

Research Beginning To Show That Weather May Influence Man's Actions

By C. B. ENGELKE
United Press International
PHILADELPHIA (UPI)—“We always look for trouble on Friday nights,” said the Philadelphia police inspector. “But when a full moon falls on a Friday night, we know there is going to be the devil to pay.”

The inspector made the remark at a meeting of the American Institute of Medical Climatology, which is trying to find out whether he was telling an old cop's tale or whether there is indeed a link between meteorological conditions and human behavior.

Why, the institute wants to know, are there more suicides at certain times; why do arthritics double up in pain on certain days; why are they relatively comfortable on others; why are you more inclined to fly off the handle at one time than another?

Heading the institute is Dr. George Piersol, dean emeritus of

the Graduate School of Medicine of the University of Pennsylvania. Other officers include the Rt. Rev. James A. Donnellon, president of Villanova University, and Harold W. Schaefer, vice president of the Philco Corp.

If their pioneer study is successful, the day may come when weather forecasts will help police make out their work schedules, when plant managers will be able to plan for “accident-prone” days, when hospitals will adjust their courses of treatment for specific illnesses according to what sort of day it will be.

So far, the study includes correlating meteorological data with statistics from the following sources:

- Hour-by-hour reports of major crimes in Philadelphia.
- Daily reports on absenteeism at the Philco plant.
- Reports on all death investigations by the office of the city's medical examiner, Dr. Joseph W. Spelman.
- And monthly reports from a number of hospitals in the Philadelphia area.

Already there are signs to indicate that the institute is off on no wild goose chase.

“There is some evidence that deaths are not evenly distributed

throughout the year,” it said. “The number of accidents, homicides and suicides, patterns of discipline and behavior of children and adults also show unusual fluctuations.”

“It was assumed that sudden drops of barometric pressure and temperature, certain unseasonal winds, high humidity and temperature, unusually high concentrations of ozone, etc., precipitated major pathologies. . . .”

While the institute stresses that “the vast field of bioclimatology has been barely explored,” scientists do have a clue to link weather with human health and disposition.

It's a clue that has been kicked around ever since 1931 when Frederick Dessauer of Germany demonstrated that electrically-charged particles in the air have a good deal to do with the way we feel and behave.

During the past 27 years, many researchers have experimented with these particles, ions, which are created when an atom or molecule gains or loses an electron and becomes either positively or negatively charged. Dessauer was the first to contend that positive ions had bad effects while negative ions had good ones.

About six years ago Dr. Piersol and Dr. Igho H. Kornbluch, direct-

or of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation at Pennsylvania University's Graduate Hospital, decided to find out why.

During investigations into the feeling of well-being induced by inhalation of air charged with negative ions, Kornbluch discovered there was a positively beneficial effect on persons suffering from hay fever and asthma.

He also noted a sedative effect. This gave him a clue for further research.

Using the facilities of Northeastern Hospital in Philadelphia with the assistance of researchers at Philco, Kornbluch and his aides discovered that negative ions do a great many things besides soothe and give a sense of well-being.

For example, they have a definite sedative and sleep-producing effect; relieve pain; relieve approximately 62 per cent of hay fever and asthma victims for periods ranging up to two hours; have a therapeutic effect, particularly on burn victims and they promote healing in certain types of wounds.

These things are now known. But Kornbluch is not satisfied. He wants to know why negative ions are so beneficial. He also sees tremendous possibilities in the wider use of ions.

For example, in such disasters

as an enemy attack on a city, Kornbluch contends that if hundreds or thousands of burn victims could be gathered together in negatively-charged rooms it would save many lives, reduce the drain on narcotics, and provide what amounts to emergency first aid without tying up scores of doctors and nurses.

On submarines under water for long periods, negative ionization might prevent taut nerves and promote sounder judgments. In extremely high altitudes, properly controlled ionization might increase alertness and provide a life-saving feeling of well-being to pilots under hazardous conditions.

LOFT MEETINGS
GEORGIA, VI. (UPI) —The annual town meeting again was held in the hay loft of Russell Simons' cattle barn. The meetings have been held there since 1952, when fire destroyed the Georgia Town Hall.

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