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Precipitation Probabilities in the Western Region Associated With Winter 500-mb. Map Types

Richard P. Augulis

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE SERVICES ADMINISTRATION WEATHER BUREAU

Weather Bureau Technical Memorandum WR-45/1

PRECIPITATION PROBABILITIES IN THE WESTERN REGION ASSOCIATED WITH WINTER 500-MB MAP TYPES

Richard P. Augulis Meteorologist Scientific Services Division Western Region Headquarters, Salt Lake City, Utah

WESTERN REGION TECHNICAL MEMORANDUM NO. 45/1

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SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH DECEMBER 1969

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

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LIST OF FIGURES AND APPENDIXES

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PRECIPITATION PROBABILITIES IN THE WESTERN REGION ASSOCIATED WITH WINTER 500-MB MAP TYPES

I. INTRODUCTION

The concept of typing weather charts and relating given pressure or wind patterns to meteorological phenomena is not new. Bowie and Weightman (I) stratified storms by their movement over geographical regions. Average tracks, expected **direction** of movement based on the storm's initial position, and average speeds were computed. California Institute of Technology in the early 1940s developed 6 day weather types using surface pressure patterns (2). The types were related to expected departures from normal of temperature and pressure. ElI iott later associated the CIT surface types to midtropospheric flow patterns (3). In recent years Klein and others have done work on relationships of certain upper-air patterns to expected precipitation and temperature distributions (4). Synoptic climatology studies of this nature have proven very beneficial by associating weather phenomena quantitatively to pressure and wind patterns.

A meteorologist preparing a forecast associates certain pressure and flow patterns with expected weather. This mental process is subjective and quite dependent on a forecaster's experience, training, motivation, etc. There are well-known advantages to making this relationship objective. The recent introduction of more sophisticated Numerical Weather Prediction (NWP) models has significantly increased the accuracy of 500-mb prognoses to periods of 48 hours or longer. Objective applications of synoptic climatological infor- ~ation to NWP prognoses should lead to improved meteorologf·cal guidance and weather forecasts.

The general relationships of precipitation occurrence to 500-mb flow patterns are known. Certain patterns are more likely to cause precipitation over a geographical area than others, but there is. need for more detailed knowledge of the probabi I ity of precipitation occurrence at various locations with different patterns. Synoptic climatology studies by Korte, Jorgensen and Klein (5) have related precipitation occurrence to closed upper-level lows, but again because of large variations in topography over the West, application of single station results to surrounding areas is questionable. Over much of the central and eastern sections of the U.S. this is not necessarily true. Thus it becomes necessary that more detailed synoptic climatology studies be prepared over western United States.

The Western Region Conditional Climatology Program was developed to add the required detail and also develop techniques for objective guidance. The following is a brief synopsis of the program. Typing

of the basic upper-level flow (500mb) pattern employing a technique discussed by Lund (6) has been completed. An explanation of this technique and uti I ization of its results form the basis of this Technical Memorandum. The future part of the program will enlist the support of Techniques Development Laboratory, Weather Bureau Headquarters. Parameters such as initial 500-mb height and departure from normal, initial vorticity, vorticity advection, and moisture will be added to obtain the detail of a type's flow. These parameters within simiLar flow patterns or types wi I I be mathematically screened through regression methods to find the best precipitation indicators. Use of the developed equations and Numerical Weather Prediction CNWP) products in the "perfect prog" approach will result in an objective probability forecast for the occurrence of measurable precipitation. This probabi I ity would then be "massaged" to a final man-machine-mix forecast. The ultimate goal is for computerization of alI steps except the latter.

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Twelve-hour precipitation cl imatologies. as specified by 500-mb flow patterns were generated as the first step of this program. This Technical Memorandum is the first of four parts which will cover a precipitation climatology over the Western Region for four seasons. Discussion on development of types, proper usage, limitations, and other general information is presented in this first portion. Winter types along with their climatologies and a listing of type dates are also included. In the near future the other three parts of this Technical Memorandum covering the spring, summer, and fall seasons will be published. These will include only the type maps and respective cl imatologies along with a I isting of type dates. AI I discussion pertinent to the winter types in this Part I wi I I be applicable to the other seasons.

II. METHOD OF DEVELOPMENT

Data used to generate types were obtained from historical files of Techniques Development Laboratory. Upper-level height data located at points on the NMC grid (Figure I) had previously been placed on magnetic tape for computer use. The period of data record ran from November 1961 through October 1968. All data were used in this work except the period June through August 1962 and March through May 1968. (These were not employed because of limited computer capacity and unavailability of data on magnetic tape.) An area covering western North America and the eastern Pacific was selected for typing. Areal boundaries were approximately 100° - 150°W. longitude and 30° - 60°N. latitude (see Figure 2). Fifty-two grid points as shown in Figure 2 were selected within this area and 500-mb heights for'these points were extracted from the tapes. The data were divided into seasons of winter: December-February; spring: March-May; summer: June-August; and fall: September-November. Three-month seasonal divisions were chosen fo minimize the

workload and be comparable to seasonal divisions of Techniques Development Laboratory's synoptic climatology studies.

The winter season consisted of I 195 maps for 0000 and 1200GMT December $1961-67$, January 1962-68, and February 1962-68. The fiftytwo grid point 500-mb height values for each of the I 195 maps were read into a Univac II08 computer. Each set of fifty-two heights was correlated with every other set. The final product was an II95 \times I 195 correlation coefficient matrix. A count was made of the number of correlations ~.80 associated with each map, *i.e.,* number of times each map was correlated with all other sample maps at .80 or higher. In the winter sample the map of 1200Z December *19,* 1961 was correlated with 690 maps at \geq .80. This map was called type map I (see Figure 3a). Type map I and all maps correlated with it at \geq .80 were removed from the sample. From the remaining maps, the map that had the largest number of correlations \geq .80 was determined and designated type map 2 (see Figure 3b). Again type map 2 and all maps correlated with it at \geq .80 were removed from the correlation matrix. The same process continued through type map *3,* type map 4, etc., unti I alI maps were eliminated or until only 10 or less maps were correlated at $\rightarrow .80$ to a sample map. Some maps could not be typed because of infrequent occurrence during this 7-year sample.

Twenty-five type maps were generated from the winter data. If alI sample maps that correlated with a type map at \geq .80 were considered to be maps of that type, then a given map could be in more than one type. For example the map for 1200Z December 5, 1961 correlated with type map I at *.900,* type map 3 at *.923,* type map 6 at .804, and type map 10 at .868. However, to eliminate this redundancy, each map was placed in the type with which it correlated highest. The map of 1200Z December *5,* 1961 was placed in type 3 since it correlated the highest (.923) with type map 3. In this manner each map was put into only one type cal led a pure type.

Figure 4 lists for the winter season a breakdown by type of the number of maps correlated \geq .80 with each type map, and the number of maps which were correlated highest with each type map. Column I indicates type number, column 2 the number of maps correlating with the type map $a^+ \geq 0$, and column 3 the number of maps correlating the highest with a type map. For example, type map I had 690 maps correlated \geq .80, but of these 690 maps only 356 correlated the highest with it. The remaining 334 correlated higher with other types. Note that many of the type maps have a large number of correlations ≥ 0.80 ; but when the number of highest correlations was counted, this number was reduced drastically, as in the case of type 7.

After each map had been placed into one type, a composite or pure mean type map was made. Although not used in this study, another composite mean called a "mixed" type was made from all maps within a type. Figure 5a-c and 6a-c show examples of a type map, its mixed mean, and its pure mean.

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A measure of the variability of maps within a type can be shown in a frequency distribution of correlation coefficients. Figure 7 is such a diagram. Of 146 type 2 maps, 80 percent were correlated $\ge .90$ with the type map, and more than 55 percent were above the .92 level. Similar percentages apply to other types.

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It might be expected that a map correlating at \$.90 with a pure map would exhibit a strong similarity in flow pattern. Generally this is true when dealing with the large broadscale flow over the grid area. Variations due to small disturbances over portions of the grid produce significant differences among maps of the same type. An example of variability within a type is shown in Figuras Ba-f. AI I maps shown in these figures are classified as type I. The type I pure mean for winter is shown in Figure Sa. The correlation of this map with each of the other type I maps (Figures 8b-f) is given in the lower lefthand corner of the respective type I map. Important features of the mean map (Figure 8a) are a broad flow of westerlies over the grid area with a trough extending southward from the Gulf of Alaska and flat ridge near 120°W. Flow features nearly identical to Figure Sa are exhibited by the sample map as shown in Figure Bb. This is also reflected in the .981 correlation coefficient. Similarity between Figures 8a and 8c is less because of ridging near 140°W. and northwesterly flow between 120- 130°W. as shown in Figure Be. However, large-scale features are quite comparable. This relationship again shows in the .961 correlation between the two. Figure Bd shows the same similarity in large-scale flow except that the southern portion of the western North America ridge is some 10° farther west than the ridge in the pure mean map. Again, the sample map shown in Figure Be exhibits the same targe-scale zonal flow of the type I mean map, but the very short-wave disturbances are almost ISO degrees out of phase. Figure Sf has a more significant dissimilarity in the cutoff low over southern California. This feature might lead to a conclusion that the map should not be a type I. There might be some validity for this over the southwestern United States, but the floW over the remainder of the grid is similar to the pure mean map (correlation .951). Weather over southern California and Arizona with this pattern would be considerably different than that expected with the map of Figure Sa.

It can readi.ly be seen by inspection of alI 6 maps that the major features of broad fairly zonal westerlies between $40 - 50$ °N., low heights in the Gulf of Alaska, and above normal heights near for off the west coast of North America are common to alI.

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Another example of map variability is shown in Figures 9a-d. Figure 9a is the fall type map 1, Figure 9b is its pure mean type, and Figures 9c-d are type I maps. Of signiticance is the difference in

flow pattern between figures 9c and 9d over western North America. The map in Figure 9c is quite similar to the one in Figure 9a with a trough in the eastern Pacific, southwest flow over the coast states, and northeast-southwest oriented ridging over the Western Region. In comparison the map in Figure 9d has substantial troughing over the western states. Correlation between Figures 9c and 9d is only .88!. However both maps have been placed in fall type I because they correlated highest with type map I (.944 and .888 respectively). Figures IOa-e show the map of 1200Z December *5,* 1961 (Figure lOa) as compared to winter type maps *I, 3, 6,* and 10 (Figures lOb-e). Correlation of this specific map to each type map Is given In the lower left-hand corner of the respective type map. Note how the basic similarity in flow is related to the correlation between two maps. The total pattern over the grid must be considered when subjectively typing a map. Minor differences should be ignored. Some maps may not be placed in any type. This usually applies to complicated split flows and blocking patterns. During transitional months, a given map may have more resemblance to a type of another season than to any of the season in which it occurs.

Objective typing by computer is a future goal. This approach would eliminate bias which occurs with subjective typing. Computation of correlation coefficients and determination of a map's type could be done at a central location like the National Meteorological Center (NMC). However at present the only approach is a subjective typing of maps at local station level.

IV. DEVELOPMENT OF TYPE PRECIPITATION CLIMATOLOGIES

A network of surface stations representing gross climatological areas and population centers of the Western Region was chosen (Figure II). It consisted of Weather Bureau, FAA, second-order, and hourly precipitation substations. After all maps of a season were typed, a listing of dates of occurrence of each type was made. This listing is given in Appendix B. From station precipitation records the occurrence or nonoccurrence of measurable precipitation for the 12 hour period subsequent to maptime was tabulated and a summary of percent occurrence or climatological probabi I ity for each type was made. For instance Salt Lake City had 20 measurable precipitation occurrences in 80 winter type 8 cases giving a 12-hour precipitation probability of 25 percent. Similar calculations were done for all types, seasons, and stations. These were then summarized on geographical maps as shown in Figure 12.

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Maps of winter type cl imatologies along with the associated type and pure mean maps are giVen In Appendix A. A transparent topographic overlay of the same scale as the climatology maps is also included. The placing of this overlay on the probability charts will aid in depicting possible orographic influences and causes of the observed precipitation frequency distribution.

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It must be emphasized that the climatology for types that do not contain a sufficient number of maps should be used with caution. Types that contain less than 20 maps are likely to be unstable and more maps are necessary to obtain a representative numerical value for precipitation occurrence. For these types emphasis should be placed on the areal distribution of probabilities, i.e., areas of maximum and minimum precipitation occurrence,

Examination of the probability distribution within types indicates some interesting differences over relatively short distances. Examples of this are the low Portland probability compared to Astoria and Salem, Oregon for winter type 14 and the high Great Falls probabi I ity compared to Cutbank and Havre, Montana for winter types II and I2. See Appendix A. All data for these examples have been checked. Explanations for the observed climatology are not apparent, although some orographic effect and small sample might be possible answers. In the case of Portland, 3 traces were observed in. the 13 cases. If these were measurable amounts, the climatology would be more comparable to surrounding stations.

V. LOCAL STUDIES EMPLOYING TYPING

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The generation of type precipitation cl imatologies is one of many possibilities. The listing of dates under each type makes it possible to apply this technique to other weather phenomena. This might include winds, thunderstorms, clouds, precipitation amounts, visibility, surface dewpoints, mean relative humidity from surface to 500mb, and others. Other meteorological variables might be included within types to further separate precipitation occurrence or nonoccurrence. A preliminary on-station study employing 500-mb height departure from normal (DN) within a type can be such a possibility. Application of FOUS 1-2 data within types might give useful results. Other suggestions are welcomed from the field.

VI. CONCLUSION

Although this Technical Memorandum is only part of the total Western Region Conditional Climatology Program, these first results can now be put to use by field personnel. Knowledge of type maps and their associated precipitation cl imatologies can be usable guidance to forecasters. Topographic influences on precipitation distribution over the Western Region are clearly shown. Knowledge of the dates of maps within a given type can be useful in studying local station forecasting problems.

VII. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Appreciation is expressed to Techniques Development Laboratory for use of their computer tapes of height data, Mr. Marvin Magnuson, Regional Cl lmatologist, and the National Weather Records Center for obtaining the necessary climatological information and to Mrs. Lucianne Miller, Miss Vicky Owens, and Miss Leona Yee for their work in summarizing and computing precipitation cl imatologies. Helpful ideas and comments by the Western Region Scientific Services Division staff during preparation of this memorandum were also very much appreciated.

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FIGURE 2

Distribution of 52 Grid Points
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FIGURE 4

Winter Season Map Type Information

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APPENDIX A

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Winter Types and Associated Precipitation Climatologies

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APPENDIX B

Listing of Maps Within Each Type

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Tanahari

 $\mathcal{P}^{\mathcal{A}}_{\mathcal{A}}$

Dec. 1961 31-00 $31 - 12$ Dec. 1963 1-00 2-00 $2 - 12$ 3-00 Dec. 1964 6-12 7-00 $7 - 12$

Jan. 1963

Jan. 1962

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Jan. 1965 Jan. 1968

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 $\epsilon = \sqrt{2}$

 $\epsilon_{\rm{tot}}$

.. . .

 $\frac{1}{2} \frac{1}{\sqrt{2}} \frac{1}{2}$

 $\overset{\bullet}{\leftarrow} \mathbf{x}^{(p)}$

 \sim \sim \sim

 $\label{eq:2.1} \begin{array}{c} \frac{1}{2} \frac{M_{1}^{2} \left(\frac{M_{1}^{2}}{M_{1}^{2}} \right) - M_{1}^{2}}{M_{1}^{2} \left(\frac{M_{1}^{2}}{M_{1}^{2}} \right) - M_{2}^{2}} \\ \frac{1}{2} \frac{M_{1}^{2} \left(\frac{M_{1}^{2}}{M_{1}^{2}} \right) - M_{1}^{2} \left(\frac{M_{1}^{2}}{M_{1}^{2}} \right) - M_{2}^{2} \left(\frac{M_{1}^{2}}{M_{1}^{2}} \right) - M_{1}^{2} \$

 $\hat{\mathcal{L}}$

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 $\label{eq:2.1} \frac{1}{\sqrt{2}}\int_{0}^{\infty}\frac{1}{\sqrt{2\pi}}\int_{0}^{\infty}\frac{1}{\sqrt{2\pi}}\int_{0}^{\infty}\frac{1}{\sqrt{2\pi}}\int_{0}^{\infty}\frac{1}{\sqrt{2\pi}}\int_{0}^{\infty}\frac{1}{\sqrt{2\pi}}\int_{0}^{\infty}\frac{1}{\sqrt{2\pi}}\int_{0}^{\infty}\frac{1}{\sqrt{2\pi}}\int_{0}^{\infty}\frac{1}{\sqrt{2\pi}}\int_{0}^{\infty}\frac{1}{\sqrt{2\pi}}\int_{0}^{\infty}\frac{$

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