

Section 2.—Meteorological Observing Stations in Canada*

In January 1964, official meteorological observations were taken and recorded at some 2,230 weather reporting stations in Canada. There are several different classes of stations, ranging from the first-order reporting stations at airports where hourly observations of all aspects of the weather are recorded, to the co-operative precipitation observing stations where a volunteer observer makes daily observations of rainfall and snowfall. While there are vast areas of the country where the weather stations are several hundred miles apart, most of the settled parts of the country are represented by first-order hourly reporting stations every 100 miles or so, and by co-operative climatological observing stations at least every 25 miles.

At most of the 241 first-order synoptic stations complete weather observations are made every six hours and at a large percentage of them only slightly less complete observations for aviation forecasts are made every hour. These weather data, including information on temperature, precipitation, pressure, wind, humidity, cloud and visibility, are sent first by radio and teletype to the different weather offices across the Continent to be used for weather forecasting purposes, and then at each month-end the manuscript reports are sent by mail to Meteorological Branch Headquarters for use in compiling climatic statistics. At some 90 of these observing stations, personnel of the Telecommunications Branch of the Department of Transport take weather observations as part of their scheduled duties, and 35 stations are operated in a similar manner by the different Armed Services; 70 stations are operated by Meteorological Branch personnel and the remainder are operated under contract, mainly by various transportation and communications companies.

Twice daily at 36 locations throughout the country, complete upper air observations are made from the surface to altitudes upwards to 100,000 feet. Pressure, temperature and humidity measurements are determined by radiosonde instruments carried aloft by balloons and the information reported by radio to the ground receiving station; winds are determined by observing the drift of the balloon by means of radar or radio direction finding ground equipment. There are also 26 other locations where the winds in the lower layers of the atmosphere are determined by observing free balloon drift by means of a theodolite or by radar. As in the case of the first-order synoptic reporting stations, these upper air weather observations are made available immediately to forecast offices for weather forecasting purposes, and the manuscript reports are collected at Meteorological Branch Headquarters for compilation of climatic statistics.

About 1,268 weather observing stations in Canada are classified as climatological stations where the observers record temperature extremes and precipitation once or twice daily and send in monthly data sheets. Most of these observers serve on a voluntary basis and willingly spend several hours a month on their hobby. In addition, many governmental and industrial organizations such as agricultural experimental farms and power companies have incorporated brief climatological duties into the general work of some of their employees. These climatological stations have contributed much useful information on temperature and precipitation for publication by the Meteorological Branch.

There are about 605 stations classified as precipitation stations where rainfall and snowfall only are observed and recorded. Since precipitation varies more rapidly than temperature over short distances, a dense network of these stations is required, especially in large urban areas. Finally, there are about 83 miscellaneous stations where observations of wind, sunshine and temperature are taken for special purposes. In all, the number of weather stations in Canada has been growing at a rate of more than 50 a year for the past decade and thus a steadily increasing climatic intelligence is assisting Canadians in all economic pursuits.

* Prepared by the Meteorological Branch, Department of Transport, Toronto.