Northern Plains Weather Services, LLC

What is a Certified Consulting Meteorologist (CCM) and What Can They Provide to Help Your Case? – *written on June 1, 2020 (minor revisions on January 9, 2021, February 21, 2021, and February 19, 2022)*

A consulting meteorologist is a person who provides professional meteorological services to a client. The services include past, present, or future weather and/or climate information. Furthermore, a forensic meteorologist is a consulting meteorologist who interprets weather or climate information to help with litigation. Lawyers are the most common clients, and cases are often related to accidents (e.g., slips and falls, car accidents/crashes), insurance claims (e.g., crops, event protection), and lawsuits (e.g., property damage). Other clients may come from the construction and insurance sectors, among several others.

A certified consulting meteorologist (CCM) is meteorologist who has demonstrated certain knowledge, experience, and character to be a consultant by going through a rigorous exam process administered by the American Meteorological Society. This CCM designation is akin to certification in the fields of accountancy, architecture, engineering, marketing, and medicine. Note that certification is not the same as being licensed. Also, not all consulting meteorologists have their CCM designation.

A CCM typically is not needed when the weather situation is straightforward and/or weather information is readily available at the location and time of interest. However, CCMs become especially valuable when weather information has to be pieced together (i.e., extrapolated or interpolated) from various sources and times to a specific location where weather information generally is lacking. In this case, a CCM uses her/his experience and expertise to interpret all available information and develop a picture of the weather that happened for the case of interest.

There are many resources at the CCM's disposal. Common datasets include surface observations, climate reports, severe storm reports, radar data, lightning data, and satellite imagery. Other datasets include numerical weather prediction models, surface road temperature data, and flood frequency analyses (among others). There also are several tools to evaluate these various input datasets in order to seek out potential relationships in the data.

The time a CCM spends on a case can be as little as 2–4 hours if only some basic data and analyses are needed. In other cases where more detailed analyses and a formal report are needed, time invested can be from 6–14 hours. If site visits, extra analyses, affidavits, depositions, and/or trials are involved, a CCM can spend considerably more time on the case. In most cases, an initial assessment of the potential role the weather played can be made fairly quickly, helping the client determine whether retaining a CCM would be worthwhile for their case of interest.

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