

A HISTORICAL SKETCH OF CLIMATOLOGY
AND THE
NATIONAL CLIMATIC DATA CENTER

Modern climatology owes much to Thomas Jefferson, who recognized a need for systematically recording the climate of the United States. It is difficult to understand why nearly a full century elapsed between publication of his first climatological notes and the emergence of a firm framework to survey this vital natural resource.

There was no organized system of taking weather observations until the 19th Century, when advances were made by the Federal Government. The US Weather Bureau, created in 1870 under the US Signal Service (later Signal Corps), was made a civilian agency and transferred to the Department of Agriculture in 1891. The Act of Congress effecting this change charged the Weather Bureau with "... the taking of such meteorological observations as may be necessary to establish and record the climatic conditions of the United States..."

The new civilian Weather Bureau inherited an operating Climatological Service. Government-operated stations numbered about 180, but as today, the bulk of data used to establish the climate came from public-minded citizens who volunteered to record temperature extremes and daily amounts of precipitation. There were more than 2,000 cooperative stations at the time; today the number has increased to 10,000 active stations. Surface observations grew in number, as did the collection of ocean and upper air observations. By the late 1920's, data holdings in Weather Bureau files had reached "staggering" proportions.

The National Weather Records Center was established in Asheville, NC, in 1951. The Weather Bureau's regional processing units were consolidated there during late 1962 and early 1963 to increase the economy, efficiency, and effectiveness of the program. With the advent of larger and more powerful electronic computers, quality control, summarization, and publication of climatological information could be done at less cost in a single location than in the regional units. In June 1970, the name of the facility was changed to National Climatic Center to more truly reflect its functions. Two years later, the Center began archiving and servicing data from environmental satellites. A name change in 1984 brought forth the National Climatic Data Center (NCDC). The role of the Center has become truly global in nature.

SERVICES

The NCDC provides a wide range of user services. These users range from large engineering firms designing the latest in safe, energy efficient structures, to the attorney documenting a weather event, to the individual planning for a retirement move.

Services offered include data resource consultations, subscription items and publications, copies of original records, certifications, generation of specialized climate studies, and a host of other climate-related activities. Services are delivered on a variety of media including on-line access, CD-ROMs, magnetic tape, floppy disks, computer tabulations, maps, and publications.

There is a charge for most services. Prepayment is required; however, the use of credit cards is acceptable. Deposit accounts may be established for customers who have a need for repeat orders.

National Climatic Data Center
Federal Plaza
151 Patton Avenue
Asheville, NC 28801-5001

Visitor's Guide



A National Resource for Climate Information



U.S. Department of Commerce

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

National Environmental Satellite, Data, and
Information Service

DIRECTIONS TO NATIONAL CLIMATIC DATA CENTER (NCDC) ASHEVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA

From South (and Airport)

Take I-26 West (toward Asheville). Go approximately 9 miles (from airport) to I-240 (there is only one I-240 exit, so you can't go wrong here).

Continue on I-240 across the bridge (French Broad River) to downtown area and take the Patton Avenue exit. Get in the left lane.

At the fourth traffic light (you're beside the Climate Complex - a gray granite-and-glass building on your left), turn left. The entrance to the Wall Street Parking Garage will be on your right.

Walk across the street (west) and down the walkway at the back of the Federal Climate Complex to the Level 2 entrance. After entering, elevators are straight ahead of you.

For the Best Western Central and Renaissance Asheville Hotels, go past the Patton Avenue exit on I-240 to Exit 5A. Turn left at the stop light. The Best Western parking lot is immediately to your left. The Renaissance Hotel parking lot is about 1/2 block on the right.

From I-40 West

Take I-240 exit and continue into town (this is a LEFT exit; stay in the left lane after you pass Exit 44 on I-40). Continue as in second paragraph above.

From I-40 East

At Exit 53B, take I-240. Continue on I-240 to Exit 4C (Montford Ave) for NCDC. At the traffic light, turn left and go over the interstate bridge. Take another left immediately after the bridge (at the second light). Turn right about 1/4 short block later. Continue to traffic light and turn left onto Patton Avenue. Then turn left at next traffic light and then turn right immediately into a parking garage. Just walk west across the street and down the walkway at the back entrance of the building. Once inside, elevators are straight in front of you.

If you are going to either the Best Western Central Hotel or the Renaissance Asheville Hotel, Exit 5A will come up first. You will turn left to go under I-240 at the traffic light. (You will be turning onto Merrimon Avenue, but as soon as you go under the bridge it becomes Broadway.) Turn left again at Woodfin St. (the next light) and go one block. Look for the Best Western on your left or the Renaissance Asheville on your right.

From North (Route 19-23)

Take Downtown/Patton Avenue exit (or 5A for hotels). Use 3rd and 4th paragraph from Section 1, above.



VISITOR INFORMATION/RECEPTION:

828-271-4237

Room 557, Federal Plaza
Asheville, NC 28801-5001

HOTELS

All Offer Government Rate
Asheville, North Carolina

Best Western Central Hotel
22 Woodfin Street
Asheville, NC 28801
(828) 253-1851
(5 blocks from NCDC)

Renaissance Asheville Hotel
One Thomas Wolfe Plaza
Asheville, NC 28801
(828) 252-8211
(5 blocks from NCDC)

GREATER DISTANCE Must have transportation

Quality Inn Biltmore
115 Hendersonville Road
Asheville, NC 28801
(828) 274-1800

Holiday Inn Sun Spree
1 Hilton Inn Drive
Asheville, NC 28806
(828)-254-3211

Hampton Inn
I-240 Exit 7
204 Tunnel Road
Asheville, NC 28805
(828) 255-9220



PRODUCTS AND SERVICES

Telephone: (828) 271-4800

Fax: (828) 271-4876

E-Mail: orders@ncdc.noaa.gov

Home Page: <http://www.ncdc.noaa.gov>

U.S. Department of Commerce
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
National Environmental Satellite, Data, and
Information Service
NATIONAL CLIMATIC DATA CENTER
Federal Plaza
151 Patton Avenue
Asheville, NC 28801-5001