontal zone, or by a change in temperature and pressure.

## Weather

The state of the atmosphere at a given moment, as it relates to its effects on human activity. This process involves short-term changes in the atmosphere in contrast to the great climatic changes that imply more long-term changes. The terms used to define weather include cloudiness, humidity, precipitation, temperature, visibility, and wind.

## Windward

The direction from which the wind is blowing.

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