

Observations of an Airline Captain.

When discussing weather one thing that needs to be firmly emphasized is that there is no such thing as *average* weather or *average* temperature. The weather and cloud formation is never the same on any two days, and as the temperature is changing all the time, and as it would be impossible to record the temperature every five minutes over every square kilometre of the Earth's surface, *there is no such measurement* nor would it mean anything. Extremes of temperature, both hot and cold, have nothing to do with man's input, but rather are a function of the weather patterns, and of the time that the wind has blown and of the type of surface it has travelled across.

An example would be the very hot temperatures recorded in summer in Victoria and South Australia caused by large high pressure systems on the East Coast directing the airflow inland to the Centre and down from the central Northern Territory over very hot land surfaces. If the high gets held there by other pressure systems, high temperatures for days on end will result, and these have nothing to do with mankind's influence.

Over recent years storms and cyclones have been very benign compared with the sixties and seventies. The last dozen summers and winters on the East Coast have been very mild, and the absolute proof that storms have not been severe except for isolated cases is that storm heights are *far lower* than in earlier years, and that there has been nowhere near the storm damage in those years. By contrast, in the 1960's and 1970's it was common in summer to see thunderstorm tops to 65,000' and 70,000', something not seen these days. This is because of lack of vertical development because the heat is not there. Nor have sea water temperatures been hot enough in recent years to cause significant cyclone activity.

In airline operations I have seen a line of thunderstorms on a summer evening stretch from Brisbane to Cairns along the Great Dividing Range in the 1970's - weather not seen these days.

Claims that temperature can be forecast 50 years ahead to an accuracy of one degree Celsius are nonsense, as some afternoons in Brisbane I have witnessed forecasts of fine weather for the next four hours, when at that very moment there has been a 250km line of thunderstorms thirty kilometres approaching Brisbane!

Accurate temperature recordings must also be in some doubt, particularly at aerodromes where the temperature is measured at the reference point when in fact the temperature above the centre of the runway may be considerably higher or lower depending on conditions and time of day. The major influences on our weather are those caused out in the Indian Ocean and the changing pressure systems, things over which we have no control.

These comments are based on experience with the weather over wide areas of Australia and Papua & New Guinea

Richard Kleeman

Richard Kleeman is a retired Domestic Airline Captain who has been flying for 45 years. He also holds a Grade 5 Masters Ticket for boats, and has had a lot of offshore boating experience up the Queensland Coast. His comments are based on these years of practical expertise.