

Nation's Weather Bureau Probes Nature's Secrets

Editor's Note: In its struggle to learn nature's secrets in order to save lives and millions of dollars lost annually through storms and droughts, the U.S. Weather Bureau has developed exciting new projects despite a traditionally slim budget. Here's a closeup of how the bureau goes about its work, vital to every American.

By DON WHITEHEAD

WASHINGTON (AP) — Congressmen, like everybody else, complain about the weather. And, like everybody else, they don't do much about it.

For, despite the fact hurricanes, violent storms and drought cost Americans hundreds of millions of dollars annually and take a heavy toll in lives, the federal government—through Democratic and Republican administrations alike—has long treated the U.S. Weather Bureau as an official stepchild.

In keeping with what has almost become a Washington tradition, the Weather Bureau today has available for weather research in 1955 only one-sixteenth as much as the eight million dollars which is paid for a single B52 jet bomber.

The \$500,000 earmarked for research is squeezed out of the bureau's \$24,750,000 budget, one of the more modest of all federal budgets.

The big money in weather research and operations is spent by the Air Force and the Navy with programs geared largely to military needs.

A top Weather Bureau official says the bureau doesn't even have access to all the "classified" weather secrets uncovered in military research.

This doesn't mean the Weather Bureau operates independently and without the benefit of the huge military weather network spread around the world. The Air Force, Navy and Weather Bureau work together on many projects and share most of the benefits of their collective effort.

But in money and personnel, the Weather Bureau is running second.

Today the Weather Bureau is correct 85 times out of 100 in its forecasts. But that 15 per cent is too great a margin of error. A wrong forecast or lack of warning can mean deaths and suffering.

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A man who has spent 40 years trying to piece together the puzzles of weather is 64-year-old I. R. Tannehill, assistant chief of the U.S. Weather Bureau.

Tannehill is optimistic about the chances of predicting weather accurately for an entire season—and of outlining a weather pattern in advance for a span of years. But the experts admit that except for short-range weather predictions, they still are in the groping stage trying to match theory with fact.

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A child plus a match is still a "sure-fire" combination," according to the National Fire Protection Association. Latest figures show that out of every 10 fire fatalities are children 14 years or younger — one third of all fire deaths are on farms.

During Fire Prevention Week, October 3-9, the NFPA urges farmers to instruct their children on fire safety. Small children should be told why they are not to play with matches, electrical

cords, and other potential sources of fire in the home. Children also must be impressed with the danger of gasoline and kerosene vapors.

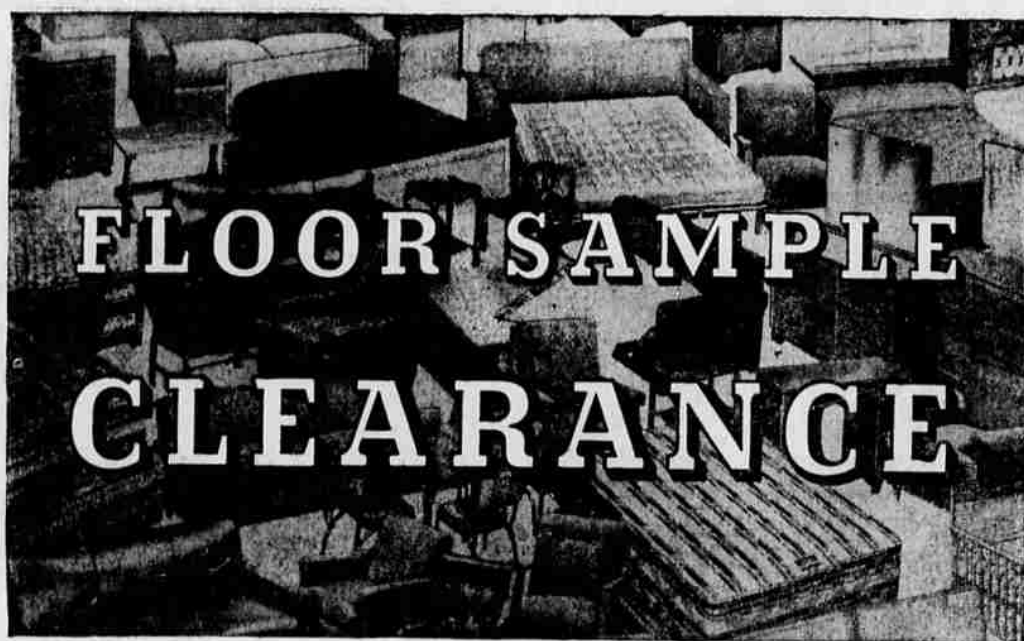
They must learn "by instruction and good example" not to put matches and other incendiary articles near dry straw, hay or underbrush, or near the engines and fuel of farm machinery. Children who are old enough should be taught to use fire-fighting equipment.

National Fire Warning Told

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