

6 CLOUDS

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Clouds have immense beauty and variety. They show weather patterns on a global scale, as viewed by satellites. Yet they are made of tiny droplets that fall gently through the air. Clouds can have richly complex fractal shapes, and a wide distribution of sizes.

Clouds form when air becomes saturated. Saturation can occur by adding water, by cooling, or by mixing; hence, Lagrangian water and heat budgets are useful. The buoyancy of the cloudy air and the static stability of the environment determine the vertical extent of the cloud.

Fogs are clouds that touch the ground. Their location in the atmospheric boundary layer means that turbulent transport of heat and moisture from the underlying surface affects their formation, growth, and dissipation.

6.1. PROCESSES CAUSING SATURATION

Clouds are saturated portions of the atmosphere where small water droplets or ice crystals have fall velocities so slow that they appear visibly suspended in the air. Thus, to understand clouds we need to understand how air can become saturated.

6.1.1 Cooling and Moisturizing

Unsaturated air parcels can reach saturation by three processes: cooling, adding moisture, or mixing. The first two processes are shown in Fig. 6.1, where saturation is reached by either **cooling** until the temperature equals the dew point temperature, or **adding moisture** until the dew point temperature is raised to the actual ambient temperature.

The temperature change necessary to saturate an air parcel by cooling it is:

$$\Delta T = T_d - T \quad (6.1)$$

Whether this condition is met can be determined by finding the actual temperature change based on the first law of thermodynamics (see the Heat Budgets chapter).



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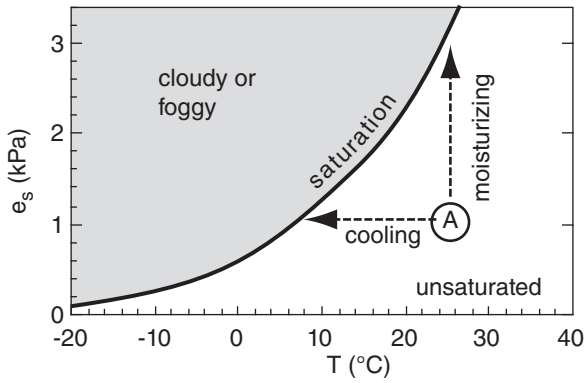


Figure 6.1
 Unsaturated air parcel “A” can become saturated by the addition of moisture, or by cooling. The curved line is the saturation vapor pressure from the Water Vapor chapter.

The moisture addition necessary to reach saturation is

$$\Delta r = r_s - r \tag{6.2}$$

Whether this condition is met can be determined by using the moisture budget to find the actual humidity change (see the Water Vapor chapter).

In the real atmosphere, sometimes both cooling and moisturizing happen simultaneously. Schematically, this would correspond to an arrow from parcel A diagonally to the saturation line of Fig. 6.1.

Clouds usually form by adiabatic cooling of rising air. Air can be rising due to its own buoyancy (making **cumuliform** clouds), or can be forced up over hills or frontal boundaries (making **stratiform** clouds). Once formed, infrared radiation from cloud top can cause additional cooling to help maintain the cloud.

Sample Application

Air at sea level has a temperature of 20°C and a mixing ratio of 5 g kg⁻¹. How much cooling OR moisturizing is necessary to reach saturation?

Find the Answer

Given: $T = 20^\circ\text{C}$, $r = 5 \text{ g kg}^{-1}$

Find: $\Delta T = ? \text{ }^\circ\text{C}$, $\Delta r = ? \text{ g kg}^{-1}$.

Use Table 4-1 because it applies for sea level. Otherwise, solve equations or use a thermo diagram.

At $T = 20^\circ\text{C}$, the table gives $r_s = 14.91 \text{ g kg}^{-1}$.

At $r = 5 \text{ g kg}^{-1}$, the table gives $T_d = 4 \text{ }^\circ\text{C}$.

Use eq. (6.1): $\Delta T = 4 - 20 = \mathbf{-16^\circ\text{C}}$ needed.

Use eq. (6.2): $\Delta r = 14.91 - 5 = \mathbf{9.9 \text{ g kg}^{-1}}$ needed.

Check: Units OK. Physics OK.

Exposition: This air parcel is fairly dry. Much cooling or moisturizing is needed.

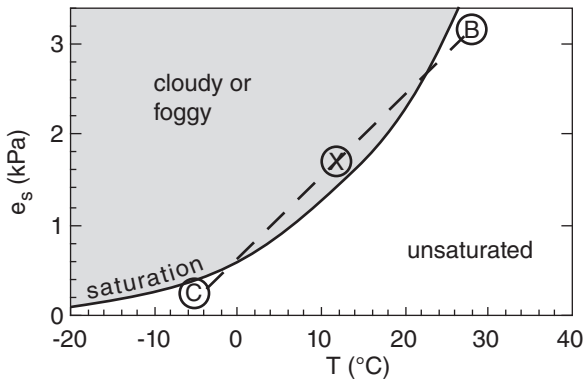


Figure 6.2
 Mixing of two unsaturated air parcels B and C, which occurs along a straight line (dashed), can cause a saturated mixture X. The curved line is the saturation vapor pressure from the Water Vapor chapter.

6.1.2. Mixing

Mixing of two unsaturated parcels can result in a saturated mixture, as shown in Fig. 6.2. Jet contrails and your breath on a cold winter day are examples of clouds that form by the mixing process.

Mixing essentially occurs along a straight line in this graph connecting the thermodynamic states of the two original air parcels. However, the saturation line (given by the Clausius-Clapeyron equation) is curved, so a mixture can be saturated even if the original parcels are not.

Let m_B and m_C be the original masses of air in parcels B and C, respectively. The mass of the mixture (parcel X) is :

$$m_X = m_B + m_C \tag{6.3}$$

The temperature and vapor pressure of the mixture are the weighted averages of the corresponding values in the original parcels:

$$T_X = \frac{m_B \cdot T_B + m_C \cdot T_C}{m_X} \quad (6.4)$$

$$e_X = \frac{m_B \cdot e_B + m_C \cdot e_C}{m_X} \quad (6.5)$$

Specific humidity or mixing ratio can be used in place of vapor pressure in eq. (6.5).

Instead of using the actual masses of the air parcels in eqs. (6.3) to (6.5), you can use the relative portions that mix. For example, if the mixture consists of 3 parts *B* and 2 parts *C*, then you can use $m_B = 3$ and $m_C = 2$ in the equations above.

6.2. CLOUD IDENTIFICATION

You can easily find beautiful photos of all the clouds mentioned below by pointing your web-browser search engine at “cloud classification”, “cloud identification”, “cloud types”, or “International Cloud Atlas”. You can also use web search engines to find images of any named cloud. To help keep the cost of this book reasonable, I do not include any cloud photos.

6.2.1. Cumuliform

Clouds that form in updrafts are called **cumuliform** clouds. The small and medium-size ones look like cotton balls, turrets on castles, or cauliflower. The largest cumuliform clouds — thunderstorms — have tops that look like an anvil or like the mushroom cloud of an atom bomb. The circulations that form cumuliform clouds have an aspect ratio of about one; namely, the ratio of cloud diameter to distance of cloud top above ground is roughly one.

Thicker clouds look darker when viewed from underneath, but when viewed from the side, the cloud sides and top are often bright white during daytime. The individual clouds are often surrounded by clearer air, where there is compensating **subsidence** (downdrafts).

Cumulus clouds frequently have cloud bases within 1 or 2 km of the ground (in the boundary layer). But their cloud tops can be anywhere within the troposphere (or lower stratosphere for the strongest thunderstorms). Cumuliform clouds are associated with **vertical** motions.

Cumuliform clouds are named by their thickness, not by the height of their base (Fig. 6.3). Starting from the largest (with highest tops), the clouds are **cumulonimbus** (thunderstorms), **cumu-**

Sample Application

Suppose that the state of parcel B is $T = 30^\circ\text{C}$ with $e = 3.4$ kPa, while parcel C is $T = -4^\circ\text{C}$ with $e = 0.2$ kPa. Both parcels are at $P = 100$ kPa. If each parcel contains 1 kg of air, then what is the state of the mixture? Will the mixture be saturated?

Find the Answer

Given: B has $T = 30^\circ\text{C}$, $e = 3.4$ kPa, $P = 100$ kPa

C has $T = -4^\circ\text{C}$, $e = 0.2$ kPa, $P = 100$ kPa

Find: $T = ?^\circ\text{C}$ and $e = ?$ kPa for mixture (at X).

Use eq. (6.3): $m_X = 1 + 1 = 2$ kg

Use eq. (6.4): $T_X =$

$$[(1\text{kg}) \cdot (30^\circ\text{C}) + (1\text{kg}) \cdot (-4^\circ\text{C})] / (2\text{kg}) = \underline{13^\circ\text{C}}$$

Use eq. (6.5): $e_X =$

$$[(1\text{kg}) \cdot (3.4 \text{ kPa}) + (1\text{kg}) \cdot (0.2 \text{ kPa})] / (2\text{kg}) = \underline{1.8 \text{ kPa}}$$

P hasn't changed. $P = \underline{100 \text{ kPa}}$.

Check: Units OK. Physics OK.

Exposition: At $T = 13^\circ\text{C}$, Table 4-1 gives $e_s = 1.5$ kPa. Thus, the mixture **is saturated** because its vapor pressure exceeds the saturation vapor pressure. This mixture would be cloudy/foggy.

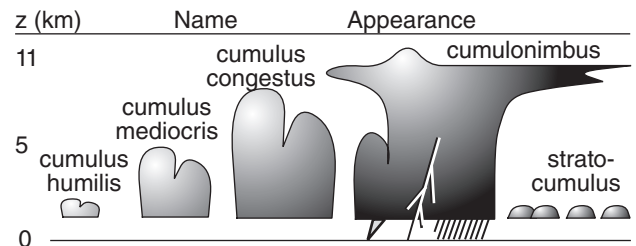


Figure 6.3

Cloud identification: **cumuliform**. These are lumpy clouds caused by convection (updrafts) from the surface.

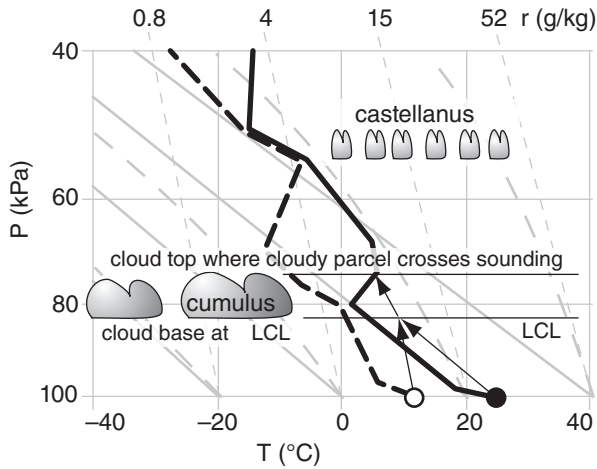


Figure 6.4
 Characteristic sounding for cumulus humilis and altocumulus castellanus clouds. Solid thick black line is temperature; dashed black line is dew point; LCL = lifting condensation level. The cumulus humilis clouds form in thermals of warm air rising from the Earth's surface. The altocumulus castellanus clouds are a special stratiform cloud (discussed later in this chapter) that are not associated with thermals rising from the Earth's surface.

lus congestus (towering cumulus), cumulus mediocris and cumulus humilis (fair-weather cumulus).

Cumuliform clouds develop in air that is **statically unstable**. This instability creates convective updrafts and downdrafts that tend to undo the instability. Cumuliform clouds can form in the tops of warm updrafts (**thermals**) if sufficient moisture is present. Hence, cumulus clouds are **convective clouds**. Internal buoyancy-forces (associated with latent heat release) enhance and support the convection and updrafts, thus we consider these clouds to be dynamically **active**.

If the air is continually destabilized by some external forcing, then the convection persists. Some favored places for destabilization and small to medium cumulus clouds are:

- behind cold fronts,
- on mostly clear days when sunshine warms the ground more than the overlying air,
- over urban and industrial centers that are warmer than the surrounding rural areas,
- when cold air blows over a warmer ocean or lake.

Cold fronts trigger deep cumuliform clouds (thunderstorms) along the front, because the advancing cold air strongly pushes up the warmer air ahead of it, destabilizing the atmosphere and triggering the updrafts (see Thunderstorm chapters).

Also mountains can trigger all sizes of cumulus clouds including thunderstorms. One mechanism is **orographic lift**, when horizontal winds hit the mountains and are forced up. Another mechanism is **anabatic circulation**, where mountain slopes heated by the sun tend to organize the updrafts along the mountain tops (Regional Winds chapter).

Once triggered, cumulus clouds can continue to grow and evolve somewhat independently of the initial trigger. For example, orographically-triggered thunderstorms can persist as they are blown away from the mountain.

Knowing the environmental sounding and a thermodynamic state of an air parcel starting near the ground, you can use a thermo diagram (Fig. 6.4) to find **cloud base** (at the lifting condensation level, LCL) and **cloud top** (at the equilibrium level, EL). See the Atmospheric Stability chapter for an explanation on how to use thermo diagrams.

6.2.2. Stratiform

Stratiform clouds are horizontal cloud layers. They span wide regions (Fig. 6.5), and have an appearance similar to a blanket or sheet. Stratiform clouds are often associated with warm fronts. Names of stratiform clouds, starting from the low-

Sample Application

Use the sounding plotted here. Where is cloud base and top for an air parcel rising from the surface?

Find the Answer

Given: sounding above.
 Find: $P_{base} = ?$ kPa, $P_{top} = ?$ kPa

First, plot the sounding on a large thermo diagram from the Atmospheric Stability chapter. Then conceptually lift a parcel dry adiabatically from the surface until it crosses the isohume from the surface. That LCL is at $P_{base} = 80$ kPa.

However, the parcel never gets there. It hits the environment below the LCL, at roughly $P = 83$ kPa. Neglecting any inertial overshoot of the parcel, it would have zero buoyancy and stop rising 3 kPa below the LCL. Thus, there is **no cloud** from rising surface air.

Check: Units OK. Physics OK.
Exposition: This was a trick question. Also, the presence of mid-level stratiform clouds is irrelevant.

est, darkest layers, are **nimbostratus**, **stratus**, **altostratus**, **altocumulus**, **cirrostratus**, **cirrocumulus**, and **cirrus**.

Layered clouds are often grouped (high, middle, low) by their relative altitude or level within the troposphere. However, troposphere thickness and **tropopause height** vary considerably with latitude (high near the equator, and low near the poles, see Table 6-1). It also varies with season (high during summer, low during winter).

Thus, low, middle and high clouds can have a range of altitudes. Table 6-1 lists cloud levels and their altitudes as defined by **World Meteorological Organization (WMO)**. These heights are only approximate, as you can see from the overlapping values in the table.

High, layered clouds have the prefix “cirro” or “cirrus”. The cirrus and cirrostratus are often wispy or have diffuse boundaries, and indicate that the cloud particles are made of ice crystals. In the right conditions, these ice-crystal clouds can cause beautiful **halos** around the sun or moon. See the last chapter for a discussion of Atmospheric Optics.

Mid-level, layered clouds have the prefix “alto”. These and the lower clouds usually contain liquid water droplets, although some ice crystals can also be present. In the right conditions (relatively small uniformly sized drops, and a thin cloud) you can see an optical effect called **corona**. Corona appears as a large disk of white light centered on the sun or moon (still visible through the thin cloud). Colored fringes surround the perimeter of the white disk (see the Atmospheric Optics chapter).

Altocumulus and cirrocumulus are layers of lumpy clouds. The edges of these small cloud lumps are often sharply defined, suggesting that they are predominantly composed of liquid water droplets. The lumpiness is not caused by thermals rising from the Earth’s surface, but instead are caused by smaller-diameter turbulent eddies generated locally within the clouds.

Low altitude stratiform clouds include **stratus** and **nimbostratus**. In North America, nimbostratus clouds often have low bases and are considered to be a low cloud. However, as we will see in the international cloud classification section, nimbostratus clouds are traditionally listed as mid-level clouds. In this book, we will treat **nimbostratus** as stratiform rain clouds with low cloud base.

The prefix “**nimbo**” or suffix “**nimbus**” originally designated a precipitating cloud, but such a meaning is no longer prescribed in the international cloud atlas. **Nimbostratus** usually have light to moderate rain or snow over large horizontal areas, while cumulon**imbus** (thunderstorm) clouds have heavy rain (or snow in winter) and sometimes hail

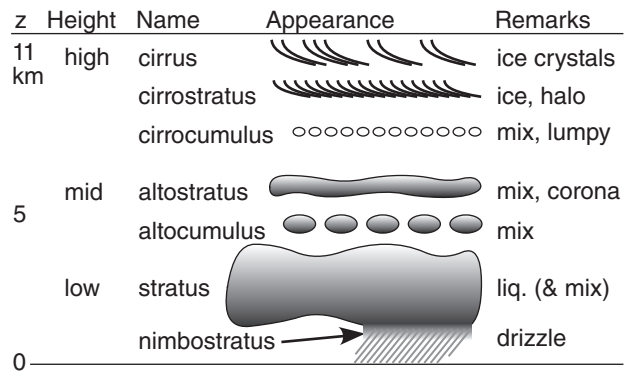


Figure 6.5
 Cloud identification: **stratiform**. Layered clouds caused by nearly horizontal advection of moisture by winds. “Mix” indicates a mixture of liquid and solid water particles. Heights “z” are only approximate — see Table 6-1 for actual ranges.

Table 6-1. Heights (z) and pressures (P) of clouds and the tropopause. Tropopause values are average typical values, while cloud heights (z) are as defined by the WMO. Pressures are estimated from the heights. sfc. = Earth’s surface.

Region:	Polar	Mid-latitude	Tropical
Tropopause:			
z (km)	8	11	18
P (kPa)	35	22	8
High Clouds:			
z (km)	3 - 8	5 - 13	6 - 18
P (kPa)	70 - 35	54 - 16	47 - 8
Middle Clouds:			
z (km)	2 - 4	2 - 7	2 - 8
P (kPa)	80 - 61	80 - 41	80 - 35
Low Clouds:			
z (km)	sfc. - 2	sfc. - 2	sfc. - 2
P (kPa)	$P_{sfc} - 80$	$P_{sfc} - 80$	$P_{sfc} - 80$

INFO • Cloud Deck
 Layer clouds, especially those with cloud bases at low altitude, are sometimes called “**cloud decks**”.

in small areas or along narrow paths on the ground called **swaths** (e.g., hail swaths or snow swaths).

Smooth-looking, non-turbulent stratiform clouds include stratus (low-altitude, thick, you cannot see the sun through it), altostratus (mid-altitude, modest thickness, you can see the sun faintly through this cloud) and cirrostratus (high altitude, diffuse, allows bright sunlight to cause shadows). None of these clouds (even the lowest ones) are associated with thermals rising from the Earth's surface.

For most **stratiform clouds**, the external forcing is horizontal **advection** (movement by the mean wind), where humid air is blown up the gently sloping surface of a warm front. The source of these air parcels are often 1000 km or more from the clouds. In these warm-frontal regions the air is often **statically stable**, which suppresses vertical motions. Because these clouds are not driven by their own positive buoyancy, we consider them to be **passive** clouds.

This process is illustrated in Fig. 5.20. Let the circle in that figure represent a humid air parcel with potential temperature 270 K. If a south wind were tending to blow the parcel toward the North Pole, the parcel would follow the 270 K isentrope like a train on tracks, and would ride up over the colder surface air in the polar portion of the domain. The gentle rise of air along the isentropic surface creates sufficient cooling to cause the condensation.

Stratiform clouds can be inferred from soundings, in the layers above the boundary layer where environmental temperature and dew point are equal (i.e., where the sounding lines touch). Due to inaccuracies in some of the sounding instruments, sometimes the T and T_d lines become close and parallel over a layer without actually touching. You can infer that these are also stratiform cloud layers.

However, you cannot estimate cloud base altitude by the LCL of near-surface air from under the

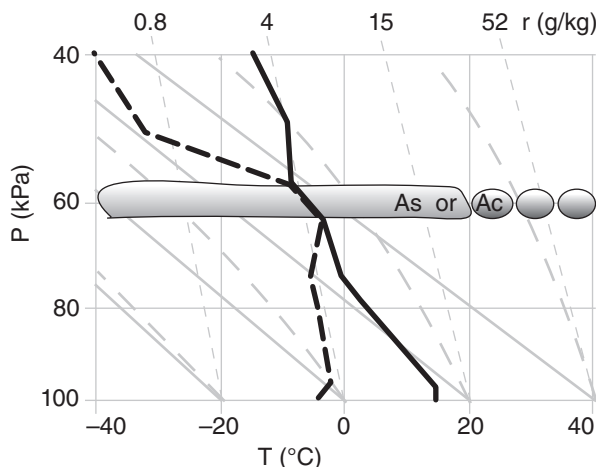


Figure 6.6
Characteristic sounding for stratiform clouds. Shown are altostratus (As) and altocumulus (Ac); mid-level stratiform clouds.

cloud, because stratiform clouds don't form from air that rises from near the Earth's surface. For altocumulus and cirrocumulus clouds, don't let the suffix "cumulus" fool you — these clouds are still primarily advective, layer clouds.

6.2.3. Stratocumulus

Stratocumulus clouds are low-altitude layers of lumpy clouds, often covering 5/8 or more of the sky (Fig. 6.3). They don't fit very well into either the stratiform or cumuliform categories. They are often turbulently coupled with the underlying surface. Thus, their cloud bases can be estimated using the LCL of near-surface air.

- Air circulations in "stratocu" can be driven by:
- 1) wind-shear-generated turbulence (known as **forced convection**),
 - 2) IR radiative cooling from cloud top that creates blobs of cold air that sink (**free convection**), and
 - 3) advection of cool air over a warmer surface.

6.2.4. Others

There are many beautiful and unusual clouds that do not fit well into the cumuliform and stratiform categories. A few are discussed here: castellanus, lenticular, cap, rotor, banner, contrails, fumulus, billow clouds, pyrocumulus, pileus, and fractus. You can find pictures of these using your web browser.

Other clouds associated with thunderstorms are described in the Thunderstorm chapters. These include funnel, wall, mammatus, arc, shelf, flanking line, beaver tail, and anvil.

6.2.4.1. Clouds in unstable air aloft

Two types of clouds can be found in layers of statically or dynamically unstable air not associated with the ground: castellanus and billow clouds.

Castellanus clouds look like a layer of small-diameter castle turrets (Fig. 6.4). When a layer of relatively warm air advects under a layer of cooler air, the interface between the two layers aloft can become **statically unstable**. [The advection of air from different sources at different altitudes is called **differential advection**.]

If these castellanus form just above the top of the boundary layer, they are called **cumulus castellanus**. When slightly higher, in the middle of the troposphere, they are called **altocumulus castellanus**. Altocumulus castellanus are sometimes precursors to thunderstorms (because they indicate an unstable mid-troposphere), and are a useful clue for storm chasers.

Billow clouds (discussed in the Atmos. Stability chapter) are a layer of many parallel, horizontal lines of cloud that form in the crests of **Kelvin-**

Helmholtz (K-H) waves (Fig. 5.17). They indicate a layer of turbulence aloft caused by wind shear and dynamic instability. When similar turbulent layers form with insufficient moisture to be visible as billow clouds, the result is a layer of **clear-air turbulence (CAT)**. Pilots try to avoid both CAT and K-H waves. Sometimes instead of a layer of billows, there will be only a narrow band of breaking wave clouds known as **K-H wave clouds**.

6.2.4.2. Clouds associated with mountains

In mountainous regions with sufficient humidity, you can observe lenticular, cap, rotor, and banner clouds. The Regional Winds chapter covers others.

Lenticular clouds have smooth, distinctive lens or almond shapes when viewed from the side, and they are centered on the mountain top or on the crest of the lee wave (Fig. 6.7). They are also known as **mountain-wave clouds** or **lee-wave clouds**, and are passive clouds that form in hilly regions.

If a lenticular cloud forms directly over a mountain, it is sometimes called a **cap cloud**. A cap cloud can form when air that is statically stable is blown toward a mountain or other terrain slope. As the air is forced to rise by the terrain, the air cools adiabatically and can reach saturation if the air is sufficiently humid. As the air descends down the lee side of the mountain, the air warms adiabatically and the cloud droplets evaporate.

However, the static stability allows the air to continue to oscillate up and down as it blows further downwind. Lenticular clouds can form in the crest of these vertical oscillations (called **mountain waves**) to the lee of (downwind of) the mountain.

They are a most unusual cloud, because the cloud remains relatively stationary while the air blows through it. Hence, they are known as **standing lenticular**. The uniformity of droplet sizes in lenticular clouds create beautiful optical phenomena called **iridescence** when the sun appears close to the cloud edge. See the Regional Winds chapter for mountain wave details, and the Atmospheric Optics chapter for more on optical phenomena.

Rotor clouds are violently turbulent balls or bands of ragged cloud that rapidly rotate along a horizontal axis (Fig. 6.7). They form relatively close to the ground under the crests of mountain waves (e.g., under standing lenticular clouds), but much closer to the ground. Pilots flying near the ground downwind of mountains during windy conditions should watch out for, and avoid, these hazardous clouds, because they indicate severe turbulence.

The **banner cloud** is a very turbulent streamer attached to the mountain top that extends like a banner or flag downwind (Fig. 6.7). It forms on the lee side at the very top of high, sharply pointed,

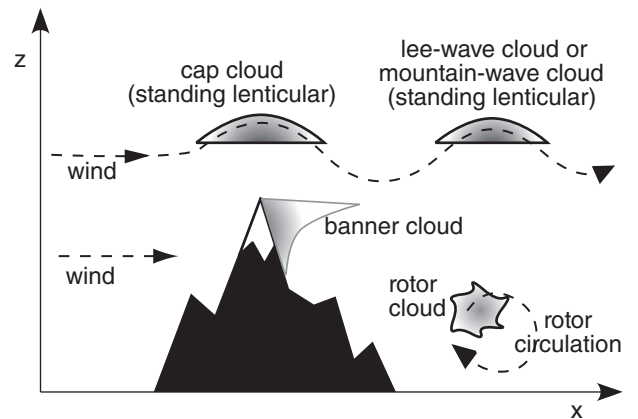


Figure 6.7

Some clouds caused by mountains, during strong winds.

mountain peaks during strong winds. As the wind separates to flow around the mountain, low pressure forms to the lee of the mountain peak, and counter-rotating vortices form on each side of the mountain. These work together to draw air upward along the lee slope, causing cooling and condensation. These strong turbulent winds can also pick up previously fallen ice particles from snow fields on the mountain surface, creating a **snow banner** that looks similar to the banner cloud.

6.2.4.3. Clouds due to surface-induced turbulence or surface heat

The most obvious clouds formed due to surface-induced turbulence are the **cumuliform** (convective) clouds already discussed. However, there are three others that we haven't covered yet: pyrocumulus, pileus and fractus.

A **pyrocumulus** is a cumulus cloud that forms in the smoke of a fire, such as a forest fire or other wild fire. One of the combustion products of plant material is water vapor. As this water vapor is carried upward by the heat of the fire, the air rises and cools. If it reaches its LCL, the water vapor can condense onto the many smoke particles created by the fire. Some pyrocumulus can become thunderstorms.

Pyrocumulus clouds can also be created by geothermal heat and moisture sources, including volcanoes and geysers. Lightning can often be found in volcanic ash plumes.

The **pileus cloud** looks like a thin hat just above, or scarf around, the top of the rising cumulus clouds (Fig. 6.8). It forms when a layer of stable, humid air in the middle of the troposphere is forced upward by cumuliform cloud towers (cumulus congestus) rising up from underneath. Hence, there is an indirect influence from surface heating (via the cumuliform cloud). Pileus are very short lived, because the cloud towers quickly rise through the pileus and engulf them.

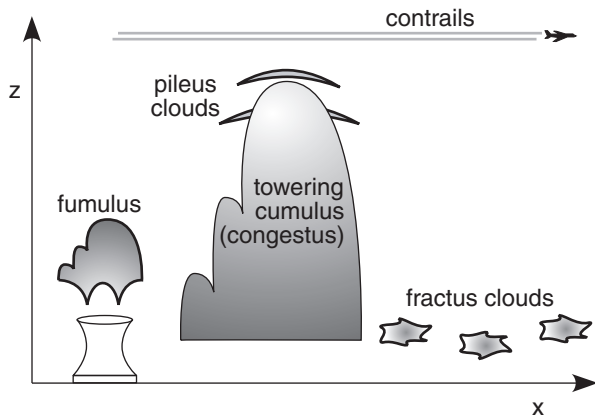


Figure 6.8
Other clouds.

INFO • Strato- & Mesospheric Clouds

Although almost all our clouds occur in the troposphere, sometimes higher-altitude thin stratiform (cirrus-like) clouds can be seen. They occur poleward of 50° latitude during situations when the upper atmosphere temperatures are exceptionally cold.

These clouds are so diffuse and faint that you cannot see them by eye during daytime. These clouds are visible at night for many minutes near the end of evening twilight or near the beginning of morning twilight. The reason these clouds are visible is because they are high enough to still be illuminated by the sun, even when lower clouds are in the Earth's shadow.

Highest are **noctilucent clouds**, in the mesosphere at heights of about 85 km. They are made of tiny H₂O ice crystals (size ≈ 10 nm), and are nucleated by meteorite dust. Noctilucent clouds are **polar mesospheric clouds (PMC)**, and found near the polar mesopause during summer.

Lower (20 to 30 km altitude) are **polar stratospheric clouds (PSC)**. At air temperatures below -78°C, nitric acid trihydrate (**NAT-clouds**) can condense into particles. Also forming at those temperatures can be particles made of a supersaturated mixture of water, sulphuric acid, and nitric acid (causing **STS clouds**).

For temperatures colder than -86°C in the stratosphere, pure H₂O ice crystals can form, creating PSCs called **nacreous clouds**. They are also known as **mother-of-pearl clouds** because they exhibit beautiful iridescent fringes when illuminated by the sun. These stratospheric clouds form over mountains, due to mountain waves that propagate from the troposphere into the stratosphere, and amplify there in the lower-density air. They can also form over extremely intense tropospheric high-pressure regions.

Fractus clouds are ragged, shredded, often low-altitude clouds that form and dissipate quickly (Fig. 6.8). They can form during windy conditions in the turbulent, boundary-layer air near rain showers, under the normal nimbostratus or cumulonimbus cloud base. These clouds do not need mountains to form, but are often found along the sides of mountains during rainy weather. The falling rain from the cloud above adds moisture to the air, and the up-draft portions of turbulent eddies provide the lifting to reach condensation.

Sometimes fractus clouds form in non-rainy conditions, when there is both strong winds and strong solar heating. In this case, the rising thermals lift air to its LCL, while the intense turbulence in the wind shear shreds and tears apart the resulting cumulus clouds to make **cumulus fractus**.

6.2.4.4. Anthropogenic Clouds

The next two clouds are **anthropogenic** (man-made). These are contrails and fumulus.

Fumulus is a contraction for “fume cumulus”. They form in the tops of thermal plumes rising from cooling towers or smokestacks (Fig. 6.8). Modern air-quality regulations often require that industries scrub the pollutants out of their stack gasses by first passing the gas through a scrubber (i.e., a water shower). Although the resulting effluent is much less polluted, it usually contains more water vapor, and thus can cause beautiful white clouds of water droplets within the rising exhaust plume. Similarly, cooling towers do their job by evaporating water to help cool an industrial process.

Contrail is a contraction for “condensation trail”, and is the straight, long, narrow, horizontal pair of clouds left behind a high-altitude aircraft (Fig. 6.8). Aircraft fuel is a hydrocarbon, so its combustion in a jet engine produces carbon dioxide and water vapor. Contrails form when water vapor in the exhaust of high-altitude aircraft mixes with the cold environmental air at that altitude (see mixing subsection earlier in this chapter). If this cold air is already nearly saturated, then the additional moisture from the jet engine is sufficient to form a cloud. On drier days aloft, the same jet aircraft would produce no visible contrails.

Regardless of the number of engines on the aircraft, the exhaust tends to be quickly entrained into the horizontal **wing-tip vortices** that trail behind the left and right wing tips of the aircraft. Hence, jet contrails often appear initially as a pair of closely-spaced, horizontal parallel lines of cloud. Further behind the aircraft, environmental wind shears often bend and distort the contrails. Turbulence breaks apart the contrail, causes the two clouds to merge into one contrail, and eventually mixes enough dry

ambient air to cause the contrail to evaporate and disappear.

Contrails might have a small effect on the global-climate heat budget by reflecting some of the sunlight. Contrails are a boon to meteorologists because they are a clue that environmental moisture is increasing aloft, which might be the first indication of an approaching warm front. They are a bane to military pilots who would rather not have the enemy see a big line in the sky pointing to their aircraft.

6.3. CLOUD ORGANIZATION

Clouds frequently become organized into patterns during stormy weather. This organization is discussed in the chapters on Fronts, Midlatitude Cyclones, Thunderstorms, and Tropical Cyclones. Also, sometimes large-scale processes can organize clouds even during periods of fair weather, as discussed here.

Cloud streets or **cloud lines** are rows of fair-weather cumulus-humilis clouds (Fig. 6.9) that are roughly parallel with the mean wind direction. They form over warm land in the boundary layer on sunny days, and over water day or night when cold air advects over warmer water. Light to moderate winds in the convective boundary layer cause **horizontal roll vortices**, which are very weak counter-rotating circulations with axes nearly parallel with the mean wind direction. These weak circulations sweep rising cloud-topped thermals into rows with horizontal spacing of roughly twice the boundary-layer depth (order of 1 km).

Mesoscale cellular convection (MCC) can also form in the boundary layer, but with a much larger horizontal scale (order of 5 to 50 times the boundary layer depth; namely, 10 to 100 km in diameter). These are so large that the organization is not apparent to observers on the ground, but is readily visible in satellite images. **Open cells** consist of a honeycomb or rings of cloud-topped updrafts around large clear regions (Fig. 6.9). **Closed cells** are the opposite — a honeycomb of clear-air rings around cloud clusters. Cloud streets changing into MCC often form when cold continental air flows over a warmer ocean. [WARNING: Abbreviation MCC is also used for *Mesoscale Convective Complex*, which is a cluster of deep thunderstorms.]

A SCIENTIFIC PERSPECTIVE • Cargo Cult Science

“In the South Seas there is a cargo cult of people. During the war they saw airplanes land with lots of good materials, and they want the same thing to happen now. So they’ve arranged to make things like runways, to put fires along the sides of the runways, to make a wooden hut for a man to sit in, with two wooden pieces on his head like headphones and bars of bamboo sticking out like antennas (he’s the controller) and they wait for the airplanes to land. They’re doing everything right. The form is perfect. It looks exactly the way it looked before. But it doesn’t work. No airplanes land. So I call these things cargo cult science, because they follow the apparent precepts and forms of scientific investigation, but they’re missing something essential, because the planes don’t land.”

“Now it behooves me, of course, to tell you what they’re missing. ... It’s a kind of scientific integrity, a principle of scientific thought that corresponds to a kind of utter honesty... For example, if you’re doing an experiment, you should report everything that you think might make it invalid – not only what you think is right about it: other causes that could possibly explain your results; and things you thought of that you’ve eliminated by some other experiment, and how they worked – to make sure the other fellow can tell they have been eliminated.”

“Details that could throw doubt on your interpretation must be given, if you know them. You must do the best you can – if you know anything at all wrong, or possibly wrong – to explain it. If you make a theory, ... then you must also put down all the facts that disagree with it, as well as those that agree with it. There is also a more subtle problem. When you have put a lot of ideas together to make an elaborate theory, you want to make sure when explaining what it fits, that those things it fits are not just the things that gave you the idea for the theory; but that the finished theory makes something else come out right, in addition.”

“In summary, the idea is to try to give all the information to help others to judge the value of your contribution; not just the information that leads to judgement in one particular direction or another.”
– R. P. Feynman, 1985: “*Surely You’re Joking, Mr. Feynman!*”. *Adventures of a Curious Character*. Bantam.

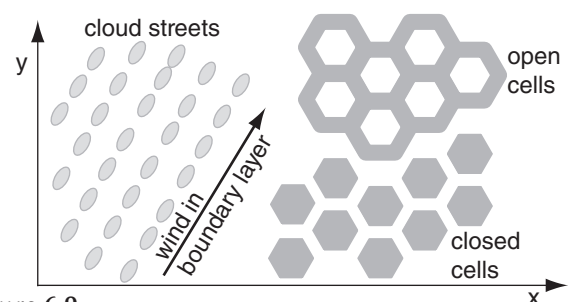


Figure 6.9
Organized boundary-layer clouds, such as are seen in a satellite image. Grey = clouds.

6.4. CLOUD CLASSIFICATION

Clouds are classified by their shapes (i.e., their **morphology**). The classification method introduced in 1803 by Luke Howard is still used today, as approved by the World Meteorology Organization (WMO).

WMO publishes an *International Cloud Atlas* with photos to help you identify clouds. As mentioned, you can easily find similar photos for free by pointing your web search engine at “cloud classification”, “cloud identification”, “cloud types”, or “International Cloud Atlas”.

The categories and subcategories of clouds are broken into:

- **genera** - main characteristics of clouds
- **species** - peculiarities in shape & structure
- **varieties** - arrangement and transparency
- **supplementary features and accessory clouds** - attached to other (mother) clouds
- **mother clouds** - clouds with attachments
- **meteors** - precipitation (ice, water, or mixed)

Most important are the genera.

6.4.1. Genera

The ten cloud **genera** are listed in Table 6-2, along with their official abbreviations and symbols as drawn on weather maps. These genera are mutually exclusive; namely, one cloud cannot have two genera. However, often the sky can have different genera of clouds adjacent to, or stacked above, each other.

Genus	Abbreviation	WMO Symbol	USA Symbol
cirrus	Ci		
cirrostratus	Cs		
cirrocumulus	Cc		
altostratus	As		
altocumulus	Ac		
nimbostratus	Ns		
stratus	St		
stratocumulus	Sc		
cumulus	Cu		
cumulonimbus	Cb		

6.4.2. Species

Subdividing the genera are cloud **species**. Table 6-3 lists the official WMO species. Species can account for:

- forms (clouds in banks, veils, sheets, layers, etc.)
- dimensions (horizontal or vertical extent)
- internal structure (ice crystals, water droplets, etc.)
- likely formation process (orographic lift, etc.)

Species are also mutually exclusive. An example of a cloud genus with specie is “Alto cumulus castellanus (Ac cas)”, which is a layer of mid-level lumpy clouds that look like castle turrets.

Table 6-3. WMO cloud species. (Ab. = abbreviation)

Specie	Ab	Description
calvus	cal	the top of a deep Cu or Cb that is starting to become fuzzy, but no cirrus (ice) anvil yet
capillatus	cap	Cb having well defined streaky cirrus (ice) anvil
castellanus	cas	small turrets looking like a crenellated castle. Turret height > diameter. Can apply to Ci, Cc, Ac, Sc.
congestus	con	very deep Cu filling most of troposphere, but still having crisp cauliflower top (i.e., no ice anvil). Often called Towering Cu (TCU).
fibratus	fib	nearly straight filaments of Ci or Cs.
floccus	flo	small tufts (lumps) of clouds, often with virga (evaporating precip.) falling from each tuft. Applies to Ci, Cc, Ac, Sc.
fractus	fra	shredded, ragged, irregular, torn by winds. Can apply to Cu and St.
humilis	hum	Cu of small vertical extent. Small flat lumps.
lenticularis	len	having lens or almond cross section, often called mountain wave clouds. Applies to Cc, Ac, Sc.
mediocris	med	medium size Cu
nebulosus	neb	Cs or St with veil or layer showing no distinct details
spissatus	spi	thick Ci that looks grey.
stratiformis	str	spreading out into sheets or horizontal layers. Applies to Ac, Sc, Cc.
uncinus	unc	hook or comma shaped Ci

6.4.3. Varieties

Genera and species are further subdivided into **varieties** (Table 6-4), based on:

- transparency (sun or moon visible through cloud)
- arrangement of visible elements

These varieties are NOT mutually exclusive (except for translucidus and opacus), so you can append as many varieties to a cloud identification that apply. For example, “cumulonimbus capillatus translucidus undulatus” (Cb cap tr un).

Table 6-4. WMO cloud varieties. Ab. = Abbreviation.

Variety	Ab.	Description
duplicatus	du	superimposed cloud patches at slightly different levels. Applies to Ci, Cs, Ac, As, Sc.
intortus	in	Ci with tangled, woven, or irregularly curved filaments
lacunosus	la	honeycomb, chessboard, or regular arrangement of clouds and holes. Applies to Cc, Ac, and Sc.
opacus	op	too thick for the sun or moon to shine through. Applies to Ac, As, Sc, St.
perlucidus	pe	a layer of clouds with small holes between elements. Applies to Ac, Sc.
radiatus	ra	very long parallel bands of clouds that, due to perspective, appear to converge at a point on the horizon. Applies to Ci, Ac, As, Sc, and Cu.
translucidus	tr	layer or patch of clouds through which sun or moon is somewhat visible. Applies to Ac, As, Sc, St.
undulatus	un	cloud layers or patches showing waves or undulations. Applies to Cc, Cs, Ac, As, Sc, St.
vertebratus	ve	Ci streaks arranged like a skeleton with vertebrae and ribs, or fish bones.

6.4.4. Supplementary Features

Table 6-5. WMO cloud supplementary features, and the **mother** clouds to which they are attached. (Ab. = abbreviation.)

Feature	Ab.	Description
arcus	arc	a dense horizontal roll cloud, close to the ground, along and above the leading edge of Cb gust-front outflows. Usually attached to the Cb, but can separate from it as the gust front spreads. Often has an arch shape when viewed from underneath, and a curved or arc shape in satellite photos.
incus	inc	the upper portion of a Cb, spread out into an (ice) anvil with smooth, fibrous or striated appearance.
mamma	mam	hanging protuberances of pouch-like appearance. Mammatus clouds are often found on the underside of Cb anvil clouds.
praecipitatio	pra	precipitation falling from a cloud and reaching the ground. Mother clouds can be As, Ns, Sc, St, Cu, Cb.
tuba	tub	a cloud column or funnel cloud protruding from a cloud base, and indicating an intense vortex. Usually attached to Cb, but sometimes to Cu.
virga	vir	visible precipitation trails that evaporate before reaching the ground. They can hang from Ac, Cu, Ns or Cb clouds.

6.4.5. Accessory Clouds

Smaller features attached to other clouds.

Table 6-6. WMO accessory clouds, and the **mother** clouds to which they are attached. (Ab.=abbreviation.)

Name	Ab.	Description
pannus	pan	ragged shreds, sometimes in a continuous layer, below a mother cloud and sometimes attached to it. Mother clouds can be As, Ns, Cu, Cb.
pileus	pil	a smooth thin cap, hood, or scarf above, or attached to, the top of rapidly rising cumulus towers. Very transient, because the mother cloud quickly rises through and engulfs it. Mother clouds are Cu con or Cb.
velum	vel	a thin cloud veil or sheet of large horizontal extent above or attached to Cu or Cb, which often penetrate it.

Table 6-7. Sky cover. Oktas= eighths of sky covered.

Sky Cover (oktas)	Sym- bol	Name	Abbr.	Sky Cover (tenths)
0	○	Sky Clear	SKC	0
1	⊕	Few* Clouds	FEW*	1
2	⊗			2 to 3
3	⊕	Scattered	SCT	4
4	⊗			5
5	⊕	Broken	BKN	6
6	⊗			7 to 8
7	⊕			9
8	●	Overcast	OVC	10
un- known	⊗	Sky Obscured	**	un- known

* "Few" is used for (0 oktas) < coverage ≤ (2 oktas).

** See text body for a list of abbreviations of various obscuring phenomena.

Sample Application

Use a spreadsheet to find and plot the fraction of clouds ranging from $X = 50$ to 4950 m width, given $\Delta X = 100$ m, $S_X = 0.5$, and $L_X = 1000$ m.

Find the Answer

Given: $\Delta X = 100$ m, $S_X = 0.5$, $L_X = 1000$ m.
Find: $f(X) = ?$

Solve eq. (6.6) on a spreadsheet. The result is:

X (m)	f(X)
50	2.558×10^{-8}
150	0.0004
250	0.0068
350	0.0252
450	0.0495
550	0.0710
etc.	etc.
Sum of all $f =$	0.999

Check: Units OK. Physics almost OK, but the sum of all f should equal 1.0, representing 100% of the clouds. The reason for the error is that we should have considered clouds even larger than 4950 m, because of the tail on the right of the distribution. Also smaller ΔX would help.

Exposition: Although the dominant cloud width is about 800 m for this example, the long tail on the right of the distribution shows that there are also a small number of large-diameter clouds.

6.5. SKY COVER (CLOUD AMOUNT)

The fraction of the sky (celestial dome) covered by cloud is called **sky cover**, **cloud cover**, or **cloud amount**. It is measured in eighths (**oktas**) according to the World Meteorological Organization. Table 6-7 gives the definitions for different cloud amounts, the associated symbol for weather maps, and the abbreviation for aviation weather reports (**METAR**).

Sometimes the sky is **obscured**, meaning that there might be clouds but the observer on the ground cannot see them. Obscurations (and their abbreviations) include: **mist** [BR; horizontal visibilities ≥ 1 km (i.e., $\geq 5/8$ of a statute mile)], **fog** [FG; visibilities < 1 km (i.e., $< 5/8$ statute mile)], **smoke** (FU), **volcanic ash** (VA), **sand** (SA), **haze** (HZ), **spray** (PY), widespread **dust** (DU).

For aviation, the altitude of cloud base for the lowest cloud with coverage ≥ 5 oktas (i.e., lowest broken or overcast clouds) is considered the **ceiling**. For obscurations, the **vertical visibility** (VV) distance is reported as a ceiling instead.

6.6. CLOUD SIZES

Cumuliform clouds typically have diameters roughly equal to their depths, as mentioned previously. For example, a fair weather cumulus cloud typically averages about 1 km in size, while a thunderstorm might be 10 km.

Not all clouds are created equal. At any given time the sky contains a spectrum of cloud sizes that has a **lognormal distribution** (Fig. 6.10, eq. 6.6)

$$f(X) = \frac{\Delta X}{\sqrt{2\pi} \cdot X \cdot S_X} \cdot \exp \left[-0.5 \cdot \left(\frac{\ln(X/L_X)}{S_X} \right)^2 \right] \quad (6.6)$$

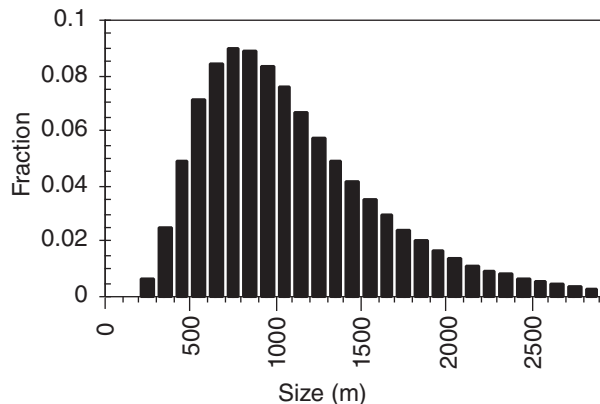



Figure 6.10
Lognormal distribution of cloud sizes.

where X is the cloud diameter or depth, ΔX is a small range of cloud sizes, $f(X)$ is the fraction of clouds of sizes between $X-0.5\Delta X$ and $X+0.5\Delta X$, L_x is a location parameter, and S_x is a dimensionless spread parameter. These parameters vary widely in time and location.

According to this distribution, there are many clouds of nearly the same size, but there also are a few clouds of much larger size. This causes a skewed distribution with a long tail to the right (see Fig. 6.10).

~~~~~  
**6.7. FRACTAL CLOUD SHAPES**

 **Fractals** are patterns made of the superposition of similar shapes having a range of sizes. An example is a dendrite snow flake. It has arms protruding from the center. Each of those arms has smaller arms attached, and each of those has even smaller arms. Other aspects of meteorology exhibit fractal geometry, including lightning, turbulence, and clouds. Fractals are defined next, and then are applied to cloud shadows.

**6.7.1. Fractal Dimension**

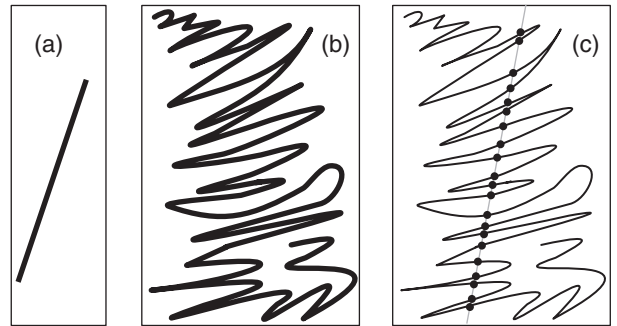
**Euclidean** geometry includes only integer dimensions; for example 1-D, 2-D or 3-D. Fractal geometry allows a continuum of dimensions; for example  $D = 1.35$ .

**Fractal dimension** is a measure of space-filling ability. Common examples are drawings made

by children, and newspaper used for packing cardboard boxes.

A straight line (Fig. 6.11a) has fractal dimension  $D = 1$ ; namely, it is one-dimensional both in the Euclidean and fractal geometry. When toddlers draw with crayons, they fill areas by drawing tremendously wiggly lines (Fig. 6.11b). Such a line might have fractal dimension  $D \approx 1.7$ , and gives the impression of almost filling an area. Older children succeed in filling the area, resulting in fractal dimension  $D = 2$ .

A different example is a sheet of newspaper. While it is flat and smooth, it fills only two-dimensional area (neglecting its thickness), hence  $D = 2$ . However, it takes up more space if you crinkle it, resulting in a fractal dimension of  $D \approx 2.2$ . By fully wadding it into a tight ball of  $D \approx 2.7$ , it begins to behave more like a three-dimensional object, which is handy for filling empty space in cardboard boxes.



**Figure 6.11**  
 (a) A straight line has fractal dimension  $D = 1$ . (b) A wiggly line has fractal dimension  $1 < D < 2$ . (c) The zero-set of the wiggly line is a set of points with dimension  $0 < D < 1$ .

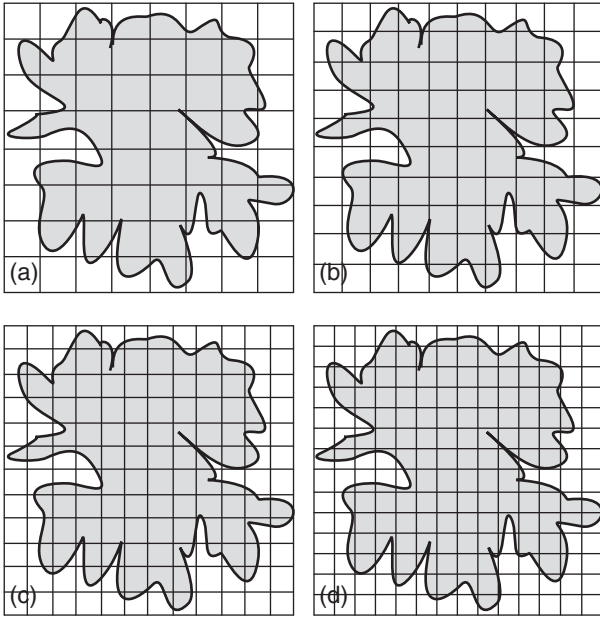
**INFO • Cloud and Sky Photography using High Dynamic Range (HDR)**

Most people take photos with their cell phone or tablet. You cannot easily add special lenses and filters to these devices. Instead, to take better cloud photos, use special software on your device to capture **high dynamic range (HDR)** images.

When you take an HDR photo, your camera takes three photos in rapid succession of the same scene. One photo uses a good average exposure for the whole scene (1.N). Another is underexposed (1.U), but captures the sky and clouds better. The third is overexposed (1.O), to capture darker ground and shadows. The software automatically combines the best parts of the three photos into one photo (2). Finally, after you enhance the saturation, contrast, and sharpness, the image (3) is much better than the normal photo (1.N).

**METHOD**

1. TAKE UNDER-, NORMAL, AND OVER-EXPOSED PHOTOS OF SAME SCENE.
2. COMBINE BEST PARTS OF EACH INTO A RAW HDR PHOTO.
3. ENHANCE RESULT (BECAUSE RAW HDR PHOTOS LOOK FLAT).



**Figure 6.12**  
 Cloud shadow overlaid with small tiles. The number of tiles  $M$  per side of domain is: (a) 8, (b) 10, (c) 12, (d) 14.

**Sample Application**

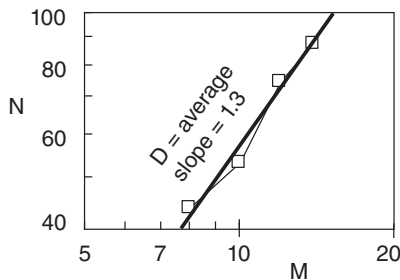
Use Fig. 6.12 to measure the fractal dimension of the cloud shadow.

**Find the Answer**

For each figure, the number of boxes is:

|     | $M$ | $N$ |
|-----|-----|-----|
| (a) | 8   | 44  |
| (b) | 10  | 53  |
| (c) | 12  | 75  |
| (d) | 14  | 88  |

(You might get a slightly different count.)  
 Plot the result on a log-log graph, & fit a straight line.



Use the end points of the best-fit line in eq. (6.7):

$$D = \frac{\log(100 / 40)}{\log(15 / 7.5)} = \underline{1.32}$$

**Check:** Units OK. Physics OK.

**Exposition:** About right for a cloud. The original domain size relative to cloud size makes no difference. Although you will get different  $M$  and  $N$  values, the slope  $D$  will be almost the same.

A **zero set** is a lower-dimensional slice through a higher-dimensional shape. Zero sets have fractal dimension one less than that of the original shape (i.e.,  $D_{zero\ set} = D - 1$ ). Sometimes it is easier to measure the fractal dimension of a zero set, from which we can calculate the dimension of the original.

For example, start with the wad of paper having fractal dimension  $D = 2.7$ . It would be difficult to measure the dimension for this wad of paper. Instead, carefully slice that wad into two halves, dip the sliced edge into ink, and create a print of that inked edge on a flat piece of paper. The wiggly line that was printed (Fig. 6.11b) has fractal dimension of  $D = 2.7 - 1 = 1.7$ , and is a zero set of the original shape. It is easier to measure.

To continue the process, slice through the middle of the print (shown as the grey line in Fig. 6.11c). The wiggly printed line crosses the straight slice at a number of points (Fig. 6.11c); those points have a fractal dimension of  $D = 1.7 - 1 = 0.7$ , and represent the zero set of the print. Thus, while any one point has a Euclidean dimension of zero, the set of points appears to partially fill a 1-D line.

**6.7.2. Measuring Fractal Dimension**

Consider an irregular-shaped area, such as the shadow of a cloud. The perimeter of the shadow is a wiggly line, so we should be able to measure its fractal dimension. Based on observations of the perimeter of real-cloud shadows,  $D = 1.35$ . If we assume that this cloud shadow is a zero set of the surface of the cloud, then the cloud surface dimension is  $D = D_{zero\ set} + 1 = 2.35$ . The fractal nature of clouds suggests that some turbulent or chaotic dynamics might need to be considered when modeling clouds.

A **box-counting** method can be used to measure fractal dimension. Put the cloud-shadow picture within a square domain. Then tile the domain with smaller square boxes, with  $M$  tiles per side of domain (Fig. 6.12). Count the number  $N$  of tiles through which the perimeter passes. Repeat the process with smaller tiles.

Get many samples of  $N$  vs.  $M$ , and plot these as points on a log-log graph. The fractal dimension  $D$  is the slope of the best fit straight line through the points. Define subscripts 1 and 2 as the two end points of the best fit line. Thus:

$$D = \frac{\log(N_1 / N_2)}{\log(M_1 / M_2)} \tag{6.7}$$

This technique works best when the tiles are small. If the plotted line is not straight but curves on the log-log graph, try to find the slope of the portion of the line near large  $M$ .

## 6.8. FOG

### 6.8.1. Types

**Fog** is a cloud that touches the ground. The main types of fog are:

- upslope
- radiation
- advection
- precipitation or frontal
- steam

They differ in how the air becomes saturated.

**Upslope fog** is formed by adiabatic cooling in rising air that is forced up sloping terrain by the wind. Namely, it is formed the same way as clouds. As already discussed in the Water Vapor chapter, air parcels must rise or be lifted to their lifting condensation level (LCL) to form a cloud or upslope fog.

Radiation fog and advection fog are formed by cooling of the air via conduction from the cold ground. **Radiation fog** forms during clear, nearly-calm nights when the ground cools by IR radiation to space. **Advection fog** forms when initially-unsaturated air advects over a colder surface.

**Precipitation fog** or **frontal fog** is formed by adding moisture, via the evaporation from warm rain drops falling down through the initially-unsaturated cooler air below cloud base.

**Steam fog** occurs when cold air moves over warm humid surfaces such as unfrozen lakes during early winter. The lake warms the air near it by conduction, and adds water by evaporation. However, this thin layer of moist warm air near the surface is unsaturated. As turbulence causes it to mix with the colder air higher above the surface, the mixture becomes saturated, which we see as steam fog.

### 6.8.2. Idealized Fog Models

By simplifying the physics, we can create mathematical fog models that reveal some of the fundamental behaviors of different types of fog.

#### 6.8.2.1. Advection Fog

For formation and growth of advection fog, suppose a fogless mixed layer of thickness  $z_i$  advects with speed  $M$  over a cold surface such as snow covered ground or a cold lake. If the surface potential temperature is  $\theta_{sfc}$  then the air potential temperature  $\theta$  cools with downwind distance according to

$$\theta = \theta_{sfc} + (\theta_o - \theta_{sfc}) \cdot \exp\left(-\frac{C_H}{z_i} \cdot x\right) \quad (6.8)$$

### Sample Application

Fog formation: A layer of air adjacent to the surface (where  $P = 100$  kPa) is initially at temperature  $20^\circ\text{C}$  and relative humidity 68%. (a) To what temperature must this layer be cooled to form **radiation** or **advection** fog? (b) To what altitude must this layer be lifted to form **upslope** fog? (c) How much water must be evaporated into each kilogram of dry air from falling rain drops to form **frontal** fog? (d) How much evaporation (mm of lake water depth) from the lake is necessary to form **steam** fog throughout a 100 m thick layer? [Hint: Use eqs. from the Water Vapor chapter.]

### Find the Answer

Given:  $P = 100$  kPa,  $T = 20^\circ\text{C}$ ,  $RH = 68\%$ ,  $\Delta z = 100$  m  
Find: a)  $T_d = ?^\circ\text{C}$ , b)  $z_{LCL} = ?\text{m}$ , c)  $r_s = ?\text{g kg}^{-1}$  d)  $d = ?\text{mm}$

Using Table 4-1:  $e_s = 2.371$  kPa.

Using eq. (4.14):  $e = (RH/100\%)e_s$   
 $= (68\%/100\%)(2.371 \text{ kPa}) = 1.612 \text{ kPa}$

(a) Knowing  $e$  and using Table 4-1:  $T_d = \mathbf{14^\circ\text{C}}$ .

(b) Using eq. (4.16):  
 $z_{LCL} = a \cdot [T - T_d] = (0.125 \text{ m K}^{-1}) \cdot [(20+273)\text{K} - (14+273)\text{K}] = \mathbf{0.75 \text{ km}}$

(c) Using eq. (4.4), the initial state is:  
 $r = \varepsilon \cdot e / (P - e) = 0.622 \cdot (1.612 \text{ kPa}) / (100 \text{ kPa} - 1.612 \text{ kPa}) = 0.0102 \text{ g g}^{-1} = 10.2 \text{ g kg}^{-1}$   
The final mixing ratio at saturation (eq. 4.5) is:  
 $r_s = \varepsilon \cdot e_s / (P - e_s) = 0.622 \cdot (2.371 \text{ kPa}) / (100 \text{ kPa} - 2.371 \text{ kPa}) = 0.0151 \text{ g g}^{-1} = 15.1 \text{ g kg}^{-1}$   
The amount of additional water needed is  
 $\Delta r = r_s - r = 15.1 - 10.2 = \mathbf{4.9 \text{ g}_{\text{water}} \text{ kg}_{\text{air}}^{-1}}$

(d) Using eqs. (4.11) & (4.13) to find absolute humidity  
 $\rho_v = \varepsilon \cdot e \cdot \rho_d / P$   
 $= (0.622) \cdot (1.612 \text{ kPa}) \cdot (1.275 \text{ kg} \cdot \text{m}^{-3}) / (100 \text{ kPa})$   
 $= 0.01278 \text{ kg} \cdot \text{m}^{-3}$   
 $\rho_{vs} = \varepsilon \cdot e_s \cdot \rho_d / P$   
 $= (0.622) \cdot (2.371 \text{ kPa}) \cdot (1.275 \text{ kg} \cdot \text{m}^{-3}) / (100 \text{ kPa})$   
 $= 0.01880 \text{ kg} \cdot \text{m}^{-3}$

The difference must be added to the air to reach saturation:  $\Delta \rho = \rho_{vs} - \rho_v =$

$$\Delta \rho = (0.01880 - 0.01278) \text{ kg} \cdot \text{m}^{-3} = 0.00602 \text{ kg} \cdot \text{m}^{-3}$$

But over  $A = 1 \text{ m}^2$  of surface area, air volume is  
 $Vol_{air} = A \cdot \Delta z = (1 \text{ m}^2) \cdot (100 \text{ m}) = 100 \text{ m}^3$ .

The mass of water needed in this volume is  
 $m = \Delta \rho \cdot Vol_{air} = 0.602 \text{ kg}$  of water.

But liquid water density  $\rho_{liq} = 1000 \text{ kg} \cdot \text{m}^{-3}$ : Thus,  
 $Vol_{liq} = m / \rho_{liq} = 0.000602 \text{ m}^3$

The depth of liquid water under the  $1 \text{ m}^2$  area is  
 $d = Vol_{liq} / A = 0.000602 \text{ m} = \mathbf{0.602 \text{ mm}}$

**Check:** Units OK. Physics OK.

**Exposition:** For many real fogs, cooling of the air and addition of water via evaporation from the surface happen simultaneously. Thus, a fog might form in this example at temperatures warmer than  $14^\circ\text{C}$ .

**HIGHER MATH • Advection Fog**

**Derivation of eq. (6.8):**

Start with the Eulerian heat balance, neglecting all contributions except for turbulent flux divergence:

$$\frac{\partial \theta}{\partial t} = - \frac{\partial F_{z \text{ turb}}(\theta)}{\partial z}$$

where  $\theta$  is potential temperature, and  $F$  is heat flux. For a mixed layer of fog,  $F$  is linear with  $z$ , thus:

$$\frac{\partial \theta}{\partial t} = - \frac{F_{z \text{ turb } z_i}(\theta) - F_{z \text{ turb } sfc}(\theta)}{z_i - 0}$$

If entrainment at the top of the fog layer is small, then  $F_{z \text{ turb } z_i}(\theta) = 0$ , leaving:

$$\frac{\partial \theta}{\partial t} = \frac{F_{z \text{ turb } sfc}(\theta)}{z_i} = \frac{F_H}{z_i}$$

Estimate the flux using bulk transfer eq. (3.21). Thus:

$$\frac{\partial \theta}{\partial t} = \frac{C_H \cdot M \cdot (\theta_{sfc} - \theta)}{z_i}$$

If the wind speed is roughly constant with height, then let the Eulerian volume move with speed  $M$ :

$$\frac{\partial \theta}{\partial t} = \frac{\partial \theta}{\partial x} \frac{\partial x}{\partial t} = \frac{\partial \theta}{\partial x} \cdot M$$

Plugging this into the LHS of the previous eq. gives:

$$\frac{\partial \theta}{\partial x} = \frac{C_H \cdot (\theta_{sfc} - \theta)}{z_i}$$

To help integrate this, define a substitute variable  $s = \theta - \theta_{sfc}$ , for which  $\partial s = \partial \theta$ . Thus:

$$\frac{\partial s}{\partial x} = - \frac{C_H \cdot s}{z_i}$$

Separate the variables:  $\frac{ds}{s} = - \frac{C_H}{z_i} dx$

Which can be integrated (using the prime to denote a dummy variable of integration):

$$\int_{s'=s_0}^s \frac{ds'}{s'} = - \frac{C_H}{z_i} \int_{x'=0}^x dx'$$

Yielding:

$$\ln(s) - \ln(s_0) = - \frac{C_H}{z_i} \cdot (x - 0)$$

or

$$\ln\left(\frac{s}{s_0}\right) = - \frac{C_H}{z_i} \cdot x$$

Taking the antilog of each side (i.e., exp):

$$\frac{s}{s_0} = \exp\left(- \frac{C_H}{z_i} \cdot x\right)$$

Upon rearranging, and substituting for  $s$ :

$$\theta - \theta_{sfc} = (\theta - \theta_{sfc})_0 \cdot \exp\left(- \frac{C_H}{z_i} \cdot x\right)$$

But  $\theta_{sfc}$  is assumed constant, thus:

$$\theta = \theta_{sfc} + (\theta_0 - \theta_{sfc}) \cdot \exp\left(- \frac{C_H}{z_i} \cdot x\right) \tag{6.8}$$

where  $\theta_0$  is the initial air potential temperature,  $C_H$  is the heat transfer coefficient (see the Heat Budgets chapter), and  $x$  is travel distance over the cold surface. This assumes an idealized situation where there is sufficient turbulence caused by a brisk wind speed to keep the boundary layer well mixed.

Advection fog forms when the temperature drops to the dew-point temperature  $T_d$ . At the surface (more precisely, at  $z = 10$  m),  $\theta \approx T$ . Thus, setting  $\theta \approx T = T_d$  at saturation and solving the equation above for  $x$  gives the distance over the lake at which fog first forms:

$$x = \frac{z_i}{C_H} \cdot \ln\left(\frac{T_0 - T_{sfc}}{T_d - T_{sfc}}\right) \tag{6.9}$$

Surprisingly, neither the temperature evolution nor the distance to fog formation depends on wind speed.

For example, advection fog can exist along the California coast where warm humid air from the

**Sample Application**

Air of initial temperature 5°C and depth 200 m flows over a frozen lake of surface temperature -3°C. If the initial dew point of the air is -1°C, how far from shore will **advection** fog first form?

**Find the Answer**

Given:  $T_0 = 5^\circ\text{C}$ ,  $T_d = -1^\circ\text{C}$ ,

$T_{sfc} = -3^\circ\text{C}$ ,  $z_i = 200$  m

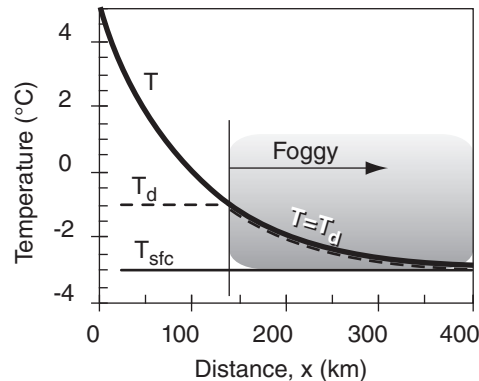
Find:  $x = ?$  km.

Assume smooth ice:  $C_H = 0.002$ .

Use eq. (6.9):  $x = (200 \text{ m}/0.002) \cdot$

$$\ln[(5 - (-3))/(-1 - (-3))] = \mathbf{138.6 \text{ km}}$$

Sketch, where eq. (6.8) was solved for  $T$  vs.  $x$ :



**Check:** Units OK. Physics OK.

**Exposition:** If the lake is smaller than 138.6 km in diameter, then no fog forms. Also, if the dew-point temperature needed for fog is colder than the surface temperature, then no fog forms.



west blows over the cooler “Alaska current” coming from further north in the Pacific Ocean.

Advection fog, once formed, experiences radiative cooling from fog top. Such cooling makes the fog more dense and longer lasting as it can evolve into a well-mixed radiation fog, described in the next subsection.

Dissipation of advection fog is usually controlled by the synoptic and mesoscale weather patterns. If the surface becomes warmer (e.g., all the snow melts, or there is significant solar heating), or if the wind changes direction, then the conditions that originally created the advection fog might disappear. At that point, dissipation depends on the same factors that dissipate radiation fog. Alternately, frontal passage or change of wind direction might blow out the advection fog, and replace the formerly-foggy air with cold dry air that might not be further cooled by the underlying surface.

**6.8.2.2. Radiation Fog**

For formation and growth of radiation fog, assume a stable boundary layer forms and grows, as given in the Atmospheric Boundary Layer chapter. For simplicity, assume that the ground is flat, so there is no drainage of cold air downhill (a poor assumption). If the surface temperature  $T_s$  drops to the dew-point temperature  $T_d$  then fog can form (Fig. 6.13). The fog depth is the height where the nocturnal temperature profile crosses the initial dew-point temperature  $T_{do}$ .

The time  $t_o$  between when nocturnal cooling starts and the onset of fog is

$$t_o = \frac{a^2 \cdot M^{3/2} \cdot (T_{RL} - T_d)^2}{(-F_H)^2} \tag{6.10}$$

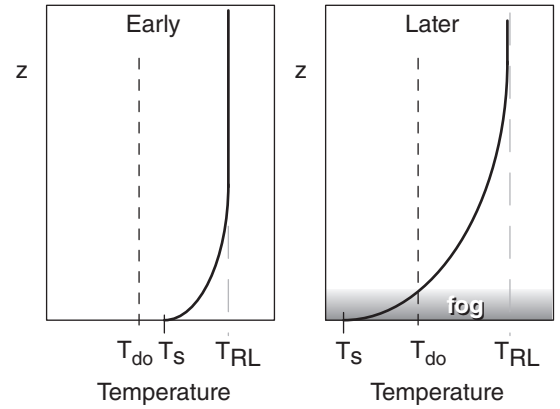
where  $a = 0.15 \text{ m}^{1/4} \cdot \text{s}^{1/4}$ ,  $T_{RL}$  is the residual-layer temperature (extrapolated adiabatically to the surface),  $M$  is wind speed in the residual layer, and  $F_H$  is the average surface kinematic heat flux. Faster winds and drier air delay the onset of fog. For most cases, fog never happens because night ends first.

Once fog forms, evolution of its depth is approximately

$$z = a \cdot M^{3/4} \cdot t^{1/2} \cdot \ln\left[\left(t/t_o\right)^{1/2}\right] \tag{6.11}$$

where  $t_o$  is the onset time from the previous equation. This equation is valid for  $t > t_o$ .

Liquid water content increases as a saturated air parcel cools. Also, visibility decreases as liquid water increases. Thus, the densest (lowest visibility)



**Figure 6.13**  
Stable-boundary-layer evolution at night leading to radiation fog onset, where  $T_s$  is near-surface air temperature,  $T_{do}$  is original dew-point temperature, and  $T_{RL}$  is the original temperature. Simplified, because dew formation on the ground can decrease  $T_d$  before fog forms, and cold-air downslope drainage flow can remove or deposit cold air to alter fog thickness.

**Sample Application**

Given a residual layer temperature of 20°C, dew point of 10°C, and wind speed 1 m s<sup>-1</sup>. If the surface kinematic heat flux is constant during the night at -0.02 K·m s<sup>-1</sup>, then what is the onset time and height evolution of **radiation** fog?

**Find the Answer**

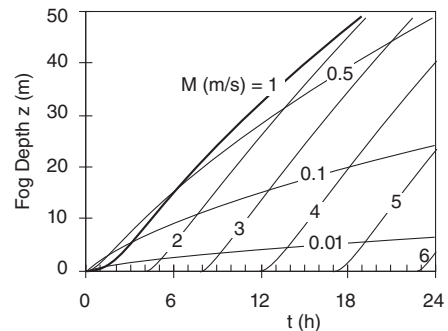
Given:  $T_{RL} = 20^\circ\text{C}$ ,  $T_d = 10^\circ\text{C}$ ,  $M = 1 \text{ m s}^{-1}$   
 $F_H = -0.02 \text{ K}\cdot\text{m s}^{-1}$

Find:  $t_o = ? \text{ h}$ , and  $z \text{ vs. } t$ .

Use eq. (6.10):

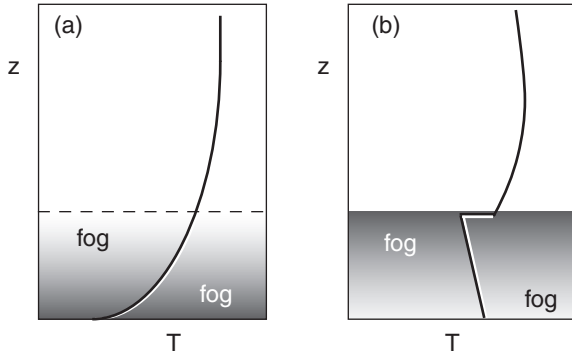
$$t_o = \frac{(0.15 \text{ m}^{1/4} \cdot \text{s}^{1/4})^2 \cdot (1 \text{ m/s})^{3/2} \cdot (20 - 10^\circ\text{C})^2}{(0.02^\circ\text{C} \cdot \text{m/s})^2} = \mathbf{1.563 \text{ h}}$$

The height evolution for this wind speed, as well as for other wind speeds, is calculated using eq. (6.11):



**Check:** Units OK. Physics OK.

**Exposition:** Windier nights cause later onset of fog, but stimulates rapid growth of the fog depth.



**Figure 6.14**  
 (a) Stratified fog that is more dense and colder at ground. (b) Well-mixed fog that is more dense and colder at the top due to IR radiative cooling.

part of the fog will generally be in the coldest air, which is initially at the ground.

Initially, fog density decreases smoothly with height because temperature increases smoothly with height (Fig. 6.14a). As the fog layer becomes optically thicker and more dense, it reaches a point where the surface is so obscured that it can no longer cool by direct IR radiation to space.

Instead, the height of maximum radiative cooling moves upward into the fog away from the surface. Cooling of air within the nocturnal fog causes air to sink as cold thermals. Convective circulations then turbulently mix the fog.

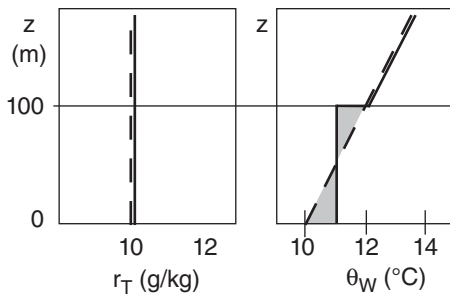
Very quickly, the fog changes into a **well-mixed fog** with wet-bulb-potential temperature  $\theta_W$  and total-water content  $r_T$  that are uniform with height. During this rapid transition, total heat and total water averaged over the whole fog layer are conserved. As the night continues,  $\theta_W$  decreases and  $r_L$  increases with time due to continued radiative cooling.

In this fog the actual temperature decreases with height at the moist adiabatic lapse rate (Fig. 6.14b), and liquid water content increases with height. Continued IR cooling at fog top can strengthen and maintain this fog. This fog is densest near the top of the fog layer.

**Sample Application**

Initially, total water is constant with height at  $10 \text{ g kg}^{-1}$ , and wet-bulb potential temperature increases with height at rate  $2^\circ\text{C}/100\text{m}$  in a stratified fog. Later, a well-mixed fog forms with depth 100 m. Plot the total water and  $\theta_W$  profiles before and after mixing.

**Find the Answer**



**Check:** Units OK. Physics OK.

**Exposition:** Dashed lines show initial profiles, solid are final profiles. For  $\theta_W$ , the two shaded areas must be equal for heat conservation. This results in a temperature jump of  $1^\circ\text{C}$  across the top of the fog layer for this example. Recall from the Water Vapor and Atmospheric Stability chapters that actual temperature within the saturated (fog) layer decreases with height at the moist adiabatic lapse rate (lines of constant  $\theta_W$ ).

**6.8.2.3. Dissipation of Well-Mixed (Radiation and Advection) Fogs**

During daytime, solar heating and IR cooling are both active. Fogs can become less dense, can thin, can lift, and can totally dissipate due to warming by the sun.

Stratified fogs (Fig. 6.14a) are optically thin enough that sunlight can reach the surface and warm it. The fog albedo can be in the range of  $A = 0.3$  to  $0.5$  for thin fogs. This allows the warm ground to rapidly warm the fog layer, causing evaporation of the liquid drops and dissipation of the fog.

For optically-thick well-mixed fogs (Fig. 6.14b), albedoes can be  $A = 0.6$  to  $0.9$ . What little sunlight is not reflected off the fog is absorbed in the fog itself. However, IR radiative cooling continues, and can compensate the solar heating. One way to estimate whether fog will totally dissipate at time  $t$  in the future is to calculate the sum  $Q_{Ak}$  of accumulated cooling and heating (see the Atmospheric Boundary Layer chapter) during the time period  $(t - t_o)$  since the fog first formed:

$$Q_{Ak} = F_{H.night} \cdot (t - t_o) + (1 - A) \cdot \frac{F_{H.max} \cdot D}{\pi} \cdot \left[ 1 - \cos\left(\frac{\pi \cdot (t - t_{SR})}{D}\right) \right] \tag{6.12}$$

where  $F_{H,night}$  is average nighttime surface kinematic heat flux (negative at night), and  $F_{H,max}$  is the amplitude of the sine wave that approximates surface kinematic sensible heat flux due to solar heating (i.e., the positive value of insolation at local noon).  $D$  is daylight duration hours,  $t$  is hours after sunset,  $t_o$  is hours after sunset when fog first forms, and  $t_{SR}$  is hours between sunset and the next sunrise.

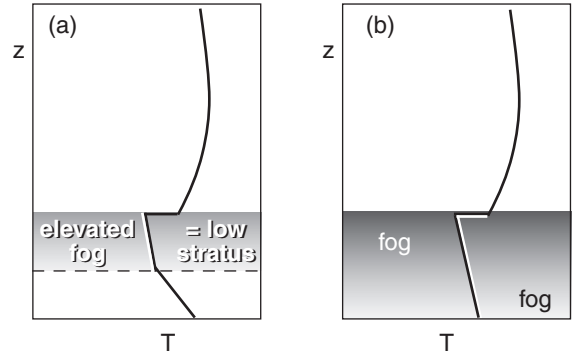
The first term on the right should be included only when  $t > t_o$ , which includes not only nighttime when the fog originally formed, but the following daytime also. This approach assumes that the rate  $F_{H,night}$  of IR cooling during the night is a good approximation to the continued IR cooling during daytime.

The second term should be included only when  $t > t_{SR}$ , where  $t_{SR}$  is sunrise time. (See the Atmospheric Boundary Layer Chapter for definitions of other variables). If there was zero fog initially, but fog forms during the night as  $Q_{Ak}$  becomes negative, then that fog will dissipate after sunrise at a time when  $Q_{Ak}$  first becomes positive (neglecting other factors such as advection). This is illustrated in the figure in the Sample Application box at right.

While IR cooling happens from the very top of the fog, solar heating occurs over a greater depth in the top of the fog layer. Such heating underneath cooling statically destabilizes the fog, creating convection currents of cold thermals that sink from the fog top. These upside-down cold thermals continue to mix the fog even though there might be net heating when averaged over the whole fog. Thus, any radiatively heated or cooled air is redistributed and mixed vertically throughout the fog by convection.

Such heating can cause the bottom part of the fog to evaporate, which appears to an observer as **lifting** of the fog (Fig. 6.15a). Sometimes the warming during the day is insufficient to evaporate all the fog. When night again occurs and radiative cooling is not balanced by solar heating, the bottom of the elevated fog lowers back down to the ground (Fig. 6.15b).

In closing this section on fogs, please be aware that the equations above for formation, growth, and dissipation of fogs were based on very idealized situations, such as flat ground and horizontally uniform heating and cooling. In the real atmosphere, even gentle slopes can cause katabatic drainage of cold air into the valleys and depressions (see the Regional Winds chapter), which are then the favored locations for fog formation. The equations above were meant only to illustrate some of the physical processes, and should not be used for operational fog forecasting.



**Figure 6.15**  
 (a) Heating during the day can modify the fog of Fig. 6.14b, causing the base to **lift** and the remaining elevated fog to be less dense (b) If solar heating is insufficient to totally dissipate the fog, then nocturnal radiative cooling can re-strengthen it.

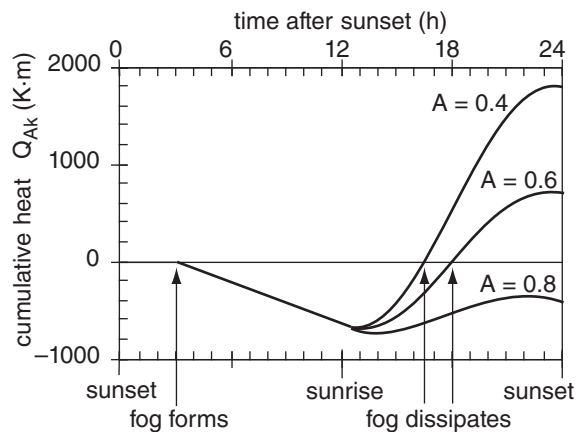
**Sample Application(§)**

When will fog dissipate if it has an albedo of  $A =$  (a) 0.4; (b) 0.6; (c) 0.8? Assume daylight duration of  $D = 12$  h. Assume fog forms at  $t_o = 3$  h after sunset. Given:  $F_{H,night} = -0.02 \text{ K}\cdot\text{m s}^{-1}$ , and  $F_{H,max\text{ day}} = 0.2 \text{ K}\cdot\text{m s}^{-1}$ . Also plot the cumulative heating.

**Find the Answer**

Given: (see above) Let  $t =$  time after sunset.  
 Use eq. (6.12), & solve on a spreadsheet:

- (a)  $t = 16.33 \text{ h} = 4.33 \text{ h after sunrise} = \mathbf{10:20 \text{ AM}}$
- (b)  $t = 17.9 \text{ h} = 5.9 \text{ h after sunrise} = \mathbf{11:54 \text{ AM}}$
- (c) **Fog never dissipates**, because the albedo is so large that too much sunlight is reflected off of the fog, leaving insufficient solar heating to warm the ground and dissipate the fog.



**Check:** Units OK. Physics OK.

**Exposition:** Albedo makes a big difference for fog dissipation. There is evidence that albedo depends on the type and number concentration of fog nuclei.

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## 6.9. REVIEW

Condensation of water vapor occurs by cooling, adding moisture, or mixing. Cooling and moisturizing are governed by the Eulerian heat and water budgets, respectively. Turbulent mixing of two nearly-saturated air parcels can yield a saturated mixture. We see the resulting droplet-filled air as clouds or fog.

If clouds are buoyant (i.e., the cloud and subcloud air is statically unstable), thermals of warm air actively rise to form cumuliform clouds. These have a lognormal distribution of sizes, and have fractal shapes. Active clouds are coupled to the underlying surface, allowing thermo diagrams to be used to estimate cloud base and top altitudes.

If the clouds are not buoyant (i.e., the cloud layer is statically stable), the clouds remain on the ground as fog, or they are forced into existence as stratiform clouds by advection along an isotropic surface over colder air, such as at a front.

Clouds can be classified by their altitude, shape, and appearance. Special symbols are used on weather maps to indicate cloud types and coverage.

While almost all clouds are created in rising air and the associated adiabatic cooling, fogs can form other ways. IR radiative cooling creates radiation fogs, while cooling associated with advection of humid air over a cold surface causes advection fogs. Precipitation and steam fog form by adding moisture to the air that touches a liquid water surface (e.g., raindrops, or a lake), followed by mixing with the surrounding cooler air to reach saturation.

Although fog forms in a layer of cold air resting on the ground, that cold-air can be either statically stable or unstable depending on whether continued cooling is being imposed at the bottom or top of the layer, respectively. Heat and moisture budget equations can be used to forecast fog onset, development, and dissipation, but only for some idealized situations.

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## 6.10. HOMEWORK EXERCISES

### 6.10.1. Broaden Knowledge & Comprehension

B1. Search the web or consult engineering documents that indicate the temperature and water vapor content of exhaust from aircraft jet engines. What ambient temperature and humidity of the atmosphere near the aircraft would be needed such that the mixture of the exhaust with the air would just become saturated and show a jet contrail in the sky. (You might need to utilize a spreadsheet to experiment with different mixing proportions to find the one that would cause saturation first.)

B2. Search the web for cloud-classification images corresponding to the clouds in Figs. 6.3 and 6.5. Copy the best example of each cloud type to your own page to create a cloud chart. Be sure to also record and cite the original web site for each photo.

B3. Search the web for thermo diagrams showing soundings for cases where different cloud types were present (e.g., active, passive, fog). Estimate cloud base and cloud top altitudes from the sounding, and compare with observations. Cloud base observations are available from the METAR surface reports made at airports. Cloud top observations are reported by aircraft pilots in the form of PIREPS.

B4. Search the web to identify some of the instruments that have been devised to determine cloud-base altitude?

B5. Search the web for cloud images corresponding to the “Other Clouds” discussed near the start of this chapter. Copy the best example of each cloud type to your own page. Be sure to also record and cite the original web site for each cloud photo.

B6. Search the web for satellite and ground-based images of cloud streets, open cells, and closed cells. Create a image table of these different types of cloud organization.

B7. Search the web for a surface weather map that plots surface observations for locations near you. For 3 of the stations having clouds, interpret (describe in words) the sky cover and cloud genera symbols (using Tables 6-7 and 6-2) that are plotted.

B8. Table 6-2 shows only a subset of the symbols used to represent clouds on weather maps. Search the web for map legends or tables of symbols that give a more complete list of cloud symbols.

B9. a. Search the web for fractal images that you can print. Use box counting methods on these images to find the fractal dimension, and compare with the fractal dimension that was specified by the creator of that fractal image.

b. Make a list of the URL web addresses of the ten fractal images that you like the best (try to find ones from different research groups or other people).

B10. Search the web for satellite images that show fog. (Hints: Try near San Francisco, or try major river valleys in morning, or try over snowy ground in spring, or try over unfrozen lakes in Fall). For the fog that you found, determine the type of fog (radiation, advection, steam, etc.) in that image, and justify your decision.

B11. a. Search the web for very high resolution visible satellite images of cumulus clouds or cloud clusters over an ocean. Display or print these images, and then trace the edges of the clouds. Find the fractal dimension of the cloud edge, similar to the procedure that was done with Fig. 6.12.

B12. Search the web for a discussion about which satellite channels can be used to discriminate between clouds and fog. Summarize your findings.

B13. Search the web for methods that operational forecasters use to predict onset and dissipation times of fog. Summarize your findings. (Hint: Try web sites of regional offices of the weather service.)

### 6.10.2. Apply

A1. Given the following temperature and vapor pressure for an air parcel. (i) How much moisture  $\Delta e$  (kPa) must be added to bring the original air parcel to saturation? (ii) How much cooling  $\Delta T$  ( $^{\circ}\text{C}$ ) must be done to bring the original parcel to saturation? Original  $[T$  ( $^{\circ}\text{C}$ ),  $e$  (kPa)] =

- a. 20, 0.2   b. 20, 0.4   c. 20, 0.6   d. 20, 0.8   e. 20, 1.0  
 f. 20, 1.5   g. 20, 2.0   h. 20, 2.2   i. 10, 0.2   j. 10, 0.4  
 k. 10, 0.6   l. 10, 0.8   m. 10, 1.0   n. 30, 1.0   o. 30, 3.0

A2. On a winter day, suppose your breath has  $T = 30^{\circ}\text{C}$  with  $T_d = 28^{\circ}\text{C}$ , and it mixes with the ambient air of temperature  $T = -10^{\circ}\text{C}$  and  $T_d = -11^{\circ}\text{C}$ . Will you see your breath? Assume you are at sea level, and that your breath and the environment mix in proportions of (breath : environment):

- a. 1:9   b. 2:8   c. 3:7   d. 4:6   e. 5:5  
 f. 6:4   g. 7:3   h. 8:2   i. 9:1

A3(S). A jet aircraft is flying at an altitude where the ambient conditions are  $P = 30$  kPa,  $T = -40^{\circ}\text{C}$ , and  $T_d = -42^{\circ}\text{C}$ . Will a visible contrail form? (Hint, assume that all possible mixing proportions occur.)

Assume the jet exhaust has the following conditions:  $[T$  ( $^{\circ}\text{C}$ ),  $T_d$  ( $^{\circ}\text{C}$ )] =

- a. 200, 180   b. 200, 160   c. 200, 140   d. 200, 120  
 e. 200, 100   f. 200, 80   g. 200, 60   h. 200, 40  
 i. 400, 375   j. 400, 350   k. 400, 325   l. 400, 300  
 m. 400, 275   n. 400, 250   o. 400, 200   p. 400, 150

A4. Given the following descriptions of ordinary clouds. (i) First classify as cumuliform or stratiform. (ii) Then name the cloud. (iii) Next, draw both the WMO and USA symbols for the cloud. (iv) Indicate if the cloud is made mostly of liquid water or ice (or both). (v) Indicate the likely altitude of its cloud base and top. (vi) Finally, sketch the cloud similar to those in Figs. 6.3 or 6.5.

- a. Deep vertical towers of cloud shaped like a gigantic mushroom, with an anvil shaped cloud on top. Flat, dark-grey cloud base, with heavy precipitation showers surrounded by non-precipitating regions. Can have lightning, thunder, hail, strong gusty winds, and tornadoes. Bright white cloud surrounded by blue sky when viewed from the side, but the cloud diameter is so large that when from directly underneath it might cover the whole sky.
- b. Sheet of light-grey cloud covering most of sky, with sun or moon faintly showing through it, casting diffuse shadows on ground behind buildings and people.
- c. Isolated clouds that look like large white cotton balls or cauliflower, but with flat bases. Lots of blue sky in between, and no precipitation. Diameter of individual clouds roughly equal to the height of their tops above ground.
- d. Thin streaks that look like horse tails, with lots of blue sky showing through, allowing bright sun to shine through it with crisp shadows cast on the ground behind trees and people.
- e. Thick layer of grey cloud with well poorly-defined cloud base relatively close to the ground, and widespread drizzle or light rain or snow. No direct sunlight shining through, and no shadows cast on the ground. Gloomy.
- f. Isolated clouds that look like small, white cotton balls or popcorn (but with flat bases), with lots of blue sky in between. Size of individual clouds roughly equal to their height above ground.
- g. Thin uniform veil covering most of sky showing some blue sky through it, with possibly a halo around a bright sun, allowing crisp

shadows cast on the ground behind trees and people.

- h. Layer of grey cloud close to the ground, but lumpy with some darker grey clouds dispersed among thinner light grey or small clear patches in a patchwork or chessboard pattern. Not usually precipitating.
- i. Thin veil of clouds broken into very small lumps, with blue sky showing through, allowing bright sun to shine through it with crisp shadows cast on the ground behind trees and people.
- j. Sheet of cloud covering large areas, but broken into flat lumps, with sun or moon faintly showing through the cloudy parts but with small patches of blue sky in between the lumps, casting diffuse shadows behind buildings and people.
- k. Deep towers of cloud with bright white sides and top during daytime, but grey when viewed from the bottom. Clouds shaped like stacks of ice-cream balls or turrets of cotton balls with tops extending high in the sky, but with flat bases relatively close to the ground. Usually no precipitation.
- l. Thick layer of grey cloud with well defined cloud base relatively close to the ground. No direct sunlight shining through, and no shadows cast on the ground. No precipitation.

A5. Use a thermo diagram to plot the following environmental sounding:

| P (kPa) | T (°C) |
|---------|--------|
| 20      | -15    |
| 25      | -25    |
| 35      | -25    |
| 40      | -15    |
| 45      | -20    |
| 55      | -15    |
| 70      | 0      |
| 80      | 9      |
| 85      | 6      |
| 95      | 15     |

Determine cloud activity (active, passive, fog, none), cloud-base height, and cloud-top height, for the conditions of near-surface ( $P = 100$  kPa) air parcels given below:  $[T$  (°C),  $T_d$  (°C)] =

- a. 20, 14    b. 20, 7    c. 20, 17    d. 20, 19
- e. 15, 15    f. 30, 0    g. 30, 10    h. 30, 24
- i. 25, 24    j. 25, 20    k. 25, 16    l. 25, 12
- m. 25, 10    n. 25, 6    o. 15, 10    p. 22, 22

A6. The buoyancy of a cloudy air parcel depends on its virtual temperature compared to that of its environment. Given a saturated air parcel of temperature and liquid-water mixing ratio as listed below. What

is its virtual temperature, and how would it compare to the virtual temperature with no liquid water?

- $[T$  (°C),  $r_L$  (g kg<sup>-1</sup>)] = a. 20, 1    b. 20, 2    c. 20, 5  
 d. 20, 10    e. 10, 1    f. 10, 3    g. 10, 7    h. 10, 12  
 i. 0, 2    j. 0, 4    k. 0, 8    l. 0, 15    m. 5, 1  
 n. 5, 2    o. 5, 4    p. 5, 6    q. 5, 8    r. 5, 10

A7. On a large thermo diagram from the end of the Atmospheric Stability chapter, plot a hypothetical sounding of temperature and dew-point that would be possible for the following clouds.

- a. cirrus    b. cirrostratus    c. cirrocumulus
- d. altostratus    e. altocumulus    f. stratus
- g. nimbostratus    h. fog

A8. Name these special clouds.

- a. Parallel bands of clouds perpendicular to the shear vector, at the level of altocumulus.
- b. Parallel bands of cumulus clouds parallel to the wind vector in the boundary layer.
- c. Two, long, closely-spaced parallel cloud lines at high altitude.
- d. Clouds that look like flags or pennants attached to and downwind of mountain peaks.
- e. Look like altocumulus, but with more vertical development that causes them to look like castles.
- f. Clouds that look like breaking waves.
- g. Look like cumulus or cumulus mediocris, but relatively tall and small diameter causing them to look like castles.
- h. Clouds that look lens shaped when viewed from the side, and which remain relatively stationary in spite of a non-zero wind.
- i. A low ragged cloud that is relatively stationary and rotating about a horizontal axis.
- j. Ragged low scattered clouds that are blowing rapidly downwind.
- k. Low clouds that look like cotton balls, but forming above industrial cooling towers or smoke stacks.
- l. A curved thin cloud at the top of a mountain.
- m. A curved thin cloud at the top of a rapidly rising cumulus congestus.

A9. Discuss the difference between cloud genera, species, varieties, supplementary features, accessory clouds, mother clouds, and meteors.

A10. Given the cloud genera abbreviations below, write out the full name of the genus, and give the WMO and USA weather-map symbols.

- a. Cb    b. Cc    c. Ci    d. Cs    e. Cu
- f. Sc    g. Ac    h. St    i. As    j. Ns

A11. For the day and time specified by your instructor, fully classify the clouds that you observe in the sky. Include all of the WMO-allowed classification categories: genera, specie, variety, feature, accessory cloud, and mother cloud. Justify your classification, and include photos or sketches if possible.

[HINT: When you take **cloud photos**, it is often useful to include some ground, buildings, mountains, or trees in the photo, to help others judge the scale of the cloud when they look at your picture. Try to avoid pictures looking straight up. To enhance the cloud image, set the exposure based on the cloud brightness, not on the overall scene brightness. Also, to make the cloud stand out against a blue-sky background, use a polarizing filter and aim the camera at right angles to the sunbeams. Telephoto lenses are extremely helpful to photograph distant clouds, and wide-angle lenses help with widespread nearby clouds. Many cloud photographers use zoom lenses that span a range from wide angle to telephoto. Also, always set the camera to focus on infinity, and never use a flash.]

A12. Draw the cloud coverage symbol for weather maps, and write the METAR abbreviation, for sky cover of the following amount (oktas).

- a. 0 b. 1 c. 2 d. 3 e. 4  
f. 5 g. 6 h. 7 i. 8 j. obscured

A13.(§). Use a spreadsheet to find and plot the fraction of clouds vs. size. Use  $\Delta X = 100$  m, with  $X$  in the range 0 to 5000 m.

- (i) For fixed  $S_x = 0.5$ , plot curves for  $L_X$  (m) =  
a. 200 b. 300 c. 400 d. 500 e. 700 f. 1000 g. 2000  
(ii) For fixed  $L_X = 1000$  m, plot curves for  $S_X$  =  
h. 0.1 i. 0.2 j. 0.3 k. 0.4 l. 0.5 m. 0.6 n. 0.8

A14. In Fig. 6.12, divide each tile into 4 equal quadrants, and count  $N$  vs.  $M$  for these new smaller tiles to add data points to the solved-example figure for measuring fractal dimension. Do these finer-resolution tiles converge to a different answer? Do this box-counting for Fig. 6.12 part:

- a. (a) b. (b) c. (c) d. (d)

A15. Use the box counting method to determine the fractal dimensions in Fig. 6.11b. Use  $M =$

- a. 4 b. 5 c. 6 d. 7 e. 8 f. 9  
g. 10 h. 12 i. 14 j. 16 k. 18 l. 20

A16. For air starting at sea level:

- (i) How high (km) must it be lifted to form upslope fog?  
(ii) How much water ( $g_{liq} kg_{air}^{-1}$ ) must be added to cause precipitation fog?  
(iii) How much cooling ( $^{\circ}C$ ) is necessary to

cause radiation fog?

Given the following initial state of the air

$[T (^{\circ}C), RH (\%)] =$

- a. 10, 20 b. 10, 40 c. 10, 60 d. 10, 80 e. 10, 90  
f. 20, 20 g. 20, 40 h. 20, 60 i. 20, 80 j. 20, 90  
k. 0, 20 l. 0, 40 m. 0, 60 n. 0, 80 o. 0, 90

A17.(§). In spring, humid tropical air of initial temperature and dew point as given below flows over colder land of surface temperature  $2^{\circ}C$ . At what downwind distance will advection fog form? Also plot the air temperature vs. distance. Assume  $z_i = 200$  m, and  $C_H = 0.005$ .

The initial state of the air is  $[T (^{\circ}C), T_d (^{\circ}C)] =$

- a. 20, 15 b. 20, 10 c. 20, 5 d. 20, 0 e. 20, -5  
f. 20, -10 g. 20, -15 h. 10, 8 i. 10, 5 j. 10, 2  
k. 10, 0 l. 10, -2 m. 10, -5 n. 10, -8 o. 10, -10

A18.(§). Given  $F_H = -0.02 K \cdot m \cdot s^{-1}$ . (i) When will radiation fog form? (ii) Also, plot fog depth vs. time.

Given residual-layer initial conditions of

$[T (^{\circ}C), T_d (^{\circ}C), M (m \cdot s^{-1})] =$

- a. 15, 13, 1 b. 15, 13, 2 c. 15, 13, 3 d. 15, 13, 4  
e. 15, 10, 1 f. 15, 10, 2 g. 15, 10, 3 h. 15, 10, 4  
i. 15, 8, 1 j. 15, 8, 2 k. 15, 8, 3 l. 15, 8, 4  
m. 15, 5, 1 n. 15, 5, 2 o. 15, 5, 3 p. 15, 5, 4

A19.(§). (i) When will a well-mixed fog dissipate? Assume: albedo is 0.5, fog forms 6 h after sunset, and daylight duration is 12 h. (ii) Also, plot the cumulative heat vs. time.

Given the following values of surface kinematic heat flux:  $[F_{H,night} (K \cdot m \cdot s^{-1}), F_{H,max \ day} (K \cdot m \cdot s^{-1})] =$

- a. -0.02, 0.15 b. -0.02, 0.13 c. -0.02, 0.11  
d. -0.02, 0.09 e. -0.02, 0.07 f. -0.02, 0.17  
g. -0.015, 0.15 h. -0.015, 0.13 i. -0.015, 0.11  
j. -0.015, 0.09 k. -0.015, 0.07 l. -0.015, 0.17

### 6.10.3. Evaluate & Analyze

E1. What processes in the atmosphere might simultaneously cool and moisturize unsaturated air, causing it to become saturated?

E2. Cumulus humilis clouds often have flat bases at approximately a common altitude over any location at any one time. Cumulus fractus clouds do not have flat bases, and the cloud-base altitudes vary widely over any location at one time. What causes this difference? Explain.

E3. Can you use darkness of the cloud base to estimate the thickness of a cloud? If so, what are some of the errors that might affect such an approach? If not, why not?

E4. Fig. 6.4 shows that the LCL computed from surface air conditions is a good estimate of cloud-base altitude for cumulus humilis clouds, but not for cloud-base altitude of altocumulus castellanus. Why?

E5. What methods could you use to estimate the altitudes of stratiform clouds by eye? What are the pitfalls in those methods? This is a common problem for weather observers.

E6. Should stratocumulus clouds be categorized as cumuliform or stratiform? Why?

E7. List all the clouds that are associated with turbulence (namely, would cause a bumpy ride if an airplane flew through the cloud).

E8. What do pileus clouds and lenticular clouds have in common, and what are some differences?

E9. Cloud streets, bands of lenticular clouds, and Kelvin-Helmholtz billows all consist of parallel rows of clouds. Describe the differences between these clouds, and methods that you can use to discriminate between them.

E10. The discrete cloud morphology and altitude classes of the official cloud classification are just points along a continuum of cloud shapes and altitudes. If you observe a cloud that looks halfway between two official cloud shapes, or which has an altitude between the typical altitudes for high, middle, or low, clouds, then what other info can you use as a weather observer to help classify the cloud?

E11 (full term project). Build your own cloud chart with your own cloud photos taken with a digital camera. Keep an eye on the sky so you can try to capture as many different cloud types as possible. Use only the best one example of each cloud type corresponding to the clouds in Figs. 6.3 and 6.5. Some clouds might not occur during your school term project, so it is OK to have missing photos for some of the cloud types.

E12. List all of the factors that might make it difficult to see and identify all the clouds that exist above your outdoor viewing location. Is there anything that you can do to improve the success of your cloud identification?

E13(S). a. On a spreadsheet, enter the cloud-size parameters ( $S_X$ ,  $L_X$ ,  $\Delta X$ ) from the Sample Application into separate cells. Create a graph of the lognormal

cloud distribution, referring to these parameter cells.

b. Next, change the values of each of these parameters to see how the shape of the curve changes. Can you explain why  $L_X$  is called the location parameter, and  $S_X$  is called the spread parameter? Is this consistent with an analytical interpretation of the factors in eq. (6.6)? Explain.

E14. The box-counting method can also be used for the number of points on a straight line, such as sketched in Fig. 6.11c. In this case, a “box” is really a fixed-length line segment, such as increments on a ruler or meter stick.

a. Using the straight line and dots plotted in Fig. 6.11c, use a centimeter ruler to count the number of non-overlapping successive 1 cm segments that contain dots. Repeat for half cm increments. Repeat with ever smaller increments. Then plot the results as in the fractal-dimension Sample Application, and calculate the average fractal dimension. Use the zero-set characteristics to find the fractal dimension of the original wiggly line.

b. In Fig. 6.11c, draw a different, nearly vertical, straight line, mark the dots where this line crosses the underlying wiggly line, and then repeat the dot-counting procedure as described in part (a). Repeat this for a number of different straight lines, and then average the resulting fractal dimensions to get a more statistically-robust estimate.

E15. a. Crumple a sheet of paper into a ball, and carefully slice it in half. This is easier said than done. (A head of cabbage or lettuce could be used instead.) Place ink on the cut end using an ink pad, or by dipping the paper wad or cabbage into a pan with a thin layer of red juice or diluted food coloring in the bottom. Then make a print of the result onto a flat piece of paper, to create a pattern such as shown in Fig. 6.11b. Use the box counting method to find the fractal dimension of the wiggly line that was printed. Using the zero-set characteristic, estimate the fractal dimension of the crumpled paper or vegetable.

b. Repeat the experiment, using crumpled paper wads that are more tightly packed, or more loosely packed. Compare their fractal dimensions. (P.S. Don't throw the crumpled wads at the instructor. Instructors tend to get annoyed easily.)

E16. Can precipitation fog form when cold raindrops fall through warmer air? Explain.

E17. A fog often forms near large waterfalls. What type of fog is it usually, and how does it form?



E18. In this chapter we listed some locations and seasons where advection fog is likely. Describe 3 other situations (locations and seasons) when advection fog would be likely. (If possible, use locations close to home.)

E19. Derive eq. (6.10), based on the exponential temperature profile for a stable boundary layer (see the Atmospheric Boundary Layer chapter). State and justify all assumptions. [This requires calculus.] Be critical of any simplifications that might not be appropriate for real fogs.

E20. Derive eq. (6.11) from (6.10), and justify all assumptions. Be critical of any simplifications that might not be appropriate for real fogs.

E21. Derive eq. (6.12) using info from the Atmospheric Boundary Layer chapter, and justify all assumptions. Be critical of any simplifications that might not be appropriate for real fogs.

E22. Use the data in the Sample Application for fog dissipation, but find the critical albedo at which fog will just barely dissipate.

E23. During possible frost events, some orchard and vineyard owners try to protect their fruit from freezing by spraying a mist of water droplets or burning smudge pots to make smoke in and above their plants. Why does this method work, and what are its limitations?

#### 6.10.4. Synthesize

S1. What if the saturation curve in Fig. 6.1 was concave down instead of concave up, but that saturation vapor pressure still increased with increasing temperature. Describe how the cooling, moisturizing, and mixing to reach saturation would be different.

S2. Suppose that descending (not ascending) air cools adiabatically. How would cloud shapes be different, if at all? Justify.

S3. Cloud classification is based on morphology; namely, how the cloud looks. A different way to classify clouds is by the processes that make the clouds. Devise a new scheme to classify clouds based on cloud processes; name this scheme after yourself; and make a table showing which traditional cloud names fall into each category of your new scheme, and justify.

S4. Clouds in the atmospheres of other planets in our solar system have various compositions:

- Venus: sulfuric acid

- Mars: water
- Jupiter: ammonia, sulfur, water
- Saturn: ammonia, ammonia hydrosulfide, water
- Uranus & Neptune: methane.

Would the clouds on these other planets have shapes different than the clouds on Earth? If so, then develop a cloud classification for them, and explain why. If not, why not?

S5. Utilize the information in (a) and (b) below to explain why cloud sizes might have a lognormal distribution.

a. The **central-limit theorem** of statistics states that if you repeat an experiment of adding  $N$  random numbers (using different random number each time), then there will be more values of the sum in the middle of the range than at the extremes. That is, there is a greater probability of getting a middle value for the sum than of getting a small or large value. This probability distribution has the shape of a **Gaussian curve** (i.e., a **bell curve** or a **“normal” distribution**; see the Air Pollution chapter for examples).

For anyone who has rolled **dice**, this is well known. Namely, if you roll one die (consider it to be a **random number generator** with a uniform distribution) you will have an equal chance of getting any of the numbers on the die (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, or 6).

However, if you roll two dice and sum the numbers from each die, you have a much greater chance of getting a sum of 7 than of any other sum (which is exactly half way between the smallest possible sum of 2, and the largest possible sum of 12). You have slightly less chance of rolling a sum of 6 or 8. Even less chance of rolling a sum of 5 or 9, etc.

The reason is that 7 has the most ways (6 ways) of being created from the two dice (1+6, 2+5, 3+4, 4+3, 5+2, 6+1). The sums of 6 and 8 have only 5 ways of being generated. Namely, 1+5, 2+4, 3+3, 4+2, and 5+1 all sum to 6, while 2+6, 3+5, 4+4, 5+3, 6+2 all sum to 8. The other sums are even less likely.

b. The logarithm of a product of numbers equals the sum of the logarithms of those numbers.

S6. Build an instrument to measure relative sizes of cumulus clouds as follows. On a small piece of clear plastic, draw a fine-mesh square grid like graph paper. Or take existing fine-mesh graph paper and make a transparency of it using a copy machine. Cut the result to a size to fit on the end of a short tube, such as a toilet-paper tube.

Hold the open end of the tube to your eye, and look through the tube toward cumulus clouds. [CAUTION: Do NOT look toward the sun.] Do this over relatively flat, level ground, perhaps from the roof of a building or from a window just at tree-top

level. Pick clouds of medium range, such that the whole cloud is visible through the tube.

For each cloud, record the relative diameter (i.e., the number of grid lines spanned horizontally by the cloud), and the relative height of each cloud base above the horizon (also in terms of number of grid lines). Then, for each cloud, divide the diameter by the cloud-base height to give a normalized diameter. This corrects for perspective, assuming that cumulus cloud bases are all at the same height.

Do this for a relatively large number of clouds that you can see during a relatively short time interval (such as half an hour), and then count the clouds in each bin of normalized cloud diameter.

a. Plot the result, and compare it with the lognormal distribution of Fig. 6.10.

b. Find the  $L_X$  and  $S_X$  parameters of the lognormal distribution that best fit your data. (Hint: Use trial and error on a spreadsheet that has both your measured size distribution and the theoretical distribution on the same graph. Otherwise, if you know statistics, you can use a method such as Maximum Likelihood to find the best-fit parameters.)

S7. Suppose that you extend Euclidian space to 4 dimensions, to include time as well as the 3 space dimensions. Speculate and describe the physical nature of something that has fractal dimension of 3.4.

S8. For advection fog, eq. (6.8) is based on a well-mixed fog layer. However, it is more likely that advection fog would initially have a temperature profile similar to that for a stable boundary layer (Atmospheric Boundary Layer chapter). Derive a substitute equation in place of eq. (6.8) that includes this better representation of the temperature profile. Assume for simplicity that the wind speed is constant with height, and state any other assumptions you must make to get an answer. Remember that any reasonable answer is better than no answer, so be creative.

S9. Suppose that fog was transparent to infrared (longwave) radiation. Describe how radiation fog formation, growth, and dissipation would be different (if at all) from real radiation fogs?

S10. Suppose that clouds were transparent to solar radiation, and couldn't shade the ground. Describe and explain the possible differences in cloud morphology, coverage, duration, and their effects on weather and climate, if any.

S11. Find a current weather map (showing only fronts and winds) for your continent. Use your knowledge to circle regions on the map where you expect to find different types of fog and different types of clouds, and label the fog and cloud types.